

Leadership: Farm, Family & Community Dimensions

November 2016

21ST CENTURY MANAGEMENT: *Enhancing Educational Programs for Women Farmers & Ranchers*

Team Focus

The Leadership Team has been working to assess the characteristics of leadership -- at the family, farm, and community levels -- that will advance the success of beginning women farmers and ranchers. The team has both reviewed literature and conducted interviews with stakeholders to better understand the leadership challenges beginning women farmers and ranchers encounter, and whether the existing programming addresses these needs.

Some of the leadership trainings that were attended by those we interviewed were: trainings by Chambers of Commerce, the National Farmers Union's Beginning Farmer Institute, the Rural Urban Leadership Program, 4-H and FFA leadership programs, Farm Bureau's Leaders of Tomorrow, shamanistic trainings (drum circles, shamanic journeys, etc.) and women in agriculture program events - including field days and workshops -- that include leadership development components. Stakeholders reported benefits from many of these programs but also a persistent gap in programs that address specific leadership development issues they encounter as women farmers and ranchers.

What The Team Has Learned So Far

The team identified the following characteristics as contributing to women farmers' success as leaders: They are innovative decision makers, who have strong collaboration and communication skills, and who model the behavior they expect for those they are leading.

We also found that leadership challenges for women included: many women lack confidence in their ability to be effective leaders; a lack of women farmer role models on agricultural-related boards and committees; logistical difficulties associated with multiple farm and family responsibilities they have; lack of funds to attend trainings; and lack of training programs that address business leadership issues common to the types of farms women operate.

In addition, it became clear that women farmers and ranches frequently are not aware of existing programs, and that a central clearinghouse for

leadership programs and resources specifically for women farmers could be helpful. Other suggestions were: to create a travelling display that can go to area conferences; and to develop print and electronic materials that deliver information about women farmers in small bites that can be advertised periodically

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Opportunities to Contribute

- Suggest women farm and ranch leaders to interview for a pilot curriculum project.
- Forward information about leadership training programs you've found useful.



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to help educate the public about women farmers so that the public is more educated about modern farming. We can also partner with other organizations to help create programming and to offer education about women farmers to other groups.

Next Steps

The Leadership Team is working will be working throughout the project to address these issues by developing affordable, and flexible leadership development programming that focuses on empowerment, and in which women farmers and ranchers feel heard and respected, and can have meaningful opportunities to discuss what they are learning with other women farmers and ranchers.

Stakeholders recommended that role-modeling and role-playing be key parts of the training. They also suggested that participants will have opportunities to identify existing gender bias and discuss how to address it within their circumstances. To address logistical and financial issues, stakeholders suggested quarterly lessons and to have programs available at conferences and gatherings that are accessible to rural women. They also suggested development of a mentoring network

developed with online components.

In 2017, we will be developing new video resources that will support both online and face-to-face programming. We will interview a variety of successful farm women about the perspectives on leadership, how they developed their leadership skills, and overcame challenges. These videos will serve as a springboard for lessons and peer discussion and learning. When the committee looked at gaps in existing programming it became aware that many women farmers are not aware of existing programs. There needs to be a central clearing house for programs and resources specifically for women farmers. Other suggestions were to have a travelling display that can go to area conferences; create brochures with trainings and resources and develop infographics that deliver facts about women farmers in small bites that can be advertised periodically to help educate the public about women farmers so that the public is more educated about modern farming. We can also partner with other organizations to help create programming and to offer education about women farmers to other groups.



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