

"Sustaining the Growth of Women in Pennsylvania Farming"

Introduction:

"Sustaining the Growth of Women in Pennsylvania Farming" was initiated as a response to the 2002 USDA/NASS Pennsylvania Census of Agriculture statistics which reported that while growth for non-woman minority farmers remained relatively flat for that period, the number of women farmers grew by 20%. This Pennsylvania growth rate was 7% higher than the national rate of 13% and occurred concurrently to a decline of Pennsylvania farms and farm land. While Pennsylvania lost 1,800 farms in the census period, it gained 998 farms managed by women.

Nationally, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported women as overseers to almost 240,000 farms; twice as many as 25 years ago, representing 27.22% of individuals reporting themselves as farm operators and 11.2% of reporting principal farm operators. In a national environment of overall decline in farm numbers, acreage and farming population, women farmers are increasing in remarkable number. Since Pennsylvania's women farmers are increasing in numbers that outrank the national average, the intent of this project was to investigate the Pennsylvania phenomenon of the growth of women in farming.

In collecting data specific to the growth of women in Pennsylvania agriculture, especially as the principal operator, using it in confluence with previously collected data and analyzing the phenomenon's impact on Pennsylvania farming as an industry, several objectives were desired.

First, it seemed natural to initiate an inquiry into this phenomenon within Pennsylvania by asking farming women themselves how they would explain the growth of women in farming. This query was geared toward determining why women are entering a field notably in economic stress.

Second, in order to correlate the relevance of this phenomenon to the economic stability of Pennsylvania agriculture, analysis of women's economic impact on Pennsylvania agriculture and how this phenomenon may be interconnected to sustaining the future of Pennsylvania's family farms was implicit. The project approached this question subjectively by asking women why they farm and why they are entering farming as a new career choice.

Third, analysis of data supplied by Pennsylvania's women farmers was intended as the ink of blueprints for education and outreach programs to serve the needs of Pennsylvania's under-served population of women farmers. The project approached this analysis by asking what support systems are currently in place and what supports are subjectively perceived as needed.

The basis of this project was subjective information gathering. By utilizing objective information gathering within a subjective forum, subjects were able to wax poetic where appropriate rather than be confined to pre-selected response choices. The project sought to look outside the box in soliciting responses as the project perceived a more meaningful database would be collected.

In seeking the identification of tools needed to improve efficiencies and profit for the growing population of women in farming, ultimately, the project sought to ask questions which would provide crucial components in an ongoing effort to aide in the preservation of farming. The subjective component of the project cannot be stressed enough as the project deemed subjective information gathering to be a crucial key in obtaining the insights sought by the project.

Procedures originally designed for a one year study were adapted to obtain the highest quality results within a 6 month scope of work. The demographics and distribution of the survey database became a smaller numeric representation of a meaningful representation of the community rather than its entirety.

It is the anticipation of this project that analysis of information gleaned and recommendations made will be used to develop a comprehensive plan intended to sustain the growth of women in Pennsylvania farming.

Procedures

The Survey:

A survey was authored to reach an audience of Pennsylvania woman farmers. The goals of survey collection were: 1) to obtain personal data useful for continued research, 2) determine interest in further research, 3) provide demographics pertinent to the USDA 2002 Census report for Pennsylvania, 4) glean an understanding of women's connection to existing available assistance and 5) specifically to provide a forum for women to respond in a non clinical, subjective manner, to a topic subjective in nature to Pennsylvania's woman farmers.

Surveys were distributed via: 1) mail with self addressed stamped return envelopes, 2) seminars, 3) farm meetings, 4) newspaper print, 5) electronic newsletters and 6) internet website access. Although the project was cognizant that the means of distribution would contribute to difficulty in reporting tangible distribution to response rates, the project assessed the means of distribution to be necessary in order to collect meaningful responses within the definition and scope of the grant.

The survey asked the following sequence of questions: Name, Address, County, Phone Number, Email Address, "Would you like to receive email information and updates?" and age. The survey then asked: 1) Are you currently farming?, 1a) If Yes, How long have you been farming (in years and months), 1b) If No, Are you launching a career in farming? 1c) If Yes, describe your occupation. 2) Are you the primary owner/operator, 2a) If No, what is your role. 3) Are you classified/listed as the primary owner? 4) Type of farm operation, 5) Size of farm (acres), 6) Your responsibilities, 7) Work/Family History (have you always farmed? What did you do before farming?), 8) Is farming your primary career?, 9) Why did you choose farming as a career?, 10) Education Background, 11) Do you have a business plan? 11a) If no, would you like help in creating one?, 12) Where do you currently find support and networking in farming? 13) What kind of support/aide/information do you think women in farming need? 14) Who is your Penn State Agent, 15) Who is your Conservation District representative, 16) How would you explain the phenomenon of increasing female farm operators?¹ Findings and evaluation will reflect this sequential order.

Identification of Demographic:

The first considerations in defining a meaningful demographic were: 1) limited time frame of distribution and 2) inopportune timing of survey distribution to a farming community. The project estimated a reasonable distribution window of April 10, 2005 to June 30, 2005; an extremely active time for any operation and poor time to survey a farming community. The project therefore reassessed this deadline for survey collection and extended the deadline to July 30, 2005.

Although the NASS/PA database of statistics was the first logical avenue to investigate in defining a meaningful demographic, NASS and the project jointly determined that utilization of this database was neither time nor cost efficient for purposes of this research. Director, Marc Tosiano and the project have agreed that findings of this project will be helpful in building gender specific questions for the 2007 Agriculture Census.

A meaningful representation of the community, rather than its entirety, was deemed appropriate and a solicitation made from a rounded representation of active and vocal farming organizations. In soliciting partners for survey distribution, an effort was made to balance traditional and nontraditional farming organizations and farm operations.

Data Distribution:

Eighteen (18) requests for participation in the survey were made to farming organizations and newspapers with thirteen (13) of those requests, resulting in survey distribution. This represents a 72% rate of participation.² Without exception, all organizations contacted responded with enthusiasm and interest in results, regardless of their ability to participate in the survey.

¹ Reference: Attachment #1: Survey

² Participating: The New Farm/Rodale, Pennsylvania Christmas Tree Growers Association, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, PASA, PA WAgN, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Pennsylvania Dairy Alliance, Pennsylvania Farm Union, PVGA News, Pennsylvania Grange, Keep Farming First, Lancaster Farming Newspaper, The Food

By nature of the parameters of survey distribution, the total distribution/response rate of surveys is an intangible. Tangible distribution/response rates are achievable through the participation of PASA, (Pennsylvania Sustainable Agriculture Pennsylvania), PA Farm Union and Pennsylvania Dairy Alliance.³

PASA analyzed membership and sorted, to the best of their capabilities, by female members. The resulting database of 656 was shared with the project in order for the project to direct mail surveys and include project self addressed stamped return envelopes. This distribution resulted in 50.95% of all survey responses, and a 16% response rate of PASA members polled.

Although Pennsylvania Farm Union accounted for only 3.8% of total survey responses, their membership response rate was 27% with 8 responses to 30 mailed surveys which included project self addressed stamped return envelopes.

Pennsylvania Dairy Alliance also produced tangible response rates by working with the project to send 40 self addressed stamped return envelopes with surveys resulting in a 23% membership response from 9 members and a total survey response rate of 4.3%.

Tangible data produced by mailings from these three organizations represent 59% of total survey responses, however, it should be noted that 18% of all respondents either did not disclose means by which the survey was obtained or fell into the category of miscellaneous.

Vehicles of distribution producing intangible distribution/response rates are attributable to electronic postings such as 1) Pennsylvania Farm Bureau's e-newsletter, Farm Bureau Express, 2) the PDA Website, 3) New Farm electronic newsletter and 4) Pennsylvania WAgN electronic newsletter. Intangible distribution/response rates in published distribution include: 1) Pennsylvania Farm Bureau Country Focus, 2) the Grange, 3) Pennsylvania Christmas Tree Association newsletter and 4) Lancaster Farming Newspaper. Additionally, the project was able to obtain TV news air time on a July 22, 2005 Blue Ridge News report which produced survey responses.

In an effort to glean an understanding of the accessibility to and use of the internet, the project designed and posted an interactive website. The website, posted as www.winag.org, was noted on all survey distributions, began running on May 22, 2005 and accounted for 35 of 210, or 16.7%, survey responses while only available for one half the survey distribution period. Visitors to the site were likely made aware of the site by distribution vehicles of the survey and/or networking. The site remains open, hosts farm related links, events and news, grants and funding opportunities as well as access to project updates. www.winag.org received 1040 visits to date, September 30, 2005.

Findings & Data Evaluation:

The project received 235 responses in a 122 day period. Disallowing 7 duplications, 7 male responses and 11 out of state responses, the database consists of 210 responses in which 99.5% disclosed name, 98.1% provided address, and 91.9% provided phone numbers. The project considers the number of responses received to be statistically appropriate to the projects objectives and time constraints. 90+ percentile success rates of personal contact information collection are considered highly successful and meet the projects goal to provide personal data useful for continued research.⁴

Email Updates: 78.6% of all respondents provided email contact information and 60% of these respondents would like to receive email information and project updates. The project objective to determine interest in project results and further research is deemed to be successful with a 60% interest in further contact.⁵

Data by County: Data was collected from 79% of Pennsylvania's counties with 53 of 67 counties reporting. Analysis was based on Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's Regional designations. All

Trust. Not able to participate: Center for Rural Pennsylvania, Equestrian Council, National Family Farm Coalition, PA Sheep & Wool Growers Association, Wayne Independent.

³ Reference: Attachment #2: Survey Database Analysis: Excel

⁴ Reference: Attachment #2: Survey Database Analysis: Excel

⁵ Reference: Attachment #2: Survey Database Analysis: Excel

counties within PDA Regions 5 and 7 reported, 90% of all counties in Region 4 reported, 88% in Region 6 and 60% of all counties in Regions 1, 2 and 3 reported. Region 7 provided the highest regional response rate of 31%.⁶

According to the 2002 USDA Census report database of Pennsylvania farm density by county, the highest density of farms occurs, in descending order, in Region 6 (14,342 farms), Region 4 (10,346 farms), Region 5 (7911 farms), Region 7 (7393 farms), Region 1 (6599 farms), Region 2 (6306 farms), Region 3 (5218 farms). Survey responses were attributable, in descending order, to Regions 7 (31%), Region 5 (20%), Region 4 (14%), Region 6 (13%), Region 2 (9%), Region 3 (7%) and Region 1 (5%) and unknown (1%).⁷

A consistency is observed in the survey's highest response rates and the USDA data of Pennsylvania farm density by county. Although not in directly ranked correlation, Regions 7, 6, 5 and 4 are all attributable to both highest farm density and highest survey response rate, therefore the project evaluates the data to be relevant and successfully collected.

Age: The USDA reported the average age of all US female operators to be 56.7 and average age of Pennsylvania woman farmers to be 54.1. The average age of Pennsylvania woman farmers responding to this survey was 44.5.⁸ The survey therefore produced responses from a database of women aged 22% lower than the USDA national average and 18% lower than the Pennsylvania average. The project assessed this discrepancy to be worthy of further investigation.

Women Currently Farming/How Long:

Reporting an average length of farming years as 15.8 years, 79% of the respondents are actively farming. The most novice farmer has been farming two (2) months while the most veteran has been farming 69 years. Disallowing the longest and shortest farming careers provided an average of 15.5 years in farming.⁹

Are you launching a career in farming? The survey produced a 9.5% response rate when asked if the respondent plans to farm. 25% of the 9.5% also listed themselves as currently farming.

Describe your occupation. When asked the current occupation of those planning to farm, the survey received a 47% response rate. 85% of the respondents who listed themselves as currently farming also answered this question. Only occupations of the non farming and planning to farm women were sorted and those respondents each provided multiple occupations. By sorting occupations into six categories, the project found 35.3% classified as currently in non farm professional occupations, 23.5% in farm related occupations, 17.7% in education and 17.7% in miscellaneous occupations. 11.8% described their occupations as health care related and another 11.8% listed themselves as retired.¹⁰

The response rate to this question (35%) from women currently farming, led the project to conclude that more efficient wording in this section may have provided more conclusive results. It is however notable that 23.5% of the 9.5% non farmers who are planning to farm also are currently employed in farm related occupations.

Primary Operators:

While the USDA reports 26% of US principal operators to be 65 years or older, this survey of Pennsylvania female operators reported only 6% as over 65. And while the USDA reports 5.8% of US principal operators to be 35 years or younger, this database reported 25% of the surveyed Pennsylvania female operators to be 35 years old or younger. The youngest survey respondent was 17 and the oldest woman farmer reporting was 78 years old. When disallowing the oldest and youngest participants, the average age of respondents was 44.4 years.¹¹ The dichotomy of statistics provokes the question of a correlation to Pennsylvania's higher statistical increase in women to the national average.

⁶ Reference: Attachment #2: Survey Database Analysis: Excel; Worksheet # 1

⁷ Reference: Worksheet #1

⁸ Reference: Worksheet #2

⁹ Reference: Worksheet #3

¹⁰ Reference: Worksheet #4

¹¹ Reference: Attachment #2: Survey Database Analysis: Excel

Role:

When asked what their role was if not the primary operator, 40.5% of all surveys responded. 80% of those responses came from women not classified as primary operator. The database was therefore analyzed utilizing the 68 non primary owner responses from the total 85 respondents. 44.8% consider themselves partners, spouses or shared owners. 13% listed themselves as support of husband, 10% reported miscellaneous roles and 9% reported business roles.¹² When the project combines spousal partnerships with responses not including a spousal partnership, but a support system in the spousal relationship, the data shows a 57.8% role description that included spousal relationship, indicating that this survey database resulted in partnership roles as the most often sited role when not primary operator.

Are you classified/listed as the primary owner:

While 38% of the Pennsylvania women who responded are classified or listed as primary operator, 12.5% of these classified primary operator did not consider themselves to be primary operator. 43% of the women respondents consider themselves to be the primary operator even if not classified as such.¹³ The question of classification as primary operator and perception of being primary operator appear skewed and leads the project to question means by which this data is collected in the future.

Type of farm operation:

Types of farm operations listed by women in the study varied vastly provided multiple classifications of operations per farmer and resulted in the project defining 31 different categories. The total response rate to this query of 89% also included specific reference to: Organic (17.7%), Pasture Raised/Grass fed (8.6%) and Farm Stand/Value Added (7%). Multiple classifications were listed for individual farmers; however, by utilizing a median of 11 responses per category and in descending order, women reported their operations to be: 1. vegetable/herbs (51), 2. dairy (30), 3. Poultry/eggs (28), 4. hay/crops (24), 5. livestock (24), 6. CSA (18), 7. sheep/lamb (18), 8. fruits & berries (17), 9. cattle/beef/veal (15), 10. goats (15), 11. produce (13), 12. flowers (11).¹⁴

While there has been much prophesizing within the farming community that data might indicate a "direction" of the woman farmer, perhaps to smaller operations or niche farming, the data indicates a combination of traditional and niche farming. While the highest response rate is attributable to vegetable and herb operations, operations which can be supported on small acreage, the second highest response rate is from dairy operators, traditionally large operations. The project views this holistic approach to farming by women to be fortuitous for farming, balancing traditional and nontraditional modes of farming.

Size of farm:

The average farm size of these women in Pennsylvania farming is 140.8 acres, according to the 89% of survey respondents. The largest farm was reported as 2,300 acres and the smallest farm .25 acres. Disallowing the largest and smallest farms, the average farm size is 129.9 acres.¹⁵

Responsibilities:

When women in the survey were asked to describe their responsibilities an 83% response rate was achieved, again, with multiple responses from individual respondents. Using the median of 19 or more responses per category, in descending order, responsibilities most often were listed as: 1. Field work/growing/harvesting (48), 2. All/everything (43), 3. Book keeping/financial (43), 4. Marketing (40), 5. Business planning (35), 6. Animal care (30), 7. Farm management (26), and 8. Value added production (25).¹⁶

Women in the survey categorize their roles on the farm as involving everything from manual field work to the value added product resulting from the operation. Business management and animal care of the

¹² Reference: Worksheet #5

¹³ Reference: Attachment #2: Survey Database Analysis: Excel

¹⁴ Reference: Worksheet #6

¹⁵ Reference: Worksheet #7

¹⁶ Reference: Worksheet #8

operation were also strongly emphasized, reinforcing all encompassing, holistic approach in which women are involved in their farm operation.

Work/Family History:

Asked their work history and if they have always farmed, a 90.5% response rate to the question revealed that 64% reported themselves as new to farming and 35.8% of the women responding have always farmed or grew up on a farm. Notations of inheritance occurred at a 1.6% survey rate although the question was not specifically asked.

The survey also asked what women farmers did before farming. Those responses were sorted by 10 categories. Median responses, in descending order included: 1. Corporate America/non farming professional careers, including sciences (46) 2. Arts/education (23) and 3. Miscellaneous (15).¹⁷

The project notes 64% of the women respondents are new to farming and the preponderance of those women is leaving professional careers, oft cited as "Corporate America". These statistics support revelations of the study which indicate a preponderance of women entering farming with a goal of utilizing business acumen and enjoying self proprietary status.

Is farming your primary career:

Responses from 100 of 210 surveys reported farming as their primary career representing 47.6% of respondents.¹⁸

Why did you choose farming as a career:

The survey intended for recipients to wax poetic if desired on subjective questions and wax they did. The most often cited reasons for farming included: 1. love of nature, the soil, animals and farming, 2. lifestyle choice, self identity and life time goal, 3. healthy food production and food security, 4. ability to raise a family while working, 5. sustainability and self sufficiency, 6. being raised on a farm, 7. loving to be outdoors, and 8. community.¹⁹

Overall, women referred to honest, healthy living that is nurturing. The interjection, "it chose me" was often exclaimed. The project notes the feeling of connection to the earth, family and farm, quality of life extending to the concern for food safety and health to override a stated need to produce income. For the most part, the phenomenon of women in farming was voiced as natural and symbiotic. Notably, an income producing career was never voiced.

Education Background:

As a benchmark, the survey asked the education background of respondents, achieving a 96% response rate to the query. 52% reported a college education, 18.3% high school, 16.3% Masters, 12.9% other and .5% GED.²⁰ The project notes 68% of respondents to be college or masters degreed. The classification of "other" was not consistently answered descriptively, however, approximately one half of those respondents received doctorate or other post masters degrees. The project therefore sees the education level of the survey respondents who have received degrees at a college level or above to be 74.7%.

Do you have a business plan:

Creating and implementing a business plan is essential for any profession, therefore, the survey asked if the recipients currently have a business plan. While 34% reported having a business plan, 11% of this population reported still needing help with a business plan. 27.6% reported not having a business plan and needing help with a plan, resulting in a total population of 39% indicating need for help with business planning.²¹

Where do you currently find support and networking in farming:

¹⁷ Reference: Worksheet #9

¹⁸ Reference: Attachment #2: Survey Database Analysis: Excel

¹⁹ Reference: Worksheet #10

²⁰ Reference: Attachment #2: Survey Database Analysis: Excel

²¹ Reference: Attachment #2: Survey Database Analysis: Excel

In order to facilitate the objective of crafting recommendations for programs conceived to serve the needs of Pennsylvania's under-served population of women farmers, the survey first asked where women are currently finding support. An 87% response rate reported finding support, in descending order: 1) PASA and then other organizations, 2) neighbors/neighboring or other farmers, 3) Penn State Extension Agents, 4) other similar producers, 5) internet, 6) friends, 7) books/reading and 8) family.²²

What kind of support/aide/information do YOU think women in farming need:

When asked what kind of support the respondents felt women in Pennsylvania farming need, a 72.9% rate produced vocal responses. Multiple needs were cited, including: 1) women's organizations and networking, 2) discussion groups, 3) affordable workshops, 4) on farm meetings, 5) internet/website support, 6) marketing/business support, 7) information and availability of grants and financing for women, 8) equipment/machinery/safety training.²³

Who is your Penn State agent:

Who is your Conservation District representative:

In an effort to determine the awareness of agencies available to farmers, the survey selected Penn State Extension and local Conservation Districts as two local agencies which work for the farming community. 52.9% of the respondents could name their Penn State agent, while only 26% were able to identify their Conservation District conservationist.²⁴ Since both agencies work cooperatively, the project questions the cause of disparity in awareness of Conservation District representatives and aide available through this agency to farmers.

How would you explain the phenomenon of increasing female farm operators:

The pulsing question of the survey was, naturally, to ask the respondents how they would explain the phenomenon of the growth of women in farming. The option to use the back of the survey sheet for comments was offered and women did so, inserting additional sheets, both hand written and computer generated.

Here, findings may be summarized statistically, but statistical analysis does not always fully serve. Statistically, 77% of women responding answered the question. As might be expected, respondents most often had more than one explanation, or plausible explanation, and responses were often subjective. Sorting the passionate, yet definitive, voices of these articulate women into objective statistics was a challenge. When sorted by explanations referenced 20 times or greater:

- 42 responses related to business; owning and managing a business, the independence of owning a business, the entrepreneurial nature of women, women having a good business sense, women being good networkers and creative innovators.
- 35 responses referenced the connection to and care of the environment.
- 25 cited the nurturing nature of women and natural connection to farming of all types.
- 24 women cited family; the ability to raise their children and still contribute income to the household as well as the importance of teaching their children, by example, the value of farming, land stewardship and the source of food.
- 23 cited niche farming with smaller capital investments.
- 22 believed more men working off farm for money and health insurance
- 22 Women specifically listed Food source: providing clean and healthy food for family and community²⁵

Nondisclosure:

Requests for nondisclosure of personal information occurred at a rate of 6%. The project is satisfied that a successful collection of database information to be utilized in future endeavors was achieved.²⁶

Comments:

Although a "comment" section was not included in the survey, 9% of respondents added comments to the survey. The 19 comments included: thanks for asking the question and observances of the

²² Reference: Worksheet #11

²³ Reference: Worksheet #12

²⁴ Reference: Attachment #2: Survey Database Analysis: Excel

²⁵ Reference: Worksheet #13

²⁶ Reference: Attachment #2: Survey Database Analysis: Excel

importance of the question and the opportunity for self reflection. One noted that farmers are so busy they don't watch their finances, several responses noted the love of farming that "is in your blood", and the self identity associated with farming.²⁷

Relationships

Inherent in this process was the need to develop working relationships with foresight to the facilitation of creating blueprints for education and outreach programs based on the data collected by the project. To that end, the project identified enthusiastic partners and began solidifying working relationships with (alphabetically):

1. Blue Ridge Communications Cable 11 News: will follow up on the news story, "The Growth of Women in Pennsylvania Farming", aired July 22, 2005 and featuring Deputy Secretary Cook when contacted by project.
2. Chester County Economic Development Council/PA Grows - Crafting agricultural loan programs for women
3. Clean Energy Council - identifying energy related funding opportunities for women
4. Equestrian Council - connecting equestrian women to agriculture, specifically PDA
5. Honeysuckle Farm/Blue Heron Consulting - researcher, conduit and facilitator of this project and future work
6. Kathy Braiser, Penn State Ag Economic and Rural sociologist: affordable education and training sessions for women
7. Keep Farming First - affordable seminar presentations for women in farming
8. Lancaster Farming Newspaper - facilitation by news releases
9. National Family Farm Coalition - recommending cooperative work with RMA to follow up on this project with study of where women are getting credit and financing.
10. New Farm - cooperative communications/research and networking efforts
11. PA Farmer's Union - continuing efforts in reaching women in membership
12. PA WAgN - organization created for women in Pennsylvania agriculture for affordable networking, education and resources
13. PASA - sustainable resource, networking and cooperators to women in Pennsylvania agriculture
14. Pennsylvania Christmas Tree Growers Association - growing field for women in agriculture and cooperator in developing education and outreach programs. PCTGA requests presentation of survey results to PSU class, "Issues in Landscape Contracting" which devotes a part of the course to women in landscape contracting
15. Pennsylvania Dairy Alliance - requests report on survey at their 2006 planning committee meeting for their first "Women in Dairy" event
16. Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture - spearhead for this project and continuing efforts to support the growth of women in Pennsylvania agriculture
17. Pennsylvania Farm Bureau - State Woman's Committee seeks to bring more women into Farm Bureau membership.
18. Pennsylvania Grange - continuing efforts in reaching women in their membership
19. SPIN - resource in connected women to profitable sub acre farming techniques

Blueprints

In order to support the women of Pennsylvania farming, it is important to know where they come from, why they are farming and what they perceive their needs to be. The women of this survey come predominantly from business backgrounds and higher education achievements; they are farming for its lifestyle and quality of both food and family. They voice a need for business & fiscal support, educational support and symbiotic interaction.

Based on data evaluation, a blueprint for the successful future of women in agriculture might look something like this, each with equal weight:

1. A collaborative Woman's Farm Organization that facilitates networking, internet access and web based support not only between woman farmers but also between farming organizations.
2. Affordable workshops, discussion groups and on farm meetings that include equipment, machinery, safety training and interaction with operators of similar operations.

²⁷ Reference: Worksheet #14

3. Marketing, business and fiscal support that begins with crafting loan programs specifically for women farmers.

Implementation of the blueprint would be facilitated by continued state and federal support and utilization of the momentum that has already been created. The USDA 2002 Ag statistics started the momentum and will be asking more gender specific questions in 2007 Census. The Federal and State governments, media and a willing, captive audience of women in Pennsylvania farming have accelerated the momentum.

Foundations have been laid with the supporting entities who worked with this project. These organizations are abundantly aware of the impact women in Pennsylvania's farming has on the present and future of Pennsylvania. Without exception, each is anxious to participate in future efforts.

The creation, then of an umbrella under which the momentum is gathered and then directed to produce vehicles for the continued successful growth of women in agriculture would be incorporated into the blueprints. The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture would logically be the overseer of such a "Women in Ag Advocate" or "Women in Ag Advocacy" team.

Recommendations

1. PA WAgN, working closely with Penn State Extension Service, is the Pennsylvania branch of The Women's Agricultural Network (WAgN), originated collaboratively through the University of Vermont's Extension System, UVM's Center for Sustainable Agriculture and the United States Department of Agriculture to promote educational, technical assistance and networking opportunities for women who own or operate farms and ag-related businesses.

PA WAgN's stated mission is to "support women in agriculture today and in the future by providing a positive learning environment, networking and empowerment". The organization strives to aide in increasing the number of women owning and operating profitable farms and ag-related businesses, as well as promoting their profile in leadership positions throughout the agricultural sectors of business, government and community.

Currently supported by the USDA and Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, and working cooperatively with PASA, PCO, DEP, Rodale & NRCS, the organization has been working diligently with a volunteer staff since its inception. January 2005 found WAgN with a membership of approximately 128. Through grant funding, two employees were added and membership soared to 380 women.

PA WAgN, even in its infancy, has created the infrastructure to address all elements of the aforementioned blueprints while working on limited funding and volunteerism. Without a need to recreate a wheel already in motion, the project recommends continued and enhanced support with establishment of consistent funding to insure the success of this organization.

2. Chester County Economic Development Council (CCEDC), currently working with the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture in the PA Grows Initiative acknowledges the need for business planning and loan programs designed for Pennsylvania's women farmers. Sue Milshaw, CCEDC's Agricultural Loan Coordinator and the project have discussed potentials for satisfying these needs. Programs for women farmers would be crafted in Pennsylvania, in cooperation with Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and CCEDC. They would then be made available through out the United States.

One concept discussed by Ms. Milshaw and the project is "Microcredits", an extension of small loans to entrepreneurs requiring loans in amounts too low to qualify for loans, or applicants too poor to qualify for traditional bank loans, and perhaps with no collateral. A prototype of this system in Bangladesh, Grameen Bank, provides no collateral small loans and currently has provided 5 million borrowers with loans. Founded in 1976, the current population of borrowers is 96% women. Additionally, women who have been granted loans and are therefore vested in the success of the program, become an implicit

part of the loan application process, also serving as mentors and support systems. The full circle process therefore serves as a catalyst of socioeconomic development.

The recommendation of the project is to support the preliminary work done by the project in conjunction with CCEDC in creating loan programs specifically crafted for women.

3. Relationships forged with other organizations by the project, including Clean Air Council, PDA, USDA RMA, PASA, Food Trust, Penn State Extension, New Farm, Equestrian Council, National Family Farm Coalition, Keep Farming First, PA Farmer's Union, PA Farm Bureau, PA Christmas Tree Growers, PA Dairy Alliance, The Grange and SPIN all proved to reveal acute awareness of the need to support this blooming population in Pennsylvania agriculture and a stated need to support the phenomenon.

Each organization brings its own expertise to the table, be it grant awareness, facilitation of reaching women in agriculture through specific niches, or education; each entity working as a whole is stronger than alone. Support of the continuance of this unity is recommended in order to craft cooperative programs geared to heighten the efficiency and profit of Pennsylvania's women farmers.

4. Education, from equipment and safety issues, to business, market acumen and brainstorming with similarly based operators, was a specifically stated need. Therefore, cooperative effort with educational facilities and seminar participation in order to provide affordable training sessions is recommended.

This is a multi layered process which might include training through organizations such as Penn State Extension and creation of presentations to be used in classes such as Dr. Kuhn's Penn State Class, "Issues in Landscape Contracting" which is beginning to focus on women in landscaping. Presentations in cooperation with PDA's Market Place of the Mind should reach undergraduate classes including high school, middle school and elementary school classes.

Consistent continuation of exposure and learning experiences in affordable seminars and conferences, such as PA Farm Show's Women in Ag Day, PASA's Women in Ag Day, Keep Farming First, and the newly forming PA Dairy Alliance's first "Women in Dairy" event are a small sampling of vehicles available to continue this momentum. Women are vocal in their need for more education based forums.

5. Press. As the saying goes, "The only bad press is no press". To cite all press relating to this phenomenon would be timely, and since the press strives to report issues the public will read about, this indicates a clear interest by the public in this phenomenon. Locally, The Philadelphia Inquirer printed "Women are leading more farms in Pa" May 5, 2004, and the New York Times featured the article, "Women find their place in the field" on June 1, 2005, citing the USDA's statistics of women in agriculture. Rodale's Organic Style Magazine, featured, "Forces of Nature", September 2005, a report on women's rise in farming. This project has also drawn interest from Lancaster Farming newspaper, and Blue Ridge Communications Cable 11 News, lending additional credibility to the project and creating interest in continuing the story as it unfolds.

Consistent continuation of public interest not only facilitates the support of women in agriculture, it facilitates education of the public, who often does not think about the source of their food and therefore does not think about the critical role farming plays in their lives. News stories are a catalyst for a more long range goal of reconnecting the family farm to the family consumer.

6. The project facilitator, Honeysuckle Hill/Blue Heron Consulting, has created a foundation and blueprint for crafting programs needed by the women of Pennsylvania farming. It is the recommendation, and desire, of this facilitator that she participate in ongoing efforts to develop a comprehensive plan to improve efficiencies and profit in order to sustain the growth of women in Pennsylvania farming.

Project Evaluation:

The goals of obtaining personal data useful for continued research, determining interest in further research, providing demographics pertinent to the USDA 2002 Census report for Pennsylvania, gleaning

an understanding of women's connection to existing available assistance and providing a non clinical forum in which women could respond were obtained as cited in "Findings and Evaluation".

Measurable objectives of the project were to determine the origin of the phenomenon, thereby increasing the potential for continuation of the phenomenon, to determine the significance of the phenomenon and to create a blueprint of outreach and education programs. The project accesses a successful achievement of those goals.

The reasons given by women for farming are more subjective than objectively based. The project learned that women most often reported emotions of connectivity, nurturing, love of the land and family when describing their decision to farm, however, implicit too, was the need to be stewards of the land, family and community. These indicate long term commitment to a lifestyle that begets a natural instinct to preserve that lifestyle, and hence farming.

Had the survey revealed monetary motivations for farming, the women might have been categorized as a transient population, able to be enticed by the next phenomenon of high income producing work. Had the survey revealed a high response rate of inheritance as the reason for farming, or high response rate of needing income and insurance from spousal off farm employment, the trend might be viewed as unstable. In fact, 64% of the respondents are new to farming, only 1.6% of survey respondents noted inheritance and only 1% of all responses noted off farm spousal work as incentive.

An astoundingly high response rate to the intrinsic nature of women being drawn to farming by their nature, for spiritual, holistic and family sustenance; a choice of lifestyle, indicates a population connected at their very being to their work. This leads the project to foresee a high expectation of continuance of the trend.

Farmland preservation and sustaining the economic structure of Pennsylvania agriculture can only be achieved by successful farmers. Successful farmers, regardless of gender, need tools for business as much as they need tools in the fields; the women in this survey have been vocal in that knowledge.

The project goal was to investigate the phenomenon of women in Pennsylvania farming and assess the connection of this phenomenon to sustaining the family farm in Pennsylvania. The women surveyed in this project are farming for a lifestyle, with the intention of educating their children about the source of food and stewardship of the land. This being said, logic would dictate the support of this population of Pennsylvania's women farmers would also support the growth of economic stability in Pennsylvania agriculture. The business of farming requires a support structure designed specifically for farming, and the women farmers of this survey voice a need for support systems structured specifically for woman farmers.

Input from the women of this survey paint a picture of an approach to farming that incorporates business acumen, support of a chosen lifestyle, complete participation in family, food production and community, with an emphasis on an educational component of both children and the public to wholesome food and stewardship of the land.

Often, the hardest task is creating momentum. The USDA RMA and PDA have created the momentum by facilitation of this research, and the women of Pennsylvania farming have created their own momentum, by nature, in their vision of sustaining the future of Pennsylvania farming. The project concludes that support of the women of Pennsylvania's farms will translate to support of Pennsylvania agriculture's economic stability and may ultimately facilitate a greater reconnection of the family consumer to the family farm.

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