



Photo credit: Dahlila Dill

Reducing Risk and Improving Resiliency for New England Women Livestock Producers in Sustainable Agriculture

The University of New Hampshire has successfully implemented Annie's Project, a farm management program for women farmers which began in 2014. According to the 2017 USDA Agriculture Census, over 50% of women farmers who are the principal operators in all six New England states are raising livestock. Looking to build educational programming a pilot program entitled, Women in Livestock Business, was offered to women livestock business owners in 2019. Fifteen women participated in this program which consisted of lectures, discussions, and activity-based instructions followed by two field days. The field days were an opportunity for the women to put into action the concepts they had learned in class. The women have since held field days on their own farms coordinating visits and learning sessions.

This program, led by Food and Agriculture Field Specialist **Elaina Enzien**, provided an opportunity for women livestock producers in **all New England states** to access the necessary tools to address risks related to communication, financial planning, market viability, and pastured livestock systems. Women participated in virtual

learning circles on two different occasions to learn about communication styles and how to improve negotiation skills. In addition, a winter virtual conference attended consistently by 68 participants offered sessions on marketing and financial planning. Three post conference field days focused on processing, grazing management, and direct sales marketing attracted 26 participants and allowed for networking. Regionally, New England is a leader for number of women producers, however, the number of specialists in business and livestock production as a region are limited. In offering this program regionally it expanded networks between farmers, agriculture service providers, and effectively reduced risk to maintain resilient livestock businesses.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the program had to be adapted and moved online which made it difficult to attain the positive networking opportunities that an in-person event would have provided. Feedback was collected online from women to craft specific focus areas on finance and marketing for the virtual conference. Over 200 women in the New England area registered for the virtual conference but it was difficult to track individual users and the resources they accessed which made collecting data a challenge. With a no cost extension, in-person field days were offered during the Spring in Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont. The field days focused on production topics which included grazing and pasture management, soil health, facilities and meat processing, animal nutrition, and marketing.

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"Being able to meet other farmers and see their operations was hugely helpful. I've kept in touch with other farm participants, and we are going to make changes to our market stand based on the success of the other farms we visited." – New England Farmer

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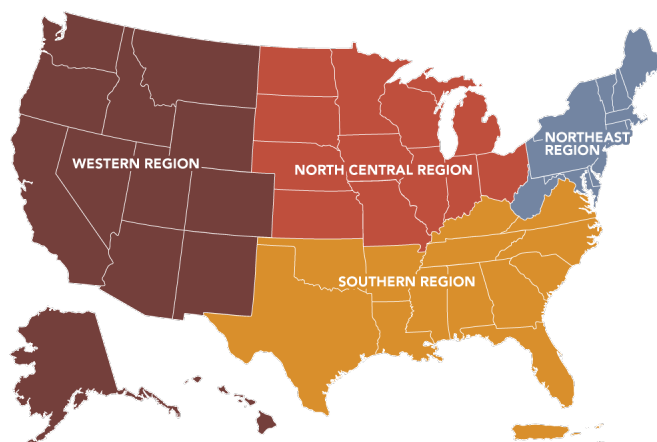
Extension Risk Management Education is supported by
the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

“Educating America’s farmers and ranchers to manage the unique risks of producing food for the world’s table.”

Extension Risk Management Education (ERME) is delivered through four regional centers that provide grant funding and leadership within their regions.

Projects are producer-focused, results-based and encourage public-private partnerships. Funded projects must identify targeted results that will help producers manage risk and then describe how the project will measure those results.

Extension Risk Management Education has funded innovative education projects that have generated tangible results for agricultural producers in 56 US states and territories. Beginning in 2020, the Centers initiated a new funding opportunity for the delivery of risk management education to agricultural producers underserved by the Federal crop insurance program. Priorities for both of these programs include commitments to funding results, providing transparent accountability, and encouraging collaboration. The accomplishments of all funded projects are available for public viewing on the ERME website:
<http://ExtensionRME.org>



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