



DATCP Farm Center Here to Lend a Helping Hand

Release Date: April 5, 2017

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Whether stressed from the loss of a processor or low commodity prices or even just considering transitioning the farm to the next generation, Wisconsin farmers can benefit from helpful information and support.

Since the mid-1980s, thousands of farm families have turned to the Wisconsin Farm Center, which provides an extensive array of services to farmers, often in cooperation with the university, governmental or private sector.

“The Farm Center mission is help farmers with both the challenges and opportunities inherent in farming,” said DATCP Secretary Ben Brancel. “The Center’s agricultural economic development consultants help Wisconsin farmers deal with the critical economic, business and social needs of farm families.

“Each situation is different and unique, but the Farm Center experts have the experience and the knowledge of farm operations to help make these transitions go smoothly,” added Brancel. “They are dedicated to keeping people in farming and growing Wisconsin’s leadership in agriculture.”

Services include financial and business consultation, farm succession planning, farm ownership transition planning, conflict mediation, production challenges, legal and financial mediation, and other assistance. Professional and confidential services offered through the Farm Center are provided at no cost.

“The nature of our call volume often depends on what is going on in the bigger farming picture,” said Kathy Schmitt, Farm Center director. “Right now, we are expecting to hear from more dairy producers seeking assistance in finding processors willing to take on more volume.”

Many of the calls for advice or assistance come in to the center’s telephone Help Line (1-800-942-2474) and are directed to staff agricultural consultants with expertise in a wide variety of areas. Schmitt said in recent years, the center has handled approximately 1,200 calls annually.

“Our financial counselors are out in the field, sitting down with people at the kitchen table, and helping them plan for profit,” said Schmitt. “We can also be a major tool in the toolbox of beginning farmers, as well as for farming families looking to transition from one generation to the next,” said Schmitt.

The Farm Center’s core programs include:

Agricultural Economic Development: Consultants help Wisconsin farmers deal with the critical economic, business and social needs of farm families including financial and business consultation, farm succession planning, conflict mediation, and production challenges.

Organics, Livestock Grazing and Specialty Crops: This program provides information and technical assistance to organic growers and processors. In addition, the program works to strengthen farm support services and processing capacity, along with a host of other services, including information on the latest developments in technology that can impact organics, livestock grazing and specialty crops farmers.

Minority Farmers Outreach: This program provides outreach and risk management assistance to beginning and minority farmers to increase their sustainability and profitability. The program

emphasizes working with Hmong fresh market producers and Hmong ginseng growers, but assists all minority farmers facing production or marketing challenges and opportunities

Mediation and Arbitration: This program provides mediation services for farmer disputes ranging from credit issues to environmental concerns to farm family conflicts. Mediation involves a neutral individual who helps facilitate negotiation and understanding between conflicting parties. Confidentiality is upheld throughout the mediation process.

Farmers and small agribusiness owners can get in touch with the Farm Center through the toll-free line at 1-800-942-2474. For more information about the Farm Center, visit datcp.wi.gov/Farms/Wisconsin_Farm_Center/index.aspx