

Elderberry Comprehensive Workshop June 7, Hartsburg, MO 2012

Evaluation Report

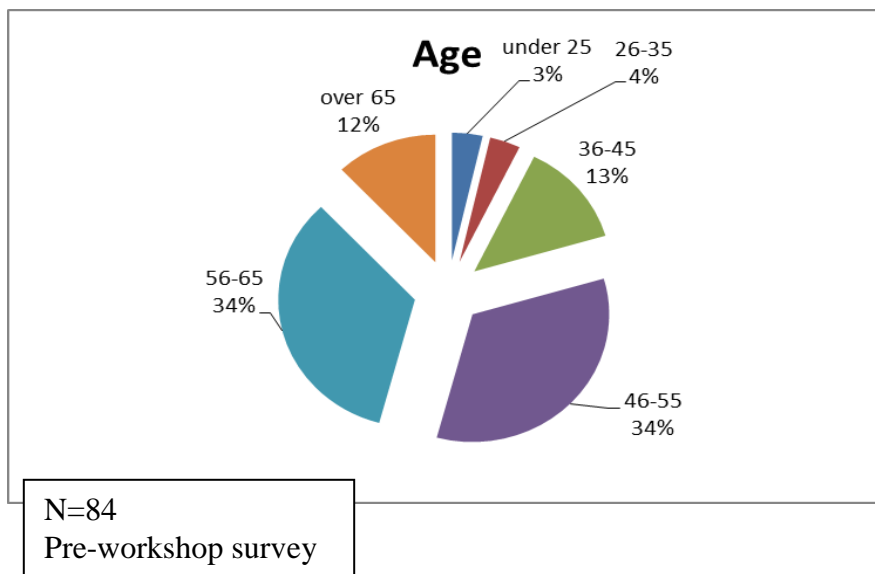
The University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry (UMCA) developed a set of two surveys to evaluate the results of the Elderberry Comprehensive Workshop held on June 7, 2012 in Hartsburg, Missouri. At the beginning of the workshop, a survey was administered to all participants to assess both their motivation to participate in this event and the level of knowledge about the topics presented. At the end of the workshop, a second survey was administered to assess the participants' perception about the event, to determine the level of satisfaction with the content and organization of the workshop, the gain in knowledge after listening to the presentations, and assess how the workshop changed their interest in elderberry.

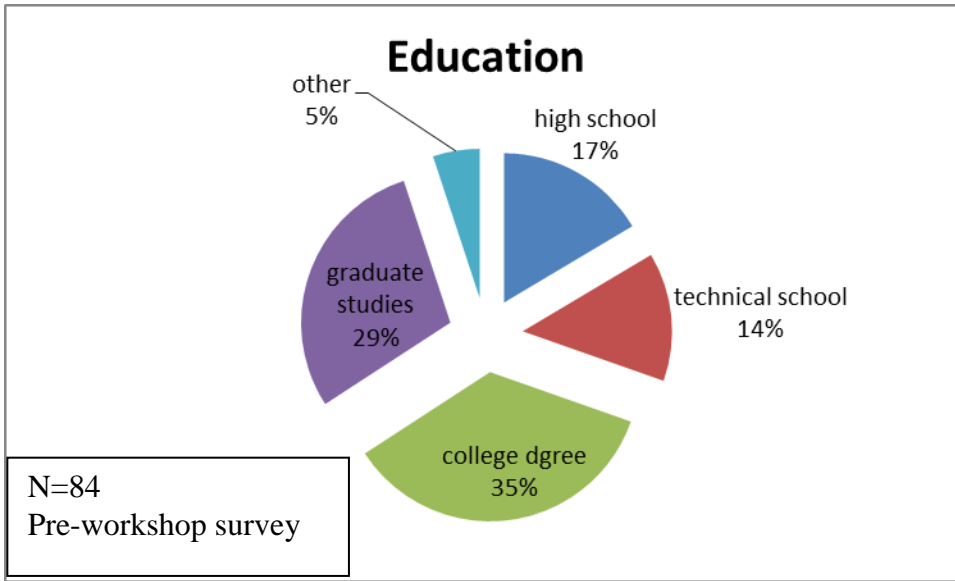
The survey had the following objectives:

1. Document the demographic characteristics of the participants at the elderberry comprehensive workshop.
2. Identify how participants learned about the workshop, and their motivation to attend the workshop.
3. Evaluate participants' reaction to the content and organization of the workshop,
4. Assess the level of knowledge before the workshops related to specific topics and compare it with the level of knowledge after the workshops to estimate the gain in knowledge.
5. Obtain suggestions that will help better organize similar workshops in future years.
6. Assess participants' initial interest in elderberry and how the interest changed after the workshop.

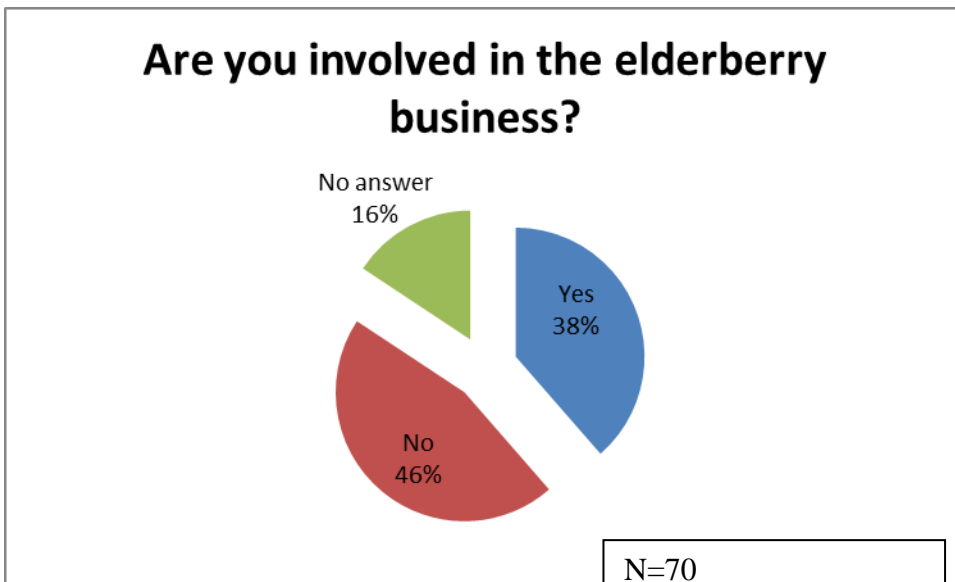
Objective 1: Document the demographic characteristics of the participants at the workshop.

Over 100 people participated in the comprehensive workshop. The demographic characteristics, based on 84 surveys collected at the beginning of the workshop are as follows:

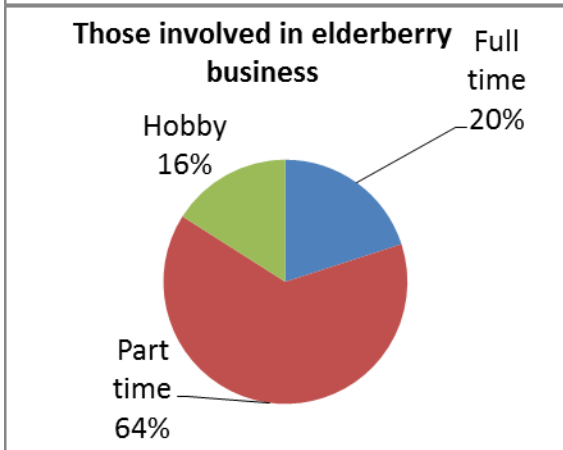




Out of 70 respondents at the post-workshop survey, 38% are somehow involved in the elderberry business, most of them part-time (64%), 20% full time and 16% as a hobby.



N=70
Post-workshop survey



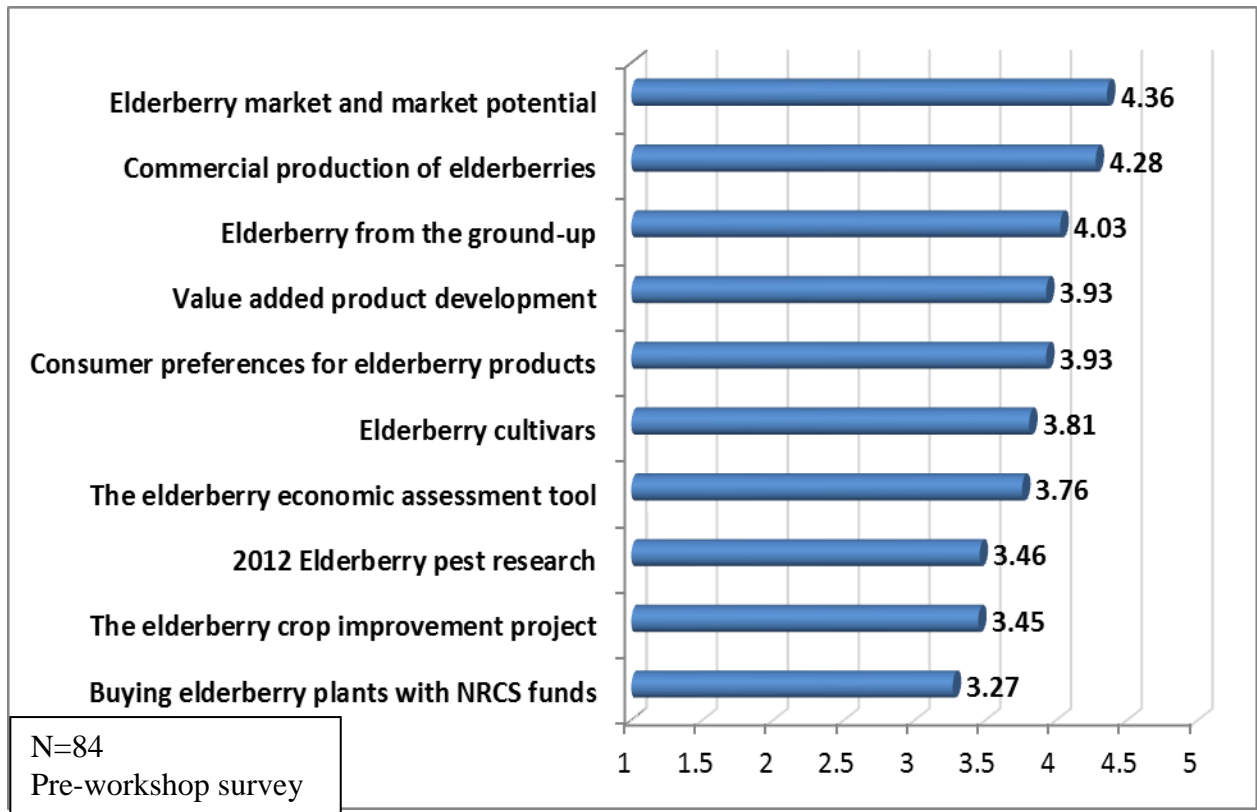
Objective 2: Identify how participants learned about the workshop, motivation to attend the workshop (Pre-workshop survey, N=84).

How participants learned about the workshop:

The most mentioned sources of learning about the workshop mentioned by respondents were: organizers, presenters, elderberry coop members (8 participants), Missouri Ruralist Magazine (8), past attendance (7), Internet (7), friends (7), Rural Electric Magazine (7), local newspaper (5), email (3).

Motivation to attend the workshop:

Elderberry market and market potential, Commercial production of elderberries and Elderberry from the ground-up were the topics that most heavily influenced respondents to participate in the workshop. On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much), the average ratings for how much each topic motivated the participants to register for this workshop are presented below:

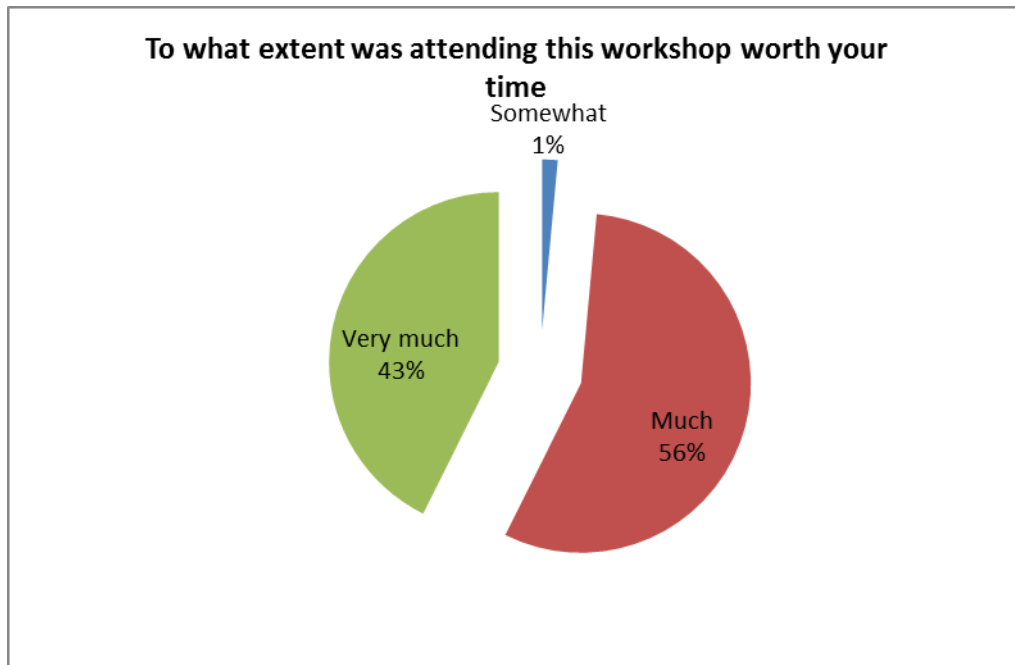


Objective 3: Evaluate participants’ reaction to the content and organization of the workshop (Post-workshop survey, N=70)

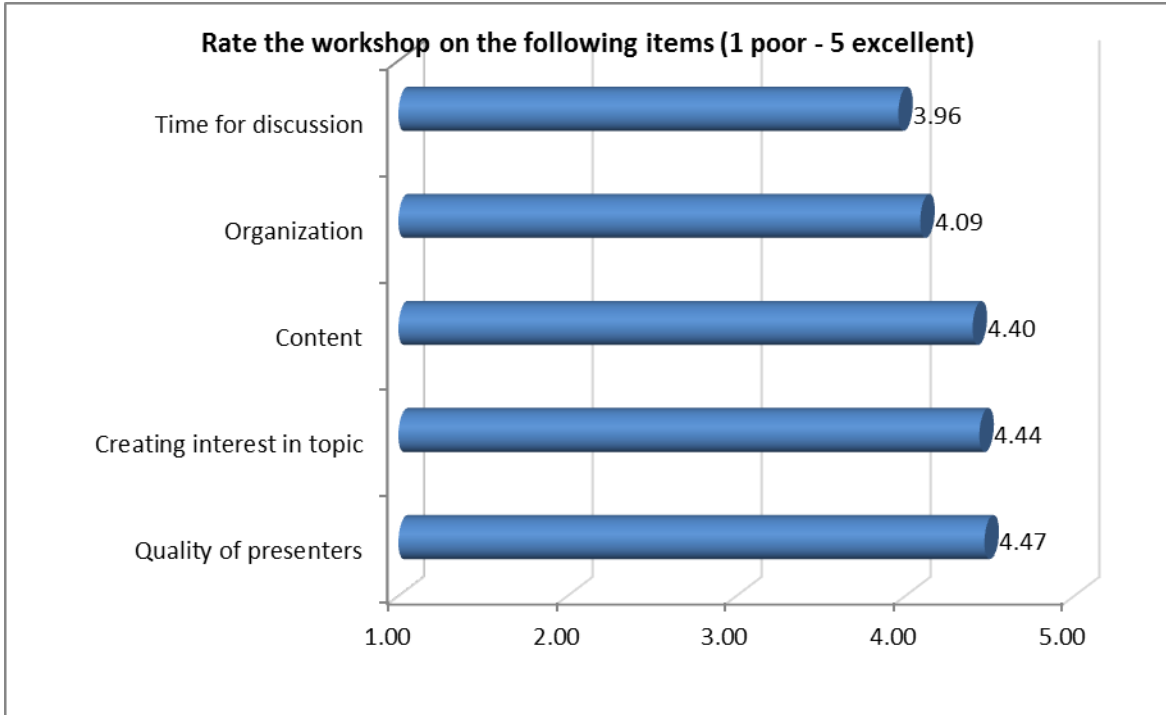
Participants were very satisfied with the series of workshops. The quality of workshop overall was rated excellent by 44% of participants and good by 54%.



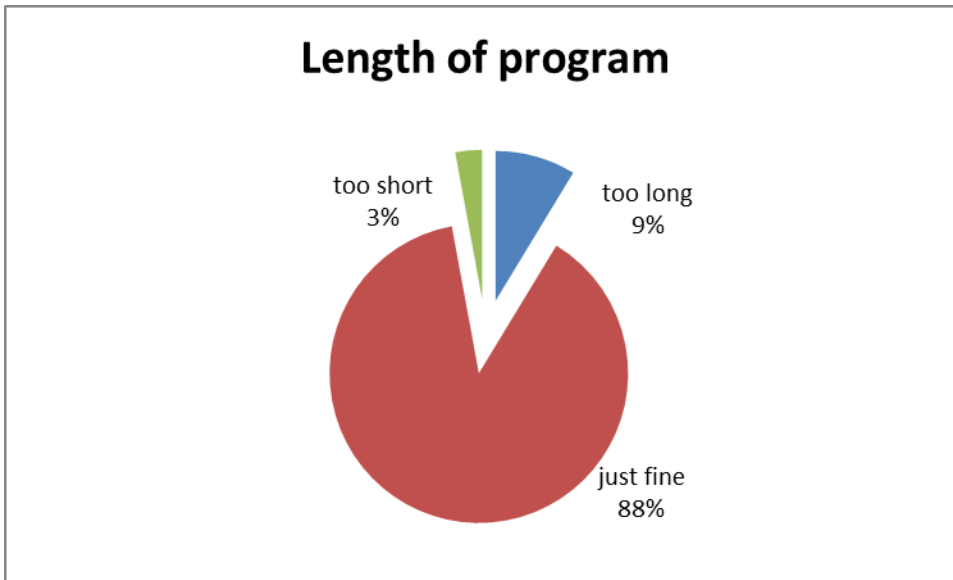
Fifty-six respondents declared that participating in the elderberry workshop was worth their time much and 43% very much.



The quality of presenters was rated very high, 4.47 average on a scale of 1(poor) to 5(excellent). Creating interest in the topic was rated second, 4.44 on a scale of 1(boring) to 5(stimulating). Content of presentations received a 4.40 rating on a scale of 1(of little use) to 5(useful). Organization was rated just a little over 4 on a scale of 1(poor) to 5(excellent) and time for discussion received a score slightly under 4.



The length of the program was considered “just fine” by 88%, too long by 9% and too short by 3%.

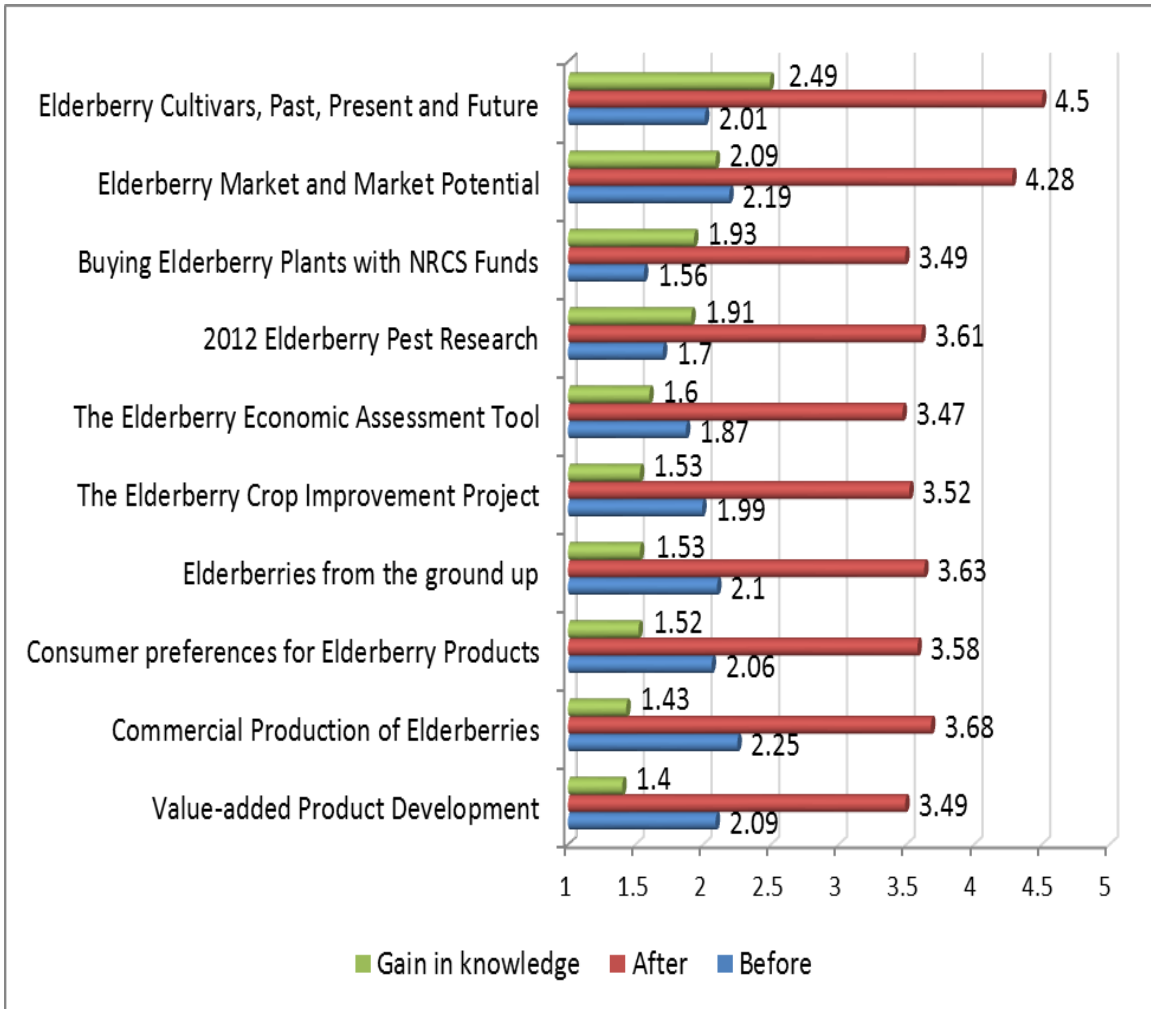


Ninety percent of respondents considered that the level of workshop was about right while 6% thought it was too advanced and 4% too basic.



Objective 4: Assess the level of knowledge before the workshop related to specific topics and compare it with the level of knowledge after the workshop (Post-workshop survey, N=70).

Participants’ level of knowledge before and after the workshop was evaluated in the post-workshop survey. A scale of 1 (nothing), 2 (very little), 3 (some), 4 (quite a bit) and 5 (a lot) was used to assess the level of knowledge. Level of knowledge before, after and the gain in knowledge is presented below (average ratings):



Objective 5: Obtain suggestions that will help better organize similar events.

The workshop participants provided many comments and suggestions regarding the workshop's topics and organization. Their comments are presented below.

What from this series of workshops were most helpful to you?¹:

Workshop participants found many help in the topics presented at the workshop.

Most, if not all, was beneficial

All of it

Vast range of topics was very helpful in learning about the subject matter

A little bit of everything

Everything

Resources and general info

Most everything due to the fact that I knew little about elderberry

Most everything

It was all helpful. Pests and soil health really hit home.

Increased general knowledge

Overall learning of products

Aspects directly related to a producer

How to grow plants

Commercial production, pest research

Pest management and production practices

Pest control, use of NRCS funds, cultivars and growing

How elderberries are grown or planted

Product identification/ economic assessment

Propagation; markets

What's needed to grow - pests, soil, water, funding

The information about the NRCS; Mulching

Markets, commercial production

"From the ground up"

The information on how to grow them, how to set it up and the information on the minerals in the soil

It was a good overview of many aspects of elderberry production, but there was not a lot of detail/depth to many of the topics covered.

Market and market potential and the variety of presenters

Planting and propagation

Marketing

NRCS funds

Cultivar types and commercial production

Market potential, type of elderberry, pests

Market and market potential. Pest research

Practical application

Meeting people and talking; Hands-on in the field.

Talking to other participants

¹ Text in italic represents exact quote

Question & answer portion after each speaker
How to commercially grow and sell
Simplified explanations, practical knowledge
Learning about elderberry from well-educated instructors
Learning about the health benefits of elderberry
Interested in all aspect so it was helpful throughout
Knowing where to look for more information when I am ready for it. Hard to absorb all in one sitting.

What wasn't covered in this workshop that you expected?

Some participants expected step by step detailed information on growing, value added production or marketing or how to get started in growing elderberry. Various attendants were at different stages of involvement with the elderberry business and it would be difficult to provide to each of them according to their needs.

Need more on processing and logistics for harvesting + transportation + packaging
Irrigation requirements
More growing and harvesting info; irrigation; more about co-op growing - if I am a grower is there a co-op market to buy my crop? How do I transport it? Price paid? Wondering about the threat of mentioned large producers etc. If they go into production are we out of business? What can we do to stop that?
I would like to have more knowledge about site locations
How to start or expand your business
What does a really new farmer need to start: equipment, how much to pay if help needed, how to get to market, do I need big freezer? Step by step for new small grower basics on new grower budget.
How do you sell? To whom?
More on production practices
How to find a buyer for our berries
Fertilization, irrigation
How to make and market your own elderberry product (preparing berries, bottling, labeling). More info on the coop. Who can join? More specific information on preparing your soil for good mineral content and more specific information on amounts and preparation of dormant soils for pest control.
Step by step hands-on on making jelly or juice
After planting, how do you manage the plant? When do you prune?
Juice processing
Product handling right after harvesting
Processing, de-stemming, I guess we'll see that tomorrow.
Implementation of irrigation systems, implementation examples, design and cost comparisons of low, medium, high costs per acre installed. Fertilization, examples and cost per acre, application rates.
Processing details
Need more hands on experience and maybe smaller groups
Repeating each question before the answer.
Don't know what I don't know.

Do you have any comments/ recommendations regarding the content or organization of this workshop that can help us organize better workshops in the future?

Some respondents considered a whole day workshop too long and suggested to split the lecture part equally between the two days. Another good suggestion was to have a more general workshop and then more detailed workshops on a few topics but which would go in more detail. The overwhelming interest for elderberry made the facility used for this workshop too crowded and some of the respondents suggested that for a next workshop the organizers can choose a larger facility. Another suggestion was to provide participants with handouts for all the talks that they can later refer to. All the comments are provided below:

Very good. I was here last year and still learned a lot

Would be nice if "sitting" part would be split into 2 days, maybe farm tour to be held the second half of full day.

Need larger area/facility for future workshops

Provide folders with information so everyone who has paid receive information and do not have to look up multiple websites that were supposed to be handed out

Need a moderator for this seminar

Staying on time schedule

I thought the program kept moving very well.

Have handouts from all speakers. Leave sales pitches out.

Better use of time. Agenda available before arrival; definitive start time; Larger facilities for size of audience.

Perhaps you could hold a beginning overview workshop and then also a more advanced workshop on fewer topics, but go more in depth on more topics.

Place, a complete agenda online prior to workshop

Better facility

Have a larger projection screen. Have speakers speak up in the microphone.

Spread out the content so that the material covered in first day isn't so long. Very uncomfortable to sit for such long periods.

Seating was tight

Provide additional cooling in classroom. Provide all handouts on thumb drive instead of paper.

Sound was a little bit off in the morning but the group did a good job in addressing this

Objective 6. Assess participants' initial interest in elderberry and how the interest changed as a result of the workshop

Before the workshop we asked: Tell us a few words about your involvement and interest in elderberry. Participants varied greatly in level of involvement and interest, from active growers already involved in commercial production, to beginning growers that are propagating plants or want to expand production, to people exploring their interest in potentially growing elderberry as a new farm crop to finally people that are interested to find more about elderberry strictly from a consumer point of view. Here are their comments:

I am interested in elderberry as an additional crop as well as for health benefits

Been using Wyldewood Cellar's elderberry concentrate for 17 months. It has changed my life. Moving to the country soon and planning on growing them.

I am busy propagating more plants

I am interested in commercial production

Extra income for farm property

For personal use and for family and friends to keep healthy /maybe give my land a job

Future development as a crop

General knowledge

Good small crop

I am a grower

Growing for 2 years, goal to have 5 acres

Have been picking wild berries making jelly, jam, syrup. Looking to supplement income on small farm

I am a grower/seller of all elderberry products

I am an extension educator in the Central Region and want to stay current on horticultural crop developments

I am interested in the benefits of growing and consuming elderberry as a potential grower of ~6.5 acres.

I am looking to add a crop to my operation; likely aronia or elderberry

I am looking to plant some berries for the purpose of bringing in an income

I am starting to grow now

I am very involved and motivated to make a profitable business for my family

I currently grow berries and fruits. This can be another line of income for my farm.

I do not have much involvement

I have 5 acres planted and interest in the development of the elderberry processing and marketing

I have been harvesting elderberry since childhood & making jelly, pies, juice from them.

I have helped make wild elderberry wine. I have a lot of interest as a cash crop

I have tasted some of the products and talked to the people in Mulvane KS, it sounded very interesting and I would like to learn more about growing elderberry.

I started collecting elderberry plants and propagate them to grow good elderberry

I want to stop working with the public and start playing in the dirt

I would like to start a small elderberry orchard and market to Atlanta chefs & farmers markets

Income potential for our farm

Interest in future for financial gain/working with the land, all for the better health of society

Interest in gardening and the processing of the fruit

Interest in producing/marketing

Interested in getting started growing elderberry and hopefully growing in the future

Interested in growing

Looking for a cash crop

Looking for extra income for land that I own

Looking for income from marginal farm ground

Looking for something to do /make money/ when retire

Looking to diversify our 240 acre Ozark sustainable sheep/grass farm

Making wine and juice for past 7 years, just planted 5 acres in PA

New farm and new ideas for opportunity

New farm crop

Own a farm and interested in sustainable product that can be produced and add value to promote additional cash flow to the farm that fits with other enterprises

Pick wild and make wine and jelly

Planted 1 1/2 acres of Bob Gordon and Wyldewood

Planted 1000 plants in 2011 after having juiced elderberries the past 5 years (wild)

Researching feasible opportunities to diversify farming production

Seen wild on farm and area, but not real consideration of potential

Several acres planted

This is my third year and working on growing

To make a livelihood to supplement retirement and be my own boss.

Very interested in gardening and health. Have used elderberry for years and now have planted quite a few.

Wanting to grow for resale

We are interested in commercial farming on part of our farm

We are interested in growing elderberries in the near future

We are looking into this to supplement our income, we have a small un-used acreage

We are starting an elderberry nursery

We have 6 1/2 acres planted

We have an orchard and grow fruit. We look forward to growing elderberry if market is available.

We have ground and are interested in a specialty crop such as elderberries

We have land and are always on the lookout for fairly low labor (my husband has MS) and environmental friendly ways to bring in a little money

We have land and want to try something different

We have planted 180 plants

We use elderberry from the wild. Would like to raise then buy for commercial use

Would like to plant my properties in berries

After the workshop, we asked: Has your interest in elderberry changed in any way after participating in this workshop? How? What are your plans regarding elderberry?

Many respondents increased their interest in elderberry as a result of the workshop. According with their initial involvement, some plan to pursue commercial production, others to get started while others just to spread the word about elderberry.

Plan to pursue an elderberry business. Initiate an action plan.

Researching the possibilities of planting

No, but my interest has always been how to incorporate it in a permaculture way not as a monoculture wit grass strips between.

Want to plant 1/4 to 1/2 acre.

Attempt to grow

Still excited about growing them. Increase acreage.

Yes, it has changed. Currently thinking of producing elderberries.

As much or more interested.

Will probably begin as a hobby and move towards a business later

I intend to continue as a grower.

Yes. I would be very much interested to grow them commercially.

Would love to become a commercial grower; Plan and investigate NRCS funds.

Hope to start growing some in the near future

Yes, we are planning on establishing an operation

I've been stimulated to look into elderberry production

Haven't changed plans, but more motivated to spread the word in my area as an alternative crop

I am planning on farming 6 acres of elderberries

Still looking into it

I think this could help diversify my farm

Moving forward

Increase size of acreage

We would like to start growing part time

Would like to start with some for winemaking for the first few years then expand the number of plants to either sell berries to winery or bring to Riverhills Coop

Going to put many acres of elderberry overtime

I want to make my own jelly, juice and wine

Looking to start planting

Much improved

More confidence

Yes, commercial production

I knew very little beforehand but now I am more likely to purchase an elderberry product.

Put in 10 acres

Not sure, possibly 5 acres next year working to do 25 acres.

Grow for personal use; if more that needed, sell

Yes, going to pass on further involvement

Get larger in production

Increased interest in getting into elderberry production on our farm.

Reconnecting with other growers from past workshops. Refresh and continue to learn more of the process and industry. Plans are to accelerate planting schedule and build website to promote my farm and elderberries.

I will definitely be adding elderberry to my farm.

Not sure yet.

In conclusion, the elderberry comprehensive workshop was very successful. The workshop strengthened communication among people interested in elderberry production, among them and established producers and among them and researchers. There was a significant gain in knowledge that improved the understanding of the design and application of elderberry production. The workshop helped advance towards adoption of elderberry as a profitable crop across Missouri and the U.S.

The participants' comments and recommendations are a valuable resource for improving future efforts in organizing similar events and for increasing farmers' awareness, acceptance and adoption of elderberry as a profitable crop.