

# An Educational Program for Traditional and Non-Traditional Beef Production

## Final Report for ENE12-122

Project Type: Professional Development Program

Funds awarded in 2012: \$64,396.00

Projected End Date: 12/31/2014

Grant Recipient: Penn state University

Region: Northeast

State: New York

Project Leader:

[Dr. John Comerford](#)

Penn state University

## Project Information

### Summary:

Northeastern beef farmers are uniquely positioned to produce beef products with sufficient consumers in a \$600 million industry. A survey of 28 extension educators in Pennsylvania and New York responsible for delivering beef production and marketing information indicated a wide range of skills about basic production practices for traditional, organic, natural, and grass-fed beef. On a scale of “none” to “extensive” skill level, average responses were moderate or less. The purpose of the project was to enlist extension educators in New York and Pennsylvania in a program to increase their teaching skills and educational resources for traditional and non-traditional beef production. This included intensive training sessions, farm tours, and development of resources by participants for use by public and private educators.

Nineteen extension educators in New York and Pennsylvania completed the program. The enlisted educators then produced 17 local farmer event and 3 regional farmer events, reaching a total of 1100 farmers managing 25,000 cattle. The population of farmers was more than 90% male and Caucasian. The 17 local educational programs, which 500 farmers attended, covered topics including pasture and forage management, reproduction, fall management of cow herds, beef genetics, marketing dairy calves, sire selection, and bunk management in feedlots. The three regional programs included the Farm to Fork Program in New York, the Winter Greenup Conference in New York, and the Pennsylvania Cattleman’s Conference in Pennsylvania. Total attendance at these events was 600 farmers. In program evaluations, 86% of farmers in attendance indicated they would adopt information they received.

Participants also produced 17 educational products for use by educators in beef production and marketing and a digital workshop for direct sales of beef to consumers. The digital workshop was formatted in the Adobe Presenter and includes

PowerPoint presentations, video, and audio lectures. Eleven lectures covered topics ranging from tenderness to sire selection to pricing the carcass and cuts. Six presentations were programs of farmers who market beef directly to consumers including farmers markets, retail sales, CSA sales, and restaurant sales. The digital workshop is housed at <http://www.nesare.org/Dig-Deeper/Resources-Nationwide/Project-Products/Northeast-SARE-Project-Products/Direct-sales-of-beef-a-digital-workshop>.

#### Performance Target:

A. Project participants have indicated a need for additional skills for educating beef farmers. Pre- and Post survey and testing will indicate participants increased needed skills by 75%.

B. 20 educators who build a wide range of skills related to traditional and non-traditional beef production systems will become proficient in delivering science based information to beef producers.

C. One thousand beef farmers, particularly those with non-traditional enterprises, will benefit from regional and local educational programs conducted by the trained educators. On-site and post-program evaluations will document quality of information delivery and adoption of information by farmers.

Project Performance Target: 20 educators who improve their knowledge and skills in environmental, human health, marketing and basic production practices for traditional and non-tradition beef production systems will proficiently deliver regional and local educational programs to 1,000 farmers with 25,000 cattle, and document the quality of information delivery and adoption of information by farmers.

#### Introduction:

The recognition that extension educators in Pennsylvania and New York did not have a sufficient skill set in many cases to address the needs of beef producers in this region prompted the development of a program that would assist them. The project included intensive training sessions conducted digitally by project leaders Comerford and Baker, farm tours in Southeastern Pennsylvania including traditional and non-traditional production units to view many production practices and discuss them with the farmers, the development of educational products by educators, and the development and production of local and regional educational events for beef farmers. These activities provided a comprehensive process of education, support development, and training experiences for educators.

## Cooperators

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## Educational Approach

Educational approach:

### 1. Participants identified.

Twenty-two participants were recruited for the project. The participants were extension educators from New York (12) and Pennsylvania (10). The educational responsibilities for the participants ranged from agricultural county generalist, farm management and records specialist, food marketing specialists, and beef cattle specialists.

### 2. Farmer advisors identified.

Farmers for an advisory group were recruited and six were identified to provide advice and input for the project. Four farmers participated in a day-long exchange with program investigators to outline the process and events needed to complete the project.

### 3. Pre-test prepared by project leaders and farmer advisers.

Project leaders and farmer advisers prepared a pre-test that was completed by participants. The beneficiaries completed the pretest and the grades were recorded. Of the 55 questions presented, there was an average of 26 incorrect answers.

### 4. Key educational needs identified.

Four farmer advisers met in a day-long session to provide an overview of the project, provide input to training opportunities for beneficiaries, identify key educational needs of farmers for different beef production enterprises, and to provide input on delivery of information to farmers. The farmers represented organic producers, traditional cow/calf and purebred producers, feedlot managers, meat processing and marketing, and grass-fed production. Grazing and pasture management was identified as a key educational need across all enterprises; basic production methods related to efficiency and profitability for all enterprises were also a desired topic. Preferred delivery method for information was determined to be face-to-face and on-site if possible. Meat marketing methods could be delivered as a packaged, digital program in the public arena.

Beneficiaries were assigned topics determined by farmer advisers and tasked to develop an educational resource for the topic as PowerPoints, video, or fact sheets.

### 5. Educational farm tour and training sessions.

The tour, completed in October 2012, was designed to elaborate traditional cattle feeding enterprises, grass-fed beef production, organic and direct sales, natural beef production, non-traditional production methods, and non-traditional marketing concepts. Farm operators were interviewed extensively to determine why they used the enterprise, what their challenges were, and what their expectations were for the future of their business. A series of webinars followed the tour in November and December, 2012; these included the following topics: Grass-fed Beef Production and Economics ; Genetics and Sire Selection Natural Beef Production; Meat Quality; Economics of Cow-calf Enterprises; Economics of Feedlot Production ; Feedlot Nutrition; Breeding and Reproduction; Marketing Feeder Calves. All webinars were archived for use by beneficiaries as teaching tools.

The information from training and tours was applied to a series of learning experiences for participants and farmers.

No milestones

## Performance Target Outcomes

Performance target outcome for service providers narrative:

### Outcomes

After the initial project training sessions were completed, participants planned and conducted two regional educational conferences in New York and a statewide conference in Pennsylvania, which 600 farmers attended. A digital workshop was produced as the fourth regional educational offering. Additionally, seventeen local programs for 500 farmers were conducted in the two states. These included management workshops, pasture walks, and issues management. Participants also produced 17 educational tools for use in farmer education. Total farmer participation in all programs was 1100 farmers. Evaluations for programs and participant responses clearly indicate impact for farmers and improved teaching ability for project participants.

#### 1. Regional educational events

Farmer advisers and beneficiaries recommended there be a meat marketing “shortcourse” developed in a digital format. This was to include fabrication of a carcass, processing issues (including labeling and packaging), price discovery, customer identification and recruitment, and working with farmers markets, internet sale, freezer beef sales, CSA’s and food service sales. Pennsylvania educators adopted this task as one of the regional meetings to be conducted. This workshop, formatted in the Adobe Presenter, includes PowerPoints, video, and voiced-over lectures. Eleven lectures cover topics ranging from tenderness to sire selection to pricing the carcass and cuts. Six presentations describe the programs of farmers who market beef directly to consumers and covers such topics as farmers markets, retail sales, CSA sales, and restaurant sales. The workshop is available for farmer, educator, and mass media access through the Penn State University Extension website: <http://extension.psu.edu/animals/beef> and the Northeast SARE website:

<http://www.nesare.org/Dig-Deeper/Resources-Nationwide/Project-Products/Northeast-SARE-Project-Products/Direct-sales-of-beef-a-digital-workshop>.

The second regional program identified in Pennsylvania was one entitled “Genetic Solutions for Meat Quality and Consumer Satisfaction.” This program was presented at the Pennsylvania Cattleman’s College in March 2013 and included information for traditional and non-traditional beef enterprises. Two regional events in New York were the Farm to Fork conference, which provided information to farmers and consumers about beef, and the Winter Greenup Conference. Total attendance at the Pennsylvania and New York programs was 600 farmers. Evaluations indicated 86% of farmers in attendance would adopt information they received.

## 2. Local educational programs

Seven local programs in New York and 10 in Pennsylvania were conducted on topics ranging from pasture management, reproduction workshops, fall management of cow herds, beef genetics, and bunk management in feedlots. Local programs in Pennsylvania included 5 on-farm workshops focusing on fall herd management and facilities, and grazer workshops completed in Spring, 2013. In New York, participants conducted a webinar and on-site producer meetings about genetic improvement after the Field to Fork conference; these continued the learning for farmers about how to use genetics to improve their cattle and their products.

Total attendance at all the local programs was 500 farmers. Evaluation results indicated 68% of farmers in attendance captured information they would use to make changes on their farm.

## 3. Educational tools

Participants created educational tools for use in their own programming efforts, and made the tool publicly available for other educators and farmers through web sites. A library of this information was compiled and housed at <http://extension.psu.edu/animals/beef>. These entries include complete audio and visual lectures, fact sheets, PowerPoints, and case studies. A series of 24 articles on numerous beef production topics are available. Numerous other fact sheets and recorded webinars are included in the library. The educational products and tools about beef production and marketing developed by the educators who participated in the project are:

- a. Basic Beef Genetics
- b. The Clatterbuck Farms Case Study-Dairy and Beef Production
- c. Consumer Attitudes and Purchasing Decisions
- d. Head Health Worksheet
- e. Cow-Calf Production Interactive Budgets
- f. Cattle Feeding Interactive Budgets
- g. Land Use Regulations
- h. Organic Parasite Control
- i. So You Want To Raise Beef
- j. Transportation of Beef Cattle
- k. Housing and Facilities
- l. Marketing Beef Directly to Consumers
- m. Selection of Beef Sires
- n. Replacement Heifer Selection
- o. Budgeting Grass-fed Beef Production
- p. Ten Places to Find Free Money in Beef Production
- q. Economics of Grass-Fed Beef Production

## 4. Improved beneficiary confidence to teach farmers

A survey of participant attitudes about their ability to conduct educational programs in beef production had the following results. Scoring was 1 through 9 with 1 being the poorest, least or lowest, 5 being average, and 9 being exceptional, most, or greatest. 1.

- My level of experience and confidence in providing educational programs for farmers in traditional and non-traditional beef production before the project: 3.7.

- My level of experience and confidence in providing educational programs for farmers in traditional and non-traditional beef production after the project: 7.3 (+51%)
- The value of the local and regional educational programs for farmers in my area or region that were funded by the project: 8.9

## Information Products

- [So You Want to Raise Beef Cattle \(Multimedia\)](#)

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