



WI Farm Center Assists the Agricultural Community

By Dan Smith

DATCP Division of Agricultural Development
Administrator

Every farmer knows that two people working together can achieve more in a day's work than one person working alone. Farming is a complicated and demanding business. It is most always helpful to have someone there providing support, suggestions and encouragement.

The Wisconsin Farm Center (WFC), part of DATCP's Division of Agricultural Development, has been partnering with Wisconsin farmers since 1984. We have provided support and assistance for a multitude of farm issues such as business and financial planning, transition and succession planning, production concerns, starting or exiting farming, and conflict resolution. Our programs and services are designed to assist the farmer identify, analyze and resolve any challenge or opportunity farming presents.

Currently, we have over a half century of agricultural management experience on the WFC staff. Our consultants are busy meeting with farm families across Wisconsin. We work with every type of farming operation, of every size and anywhere in the state. Our

IN THIS ISSUE

- WI Farm Center Assists Producers
- WI Farm Center Not Just for Times of Crisis
- Transitioning to Organic Workshops
- Nominate A Rural Development Initiative
- Upcoming Survey Gathers USDA Feedback

NOMINATE A TOP RURAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE TODAY

Wisconsin Rural Partners Inc. is now accepting nominations to recognize 2016 Top Rural Development Initiatives. "Rural Wisconsin people are hardworking and persistent," said WRP executive director Rick Rolfsmeyer. "Moreover, through reviewing many years of award nominations we've found that rural folks are also creative and resourceful. We've

first job is to listen. We want to learn first about your farm and your concerns, goals and challenges. Then we help you sort through what are often complex situations involving multiple options and solutions. In the end, the decisions made are yours alone. It is your farm, your family and your future. Our assistance is provided with full confidentiality and at no cost to you. Our goal is success for you, your family and your farm.

Over the last decades, the WFC has helped farmers deal with most every kind of challenge or opportunity farming provides. As expanded upon in another article in this newsletter, we are more than a crisis management team -- we are partners dedicated to your personal and professional success. If you are pondering an issue on the farm, let's put our heads together and see what solutions we might discover.

Each year brings its own unique set of challenges to farmers, be it weather, markets, supply shortages or changes in your personal situation. As the old saying goes, if farming was easy everyone would be doing it. You know, and the Farm Center staff knows, farming is not easy, but it can be tremendously rewarding and enjoyable. It is the goal of the Farm Center to help farmers be successful. Consider us your partners. We can't come out and help you unload those hay wagons, but we can help you address the many challenges and opportunities farming presents.

DATCP Farm Center: Not Just for Times of Crisis

With farm sector profit levels for 2016 forecast to follow some of the same challenging trends established in 2015, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection's Farm Center expects to see an increase in the number of farmers contacting the center for information and support.

"It's the boom and bust nature of farming," said Kathy Schmitt, Farm Center director. "When the situation gets tougher on the farm, our number of calls goes up.

seen some incredibly good projects."

Any project, activity, or even a whole community in rural Wisconsin is eligible. Initiatives do not have to be community-based: WRP may recognize any state, federal, tribal, non-profit or for-profit business initiative, regional or statewide, as long as it meets program criteria. Initiatives can be in agriculture, economic or community development, business, education, health, energy, environment, philanthropy, tourism, the arts or any other field.

The Top Rural Development Initiative Program began in 1998, to help uncover and share the great things happening throughout rural Wisconsin and serve as a capacity building tool from which all rural Wisconsin communities stand to benefit.

WRP looks for nominations that cite positive community impacts, regional success stories, or demonstrated innovative ideas. The panel of judges will be from various professions and backgrounds and will look at a few simple things:

- Whether the project demonstrates the spirit of partnership or collaboration in making its success happen;
- How widespread and long term the positive impact is for the community;
- How innovative the project is; and
- How the initiative stacks up as a model for other communities in Wisconsin to follow. We encourage

Through the end of October, 2015 calls volume was running nearly 10 percent higher than in 2014.”

[Read More](#)

‘Thinking of Transitioning to Organic?’ Workshops Scheduled Feb. 4–5

Media Contact: Rick Hummell, 608-224-5041 rick.hummell@wisconsin.gov

or **Bill Cosh, 608-224-5020** William2.Cosh@wisconsin.gov

Are you curious about how to transition your dairy farm to organic? Are you wondering about organic market opportunities or if “going organic” is right for your facility or food product?

These questions are directed at individuals who may have an interest in attending the upcoming “Thinking of Transitioning to Organic?” workshop series presented by the WI Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), and Dane County Extension.

The series, Feb. 4 and Feb. 5, consists of two workshops: one for dairy farmers and one for food processors. Both workshops will be held at the DATCP Building, 702 Agricultural Dr., Madison.

February 4 – Dairy Farmers – 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Dairy farmers and/or technical assistance providers are invited to listen to speakers directly involved in the organic dairy industry, as well as farmers who have successfully made the transition to organic.

Topics include: Organic Certification Requirements Overview & NRCS Programs for Farmers; Financing/Crop Insurance and Risk Management;

the nomination of initiatives that have moved through the planning phase and into the implementation phase to better enable you to highlight the positive impact of the project. Those initiatives receiving previous Top RDI designation are not eligible.

Anyone living in or serving rural Wisconsin can nominate an initiative. Guidelines and the submission form are available [HERE](#) and are due by close of business on Friday, February 5, 2016. For more information contact Rick Rolfsmeyer, WRP executive director, at 608-967-2322 or ricky@wirural.org.

SURVEY AIMS TO COLLECT FARMER FEEDBACK ABOUT USDA PROGRAMS

A new [online survey](#) launched by the American Farm Bureau Federation will collect feedback from farmers and ranchers about their experiences with 10 Agriculture Department programs housed in three agencies. Results will be used by AFBF to develop recommendations on how USDA can enhance its programs and make them more useful to farmers and ranchers.

All farmers and ranchers, not just Farm Bureau members, are encouraged to take the survey, which takes about 10 minutes to complete.

“Farmers and ranchers sometimes find it confusing and complex to participate in USDA programs,” said AFBF President Bob Stallman. “At the same

Livestock Health and Management; Soils/Cover Crops & Pasture Management; and Markets and Pricing.

The list of speakers (more to be announced) includes: Allen Philo, Midwestern BioAg; Harriet Behar, Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES); and Dr. Guy Jodarski, Organic Valley.

February 5 – Food Processors – 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

Food processors wondering about organic market opportunities and whether organic is right for them can address questions to experts from two certifying agencies.

Topics are: Is Organic Appropriate for Your Facility or Product?; Standards, Requirements, and Regulations; Market Opportunities; Organic System Plans; Ingredients/Processing Aids, Cleaning Agents, and more.

Speakers at the Feb. 5 event include Michelle Menken, Minnesota Crop Improvement Association; and Joe Pedretti, Midwest Organic Services Association.

Event organizers Angie Sullivan, an agriculture program specialist with DATCP, and Theresa Feiner, a DATCP business development specialist, said they organized the workshop series after hearing from increasing numbers of dairy farmers and food processors expressing interest in organics.

“Not everybody is definitely interested in making the transition – they’re just wondering what it takes and whether it’s right for them,” said Sullivan. “We want to give farmers who are considering transitioning to organic as much information as we can, so they can make an informed decision and decide if organic is right for them. “We’re doing that in a forum that allows them to ask all their questions.”

“With Wisconsin having the second highest number of organic farms in the nation, organic processors have the opportunity to access organic product from Wisconsin farmers,” said Feiner. “The experts we’ve gathered for these workshops will be able to answer

time, USDA staff are concerned that farmers and ranchers who could benefit from a number of different programs frequently do not apply.”

The survey focuses on the following USDA programs from the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Rural Development:

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program;
- Conservation Stewardship Program;
- Conservation Reserve Program;
- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program;
- Value-Added Agricultural Producer Grants;
- Rural Energy for America Program;
- Farmers’ Marketing and Local Food Promotion Program;
- Direct Farm Ownership Loans;
- Direct Farm Operating Loans; and
- Guaranteed Farm Loans (farm operating and farm ownership). AFBF will share feedback from the survey about what is working well with the programs and how they can be improved with USDA. Take the survey online through March 15 [HERE](#)



questions about what it means to be an organic processor.”

For more information about the Feb 4 workshop (dairy farmers), contact Angie Sullivan at 608-224-5095 or Angie.Sullivan@wisconsin.gov. For more information about the Feb. 5 workshop (food processors), contact Theresa Feiner at 608-224-5140 or Theresa.feiner@wi.gov

The cost to attend is \$20/day or \$30/both days. Lunch is included. To register, visit: <http://counties.uwex.edu/dane/?p=6125>

Pesticide Application Training Project

By Jack Chang

Agricultural Program Specialist

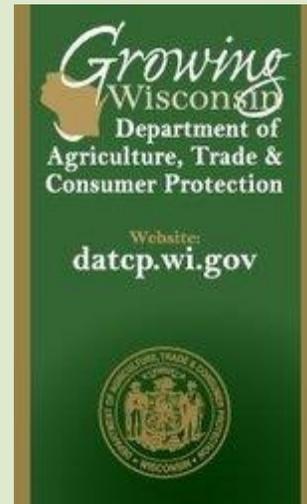
DATCP Division of Agricultural Development

The Minority Farmer Program reaches out to minority farmers in Wisconsin by helping minimize language and/or cultural barriers to accessing resources for farm investments, business planning and risk management.

Pesticide application training is a risk management tool that every farmer should have in his or her tool box. After a few years of providing services to minority farmers, primarily Hmong farmers in Wisconsin, we at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection received numerous requests from the Hmong farming community regarding the need for a pesticide application training program that is culturally appropriate and easy to understand. Hmong farmers have had limited access to pesticide application training in the past because of language and/or cultural barriers.

In 2014, we applied for and received a grant through the North Central Extension Risk Management Education Center for a project called “Pesticide

THE WISCONSIN FARM CENTER WISHES YOU A PRODUCTIVE, PROFITABLE AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR



Application Training for Hmong Growers.” This project is designed for Hmong growers to understand the complexity of pesticide application including, but not limited to reading pesticide labels, pesticide regulations, using pesticide safely, calibrating equipment and keeping pesticides on target. We developed the Pesticide Application Training Course to be simple and culturally approachable, but contain in-depth information. The training is designed to provide safety education on pesticide application to Hmong growers, while also preparing them for the state pesticide certification exam.

After the pesticide application training course was developed, we offered it to the Hmong growers. The initial training session was hosted at the Arlington Research Station in Arlington, December 11–12, 2015. This was the first time ever to offer this kind of training to Hmong growers in Wisconsin. There were 20 Hmong growers at the two-day training session. The training covered pests and pest management principles, pesticide regulations (federal and state), label reading, equipment calibration, mixing and using pesticide safely, and keeping pesticides on target, etc. The post-training evaluation showed that 100% of the participants liked the training and gained a considerable amount of knowledge from it. Seventy percent of attendees said they plan to pursue their state pesticide certification. A week later, one participant called and scheduled to take the state pesticide certification exam. He planned to get his certification before the end of 2015.

We will offer the Pesticide Application Training again for Hmong minority growers March 11–12, 2016 in Wausau. This is the last opportunity for us to offer this training under the “Pesticide Application Training for Hmong Growers” Project. Because the popularity of the training, we are able to offer 30 seats, and we expect they will fill up very quickly. This is a FREE Training, but pre-registration is required.

For more information, contact Jack Chang at (608) 224-5050 or Jack.Chang@Wisconsin.gov or Sophiaya Xiong at (608) 516-6094 or Sophiaya.Xiong@Wisconsin.gov at the Wisconsin

Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

Funding for this project was provided by the North Central Extension Risk Management Education Center, the USDA Institute of Food and Agriculture, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, UW Extension of Dane, Marathon and Lincoln Counties and University of Wisconsin-Madison.