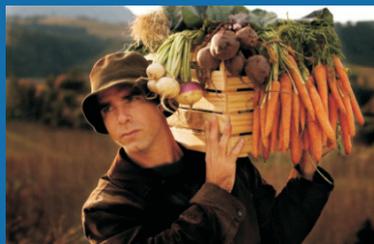


Producers Learn to Determine Risks They Face in Transitioning to Organic Production



With the organic market growing steadily and sustainable living practices heavily sought after, many producers are interested in learning about organic certification and organic production options. This New Mexico Organic Commodity Commission project, Assessing and Managing Risk in Organic Transition, helped to educate producers and assist them in making an informed decision whether or not to transition to organic practices.

Four workshops presented in different areas of New Mexico helped producers to determine risks they would face in the transition to organic production. Producers learned strategies to mitigate those risks to improve the economic risks associated with new production technologies.

The workshops focused on agriculture specific to each region while providing general information on transitioning to organic. The curriculum and presentations focused on the importance of record keeping and networking with other producers, as well as other risk areas that created the biggest challenges. Presenters then introduced strategies and provided information to help ease the barriers towards the achievement of risk management results.

Producers who attended were often at different stages of their business and production. While some were seasoned farmers seeking to upgrade their production techniques, others were beginning farmers striving to learn as much as they could before considering a transition to organic. Thus, some participants reached their risk management goals sooner than others and some needed interim goals to use as benchmarks to help them reach the end result. It is important to verify how each producer accomplishes his or her risk management goals and to connect them with the tools and support they need to accomplish these goals. “We want the producers to be successful, which ever route they choose to take”, said Quinn. “Each project we do is really the beginning of a long-term relationship working with the producers. We don’t want the relationship to end when the project ends. We strive to keep working with producers so they can meet their goals.”

In order to keep the curriculum and workshops relevant, Joanie assessed the progress that producers were making toward their risk management goals throughout the program. Changing the curriculum and delivery regularly to stay aligned with producer response was critical to program success. “We’ve learned that sometimes after establishing a risk management result and watching what producers did with it, it might not be a realistic goal after all,” says Quinn. Participant evaluations and call backs help educate the presenters on what resonates with producers. Joanie’s team focused on producer comments and questions and used this information to strengthen future workshops.

The goal of Joanie Quinn’s project was not to encourage producers to transition to organic, but instead, to help them make educated decisions on whether or not to pursue a lot of time, money and effort. It is important to be sure it is the right decision before going through with it,” said Quinn. The program had a positive impact in that the training allowed producers to act upon the knowledge received and then gave them decision tools to analyze whether it was a manageable risk.

Risk Management Priorities and Topic Areas for the soon-to-be-released Western Center’s 2010 Request for Applications (RFA)

Problems at the national level have delayed the release of the Western Center’s RFA. The RFA will be released soon. Listed below are three priorities that will be identified in the RFA.

1. Managing the human risks associated with challenging financial conditions. Building family and management team resilience in tough times with improved stress management, financial planning, communication, farm transition plans, and exit strategies that analyze financial options, interpersonal issues and transition plans.
2. Managing financial risk to stay profitable in agriculture—developing financial management strategies and using financial analysis tools to manage the changing credit environment, credit risks associated with bank failures, operating credit availability, interest rate changes, declining land/asset values, and/or input and crop price volatility.
3. Finding opportunities and managing risks in a challenging economy—improving agriculture profitability, strategies to lower costs of production, and market planning to improve farm revenues.

Application resources may be viewed and downloaded from <http://www.agrisk.umn.edu/verification/media.htm>. We strongly encourage you to take advantage of these resources to help improve your chances for success. The Western Center will also be available to review proposal drafts prior to submission, if requested by applicants.



Announcing the 2010 Women in Agriculture Educator Conference

Tuesday, March 23rd to Thursday, March 25th

Conference Schedule:

Pre-conference: 1:00 pm to 5:30 pm, March 23, 2010

Conference: 8:00 am, March 24, 2010 to
12:00 pm, March 25, 2010

***Call for proposals for concurrent and
poster sessions due December 1, 2009.***

The goal of this conference is to broaden risk management educational programming for women in agriculture, to encourage new programming efforts, and to strengthen existing programs.

www.agrisk.umn.edu/wia/Conferences/WIA2010/

Hotel:

Baltimore's Tremont Plaza Hotel

www.tremontsuitehotels.com

Airport:

Baltimore-Washington International (BWI)

www.bwiairport.com

Extra:

Anticipated post-conference event

**Women in Working Lands D.C. Seminar/Reception
Tuesday, March 26, 2010**

**More details to be posted on the WIA web site in mid-November.*

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