Trade Adjustment Assistance for Farmers program (TAA) is a national program administered in part by the four Regional Extension Risk Management Education Centers under the leadership of Bob Craven and the Center for Farm Financial Management team at the University of Minnesota. Technical assistance in the way of business planning training and cash benefits help agricultural producers and fishermen who have been adversely affected by import competition. Commodities are first approved by the USDA Foreign Ag Service before producers qualify for program benefits. Intensive training is then provided on their approved commodity which includes developing an initial business plan, followed by the completion of a long term business plan with support from business planning consultants.

The Western Center has worked in conjunction with the TAA Team to coordinate the involvement and training of 32 business planning consultants who, in turn, have coached more than 1200 TAA participants in numerous states in the West and in Texas and North Carolina. As a result, over 900 farmers have completed long term plans. Consultants were drawn from a diverse group of business professionals, including bankers and Extension specialists.

Norman Schuchman, a business consultant from Foley, Alabama, worked with approximately 40 shrimpers in SW Texas. He is a strong advocate for personal plans and has this to say about the program: “As consultants we need to understand these producers on a personal level and be able to gain their trust. The program is about helping producers to not only look forward to the future of their business, but also to understand the effect this process will have on their family.” Schuchman continues, “As an applicant, a producer needs to be willing to reinvent himself. He/she needs to learn other skills which can provide more opportunities and different avenues to make a living.”

Dennis Fiess, a retired Extension Specialist from Spokane, Washington, worked with 72 producers including Washington asparagus producers, North Carolina shrimpers, Alaskan shrimpers and Maine blueberry producers. Fiess shares, “These producers knew their business and most of them knew what they wanted to do, but they were intimidated by the process.” Fiess continues, “By sitting down and getting to know each producer and hearing their goals for their business, I was able to help them work through the process so they could complete their plans.”

For more information on TAA visit: www.taaforfarmers.org.

One hundred sixty consultants were trained nationally to coach applicants through the business planning process. As of June 2012: 1,886 applicants are working on either their intensive training or their Initial Business Plan; 1,978 are in the process of working on a Long Term Business Plan and 5,732 have completed a Long Term Business Plan.

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2012 Extension Risk Management Education Awards

Congratulations to the organizations who competed for and received an Extension Risk Management Education grant for projects which will be delivered in 2012-2013. Please see the second page for a listing of award recipients.
The Washington State University Western Center for Risk Management Education is one of five USDA NIFA Extension Risk Management Education Centers serving agricultural producers through targeted risk management education. The Western Center partners with state university Extension educators and public and private sector partners in the west, providing tools and training to support producers in establishing long-term risk management strategies that will strengthen the economic viability of their farm and ranch enterprises. The Western Center is housed within the Washington State University College of Agricultural, Human and Natural Resource Sciences Extension School of Economic Sciences.