

## Acquiring Benchmarking Skills – West Desert Land and Livestock's Story

**Project Director:** Jay Olson – Snow College, Utah

**Situation:** This family owned enterprise was running a fairly traditional cow calf operation, growing their own hay to feed their livestock. Constraints on their time was an ongoing issue from having to constantly feed hay. Their motivation for engaging in the on farm instruction provided by this project was to be able to evaluate their operation and the different enterprises within it.

**Outcomes:** Conducting a comprehensive evaluation of their operation and the cost/profit centers within it through the use of both QuickBooks "Classes" and the year-end report resulted in the following outcomes:

- 1) Significantly reduced feed costs and machinery needs through incorporating hay production with cover crops.
- 2) Acquired additional income consulting with other farmers desiring to practice cover crop growing and grazing.

3) Transitioned from backgrounding their calves in a feed lot to selling their steers at weaning.

4) Retained heifers through winter by grazing the cover crops, then sold heifers not needed for their own replacements to other ranchers as replacement heifers.

5) Direct marketed and butchered the remainder of heifers as grass fed beef and locker beef to consumers at farmers' markets.

**Impacts:** As a result of these changes, family relationships improved greatly due to increased family time from not having to constantly feed hay. Most importantly these changes have resulted in improved economic impacts for their operation. The average economic gain for the year was \$62,857 for the 21 participating farmers and ranchers.

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"I don't understand why every producer in the valley isn't taking advantage of this program. For the minimal cost each year it is a great service to have an extra set of eyes looking over the finances as well as having someone to talk to about different ideas."

– Utah Rancher

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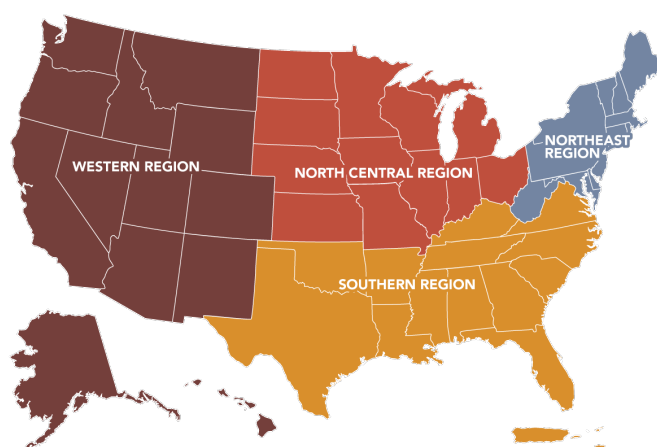
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## “Educating America’s farmers and ranchers to manage the unique risks of producing food for the world’s table.”

**Extension Risk Management Education (ERME)** is delivered through four regional centers that provide grant funding and leadership within their regions.

Projects are producer-focused, results-based and encourage public-private partnerships. Funded projects must identify targeted results that will help producers manage risk and then describe how the project will measure those results.

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