

SUCCESS in

MASSACHUSETTS



OUTSTANDING
REGIONAL
PROJECT
2023

Putting the Tools to Work: Strategies and Support for Sound Business Decision Making

Project Director: Kelly Coleman, Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture, Inc



Situation: The economic conditions for farming in Massachusetts have gotten even more difficult in the past several years with increasing input costs related to energy, labor, feed and seed, and more competitive markets. Developing strong decision-making skills can help farmers make sound decisions to mitigate risks related to tight margins, thereby contributing to farm business success. Since farmers' level of experience with decision-making varies widely, Kelly Coleman and her team at Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture designed this series to meet the needs of producers at several different levels.

The first assignment in this project was for participants to develop a holistic goal at home along with other farm decision makers. The second assignment built upon this foundation of a holistic goal and asked the participants to use that goal to practice holistic decision testing. One farmer, a woman who co-runs a sheep dairy and creamery, had found that through the holistic goal development process, she and her husband needed to shift focus away from the farmers market and more towards on-farm based projects (ex. ecommerce, farm store). They had fallen into the trap of trying to do too much.

Outcomes: This project combined existing Holistic Management International (HMI) Principles with financial analysis tools that illustrates how triple-bottom-line thinking and accurate financial data could lead to better business decisions. The essentials of the HMI decision testing practices were simplified with an emphasis on gathering accurate and useful data to inform the decision-making process.

Impacts: As a participant, this farmer was given a financial planning workbook developed by Rose Wilson and the Vermont Hous-

“This CISA workshop was one of the most substantive and useful I’ve participated in. My partner and I really enjoyed the holistic goal setting process, and I think we’ll continue to refine and apply the HMI goal we created for years to come.”

-Massachusetts Farmer

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ing and Conservation Board's Farm and Forest Viability Program. She worked one-on-one with Rose to use the financial planning tool to pare down the products they offered and focus on profitability with a smaller, more manageable inventory and less labor intensive sale outlets. By gaining a better understanding of holistic management practices, she was able to confidently move forward with the decision making process to financially plan and aim for a goal.

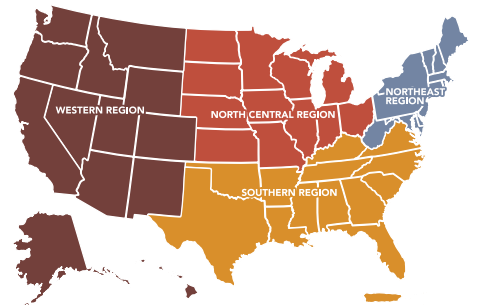
SUCCESS in EVERY STATE

Extension Risk Management Education

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

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

Extension Risk Management Education has funded innovative programs that have generated tangible outcomes for producers in every state. Commitment to funding outcomes, providing transparent accountability, and encouraging collaboration allow you to view the accomplishments of all funded projects on our website: ExtensionRME.org



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