

Assessing the business development strengths and needs of women and Latino farmers in Iowa

Abstract: Women and Latino farmers were surveyed about their needs for materials to inform their farming enterprises and help make them economically successful. Researchers will use the findings to develop appropriate supporting materials.

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After surveying these two groups, the project results demonstrated a need to target materials and workshops in the areas of capital acquisition and business planning.

What was done and why?

The American farming population is becoming more diverse, particularly because of increased numbers of women and Latino farmers. As an expanding proportion of the farming population, and especially given these groups' propensity toward diversified and/or organic production, women and Latino farmers are good candidates for producing more of the fresh, locally grown produce, dairy and meats an increasing number of Iowa consumers want. To help these groups of interested farmers achieve economic stability, Iowa must invest in the success of their small-scale, diversified farm businesses.

In order to determine what business management support these new farmers need, and how they want it delivered, this project surveyed samples of both populations. The goal was to understand the business development strengths and challenges of Latino and women farmers in order to create the most effective resources to disseminate to each population. This effort should lead to woman and Latino farmers changing their business management behavior in ways that will improve their viability.

What did we learn?

Women farmers: The results of the survey will allow WFAN's staff and Van Auken to design more effective outreach programming methodology and tools to help Iowa's women farmers improve their business planning skills. Once these programs are delivered effectively, more current women farmers will increase their success in agriculture, and more beginning farmers will begin their careers on a more solid business footing.

Latino farmers: The results of the interviews with Latino farmers as well as the process of identifying Latino farmers and making new connections with this hard-to-reach population will allow NCAT and partners to reach these groups more effectively in the future. In particular, facilitating a connection for Farm Service Agency with a Latino farmer will help FSA develop its experience and knowledge base in working with this population. While just one of the 13 people interviewed was willing to meet with FSA during the timeframe of this project, at least one other person (an "aspiring farmer") expressed serious interest in meeting with FSA, and several others were very interested in hearing about FSA financing programs.



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