



Newsletter for Western Agricultural Educators

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Women, Farms and Food in Washington

Over five-hundred women ag producers gathered throughout Washington state this past February to attend a series of educational workshops hosted in 16 locations statewide. The program led by project director Margaret Viebrock, along with a statewide team of ag professionals and female producers, made it possible for a diverse group of women to attend without having to drive long distances. Participants represented nearly every facet of production ag, including those growing for farmers markets and value added. As a result of the program producers are implementing new and/or improved strategies in financial management, record keeping, evaluation of insurance, marketing plan development, and writing a business plan. Participants also acquired improved decision making and time management skills.

Topics previously identified by women through focus groups, program evaluations and telephone interviews were addressed by nationally recognized speakers who shared their business strategies related to financial, marketing and human risk. The 16 sessions were specifically tailored to each audience and facilitated by Extension faculty and industry or financial collaborators in every location. To localize the presentations each facilitator was responsible for inviting three local producers to participate in a panel discussion. Facilitators were also encouraged to use locally grown or produced food for the conference lunches.

Innovative technology that allowed national speakers to present through webinars from their home or office to 16 sites within a short distance of these women was the



key to keeping attendance. “These women are very busy people and have more than one job – possibly a job off the farm to support the farm, children at home, community commitments, elder care and the list goes on,” relates Viebrock. Encouraging commitment from participants to utilize information learned was critical. “Many times we go to a conference and at the end we say – ok, that was great now I need to get home and get back to work,” says Viebrock. “To avoid this frame of mind we built in a personal action plan for what they learned,” recalls Viebrock. “After each of the three main topics, participants spent time in small groups discussing their take away message and how it pertained to them, their action plan and their timeline to get it done.”

One highlight of the program was producer sponsorships, which allowed 55 women to participate who would not have been able to attend otherwise. Another key to program success was the ability to reach small isolated communities and to gain a diverse audience, including Native American

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.



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and Hispanic women. Viebrock shares, "We used a state wide map to find underserved areas and then found facilitators in those areas to be a part of the team." Ear buds were provided in one location along with a translator to bridge the communication gap between the speakers and Latino producers. Next year the program plans to expand to bordering counties and neighboring states with improved recruitment methods for reaching more Latino, Native American and Hmong women.

For information on project details such as delivery methods, program design and recruitment, visit the project website at www.womeninag.wsu.edu.

Two hundred sixty five women responded to the conference evaluation, sharing the impact it had on their personal and business knowledge and behavior and what they plan to do as a result. Over 200 women producers committed to re-think their farm vision to meet financial, marketing and production goals with 143 "clarifying" this vision; 138 identified their farming risks and are making changes to reduce these risks, such as acquiring improved financial and marketing skills and purchasing insurance for the parts of their operations that are subject to higher risk.

According to the Washington State Ag Census, female principal farm operators increased 44% from 5632 in 2002 to 8090 in 2007. Women manage 881,612 acres of farmland and sell \$184,307,000 annually in farm products. Ninety-eight percent of women owned farms are small farms with total sales less than \$250,000. Latino women operators increased by 82 or 67% from 2002 to 2007.



Viebrock shared details of her program design, including recruitment and follow-up strategies, with other educators at the recent National Women in Ag Educator Conference held in Memphis this March. Presentations can be viewed online from the following link: <http://extensionrme.org/conferences/2012/Default.aspx>



Participant Testimonial:

Mary Anne Enyeart of Four Mountain Milling/Enyeart Family Farm Inc. shares her experience with the program, "Our farm is located in the Klickitat Valley near Goldendale. We farm mostly dryland - about 1800 acres of soft white wheat, alfalfa hay and some grain hay. I attended the February 2012 "Women in Agriculture" workshop. I found it a most beneficial time together with other gals who had farm resources and hoped to make them profitable. Using the many skills and knowledge from the various topics from an earlier workshop for women involved in agriculture, I felt a great deal of growth and enthusiasm. Although I have recently finished an estate plan, the discussion by the group and presentations helped me understand the importance of having one, how it best works and the need to update it. I came away with a strong desire to continue with my flour business as I could see how beneficial it was to share my "wheat story" with others. Each of us left chattering about ways to continue and share our farm experience. It was amazing how we could all communicate together and still remain in our own locality."

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