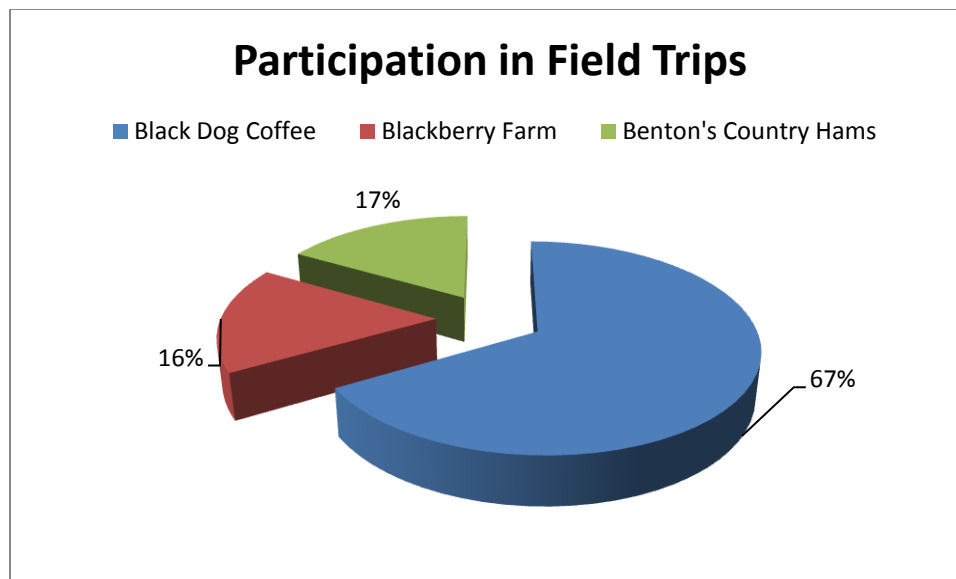


Impact of Professional Development Field Trips

NE SARE Project ENE12-125, Enhancing Cooperative Extension capacity to support the advancement of adding value and direct marketing by farmers in the Northeast

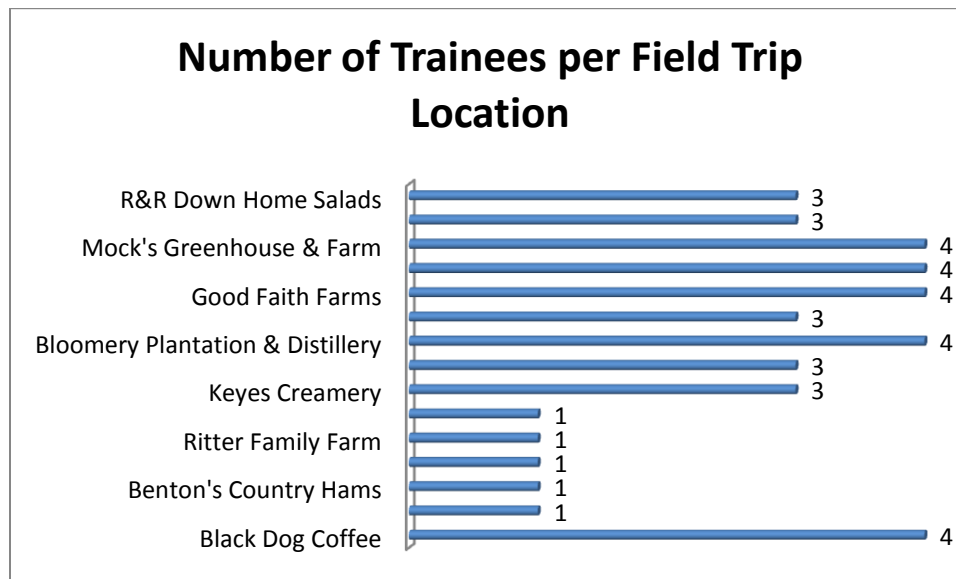
The North East Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education project, ENE12-125, is designed to teach Extension personnel and agricultural professionals in Pennsylvania, Maryland and West Virginia to provide education to farmers adding value and other food entrepreneurs, to increase their awareness of business and risk management aspects of selling food to the public. After the launch of this project, trainees from Tennessee and Oregon were added. The project team provided a series of seven webinars to 32 interested trainees; a second step in the educational process was for the trainees to participate in field trips to farmers and entrepreneurs who had been successful in making and selling food products. The businesses visited included: Black Dog Coffee, Blackberry Farm, Benton's Country Hams, Reynolds Family Farm, Ritter Family Farm, Alley Cat Tea, Keyes Creamery, Rumbleway Farm, Bloomery Plantation and Distillery, Glascock's Produce, Good Faith Farms, Gunnoe Farms, Mock's Greenhouse and Farm, Panorama at the Peak (on farm dining), and R&R Products, Down Home Salads.

Three of the West Virginia trainees visited 8 businesses; an additional West Virginia trainee visited five businesses. A Tennessee trainee visited five businesses. Two Maryland trainees visited two businesses; two Maryland trainees visited one business.



Locations of the field trips were selected by the trainees, and approved by the NE SARE project team leader before the hosts were contacted, or dates set. Most businesses were selected as examples of farmers who add value and/or direct market their products. Additionally, a few food entrepreneurs were chosen so that trainees could compare farm/non-farm food enterprises. One or more member(s)

of the grant project team took part in each tour in West Virginia and Maryland, but were not counted in the “participants” data. Accordingly, the following locations were visited, with the number of trainees in attendance as noted on this chart:



Upon completion of a field trip, each trainee was expected to provide his/her reflections about what had been learned, and how this information would be used once they began teaching “Food for Profit” workshops, or providing individual consult to clients who were interested in starting or enhancing a food business. This report summarizes trainee responses to the survey.

After two questions identifying the trainee and the field trip location being reported, trainees were asked to describe, in their own words, the product or products that the business they visited offers. Their replies (some more detailed than others) showed an understanding of the types of products as well as the production methods being used. The exact responses were:

- Ritter Family Farm (TN)
 - A large variety of value-added products including apple butter, tomato juice, chow chow, soups, etc.
- Alley Cat Tea (TN)
 - Juice/tea beverage
- Benton’s Country Hams (TN)
 - Country Ham and Bacon, Fresh Pork Sausage
- Blackberry Farm (TN)
 - Jams, jellies, pickled products, chow chow, fermented foods - sauerkraut, vinegars, cured meats, cheeses
- Reynolds Family Farm (TN)
 - This operation offers a variety of products from baked goods such as fried pies, pumpkin rolls, apple stack cakes and cupcakes to apple butter, pickles, salsa and pickled okra. Black bean and corn salsa was described as their best selling product.

- Keyes Creamery (MD)
 - The creamery offers ice cream as their main product but also their cheeses. The market also sells other local goods.
 - Keyes Creamery is a cheese and ice cream producer. The Keyes family owns and operates a dairy farm as well and uses milk produced by the farm to operate the creamery.
 - Keyes Creamery offers cheese and ice cream - pints, quarts, and dips.
- R&R Products / Down Home Salads (WV)
 - salads, process onions, desserts, potatoes
 - Fresh made salads
 - Various salads
- Gunnoe Farms -- Sausage and Salad Company (WV)
 - At this site, salads. Started with sausage but founder realized that was rather seasonal so started making salads.
 - Processed/packaged Salads and Sausage factory
 - Processed, packaged foods
 - Various salads and sausages
- Panorama at the Peak -- Farm Fresh Dining (WV)
 - Restaurant serving locally sourced food.
 - A beautiful, casual, fine dining restaurant that serves local, fresh, organic food
 - Fine dining
- Glascock's Produce (WV)
 - Fruits and vegetables
 - Apples, peaches, watermelon, tomatoes, peppers, sweet corn, Indian corn, plus various value added products such as Bloody Mary mix, BBQ sauce, fruit butters, breads, etc.
 - Garden produce and processed products from their own produce
- Mock's Greenhouse and Farm (WV)
 - Hydroponic vegetables
 - Hydroponic Greenhouse Farm - Produce
 - Hydroponic tomatoes, cucumbers, bibb lettuce and basil
 - Modest upscale products(tomatoes and Bib lettuce)
- Bloomery Plantation and Distillery (WV)
 - Cocktail Liqueurs
 - Cordials - Bloomery is a craft distillery
 - High quality liquors
 - Farm Fresh Cocktail Liqueurs
- Good Faith Farms -- Charles Barton's organic sheep (WV)
 - Barbados Black Belly hair sheep
 - "Organic" Grass Fed Lamb
 - Certified organic sheep
 - Organic lamb meat
- Black Dog Coffee (WV)
 - The business itself is a coffee roasting business. Some months ago they opened retail store where they sell other local products and recently started having a Wednesday afternoon farmers market.
 - Fresh roasted coffee
 - Fresh ground coffee
 - Fresh roasted coffee beans

- Rumbleway Farm (MD)
 - Robin Way, owner and operator, produces pastured chickens, pork, beef, and confinement rabbits. She processes the poultry on-farm and has the other livestock custom processed. She retails these meat products, plus a selection of canned goods, through her on-farm store. She also offers canning and cooking classes and dinners on the farm.
 - Pasture raised chicken, pork and beef. They also sell canned good and other preserved products.
 - Value-added livestock products, prepared foods (jams, pickled vegetables, sauces) from their on-farm store. They also have farm dinners, cooking classes and do offsite catering.

The fourth question was: *“What specific market niche/segment is this business targeting?”* This question required the trainees to think about the importance of identifying a specific target market, and how this group of customers affects the product and processes of the business. Responses from the trainees included:

- Ritter Family Farm (TN)
 - Health conscious people looking for local foods. Customers are not from their county. On-farm sales, restaurant.
- Alley Cat Tea (TN)
 - Restaurants and grocery stores
- Benton’s Country Hams (TN)
 - Mostly restaurants interested in artisanal foods - high end restaurants. On-site retail to local consumers. Internet orders.
- Blackberry Farm (TN)
 - This business is targeting consumers with high incomes and interest in local foods.
- Reynolds Family Farm (TN)
 - The Reynolds market directly to consumers at farmers markets and festivals. Consumers they are looking for are interested in local foods, homemade foods and foods "like grandma used to make."
- Keyes Creamery (MD)
 - Local people; has benefited from the new “ice cream trail” through central Maryland
 - Keyes targets the ice cream and artisanal cheese market. Additionally, Keyes targets the segment of the population interested in buying locally sourced and produced foods.
 - Keyes mostly targets the local population looking for local dairy products, especially those looking for superior ice cream.
- R&R Products / Down Home Salads (WV)
 - Distributes to regional grocery store and restaurants.
 - Sells to churches, restaurants, grocery stores, and public
 - Direct sales to restaurants, churches and some retail
- Gunnoe Farms -- Sausage and Salad Company (WV)
 - General market. Deliver directly to stores.
 - Wholesale/grocery stores
 - Direct store delivery
 - An old family company with long-time customers
- Panorama at the Peak -- Farm Fresh Dining (WV)
 - Health conscious clientele.
 - (People who want) local organic food, well made and reasonably priced
 - People looking for locally grown and mostly organic

- Glascock's Produce (WV)
 - Farmers' markets
 - Farmer's markets where customers want local and fresh
 - They supply products to several year round farmers' markets
- Mock's Greenhouse and Farm (WV)
 - Farmers' markets
 - Year round produce - is the second largest hydroponics in the state
 - Wholesale to stores/markets selling to upscale purchasers (Whole Foods and Wegmans are 2 of his big customers)
 - Wholesale hydroponic year round produce. 99% leaves Morgan County
- Bloomery Plantation and Distillery (WV)
 - People that enjoy something a little unusual. Locally it is an entertainment venue with live music, etc.
 - Upscale/adventurous/fun-loving people
 - Higher end customers looking for unique, fresh, original liquors
 - Tourist - Their objective is to provide an authentic memorable experience to their customers. Product is also sold in other venues.
- Good Faith Farms -- Charles Barton's organic sheep (WV)
 - Ethnic, organic
 - Ethnic - this owner believes the American Market does not like lamb.
 - Those looking for organic sheep - especially the ethnic / religious groups
 - Islams and African Americans that want grass fed organic lamb meat
- Black Dog Coffee (WV)
 - People that enjoy a good cup of coffee. People like to support local businesses
 - Coffee 'snobs' & Local Community + Gluten Free and 'Buy Local' devotees
 - High quality coffee as well as locally grown and made food products
 - Gourmet coffee with global distribution
- Rumbleway Farm (MD)
 - Robin targets customers who want pasture-raised meats and customers who want to build a relationship with the farm and the farmer that raises their food.
 - Local, direct marketing, meat sales
 - Shoppers who place a premium on local, grass-fed, hormone- and antibiotic-free products. Because they partner with Baltimore-area chefs for their cooking classes, they are reaching shoppers with disposable income and with locavore/sustainable interests. The farm store is open every day but Wednesday, making it easy for shoppers to access their products.

The fifth question was: *“Why did the entrepreneur start this business?”* This question required the trainees to think about the personal and community needs that are the basis of many businesses – so that they might recognize these aspects in future clients. The “story” feeling to many of the responses illustrates trainees’ awareness that there IS a story behind why people begin self-employment. This question also helps to determine whether the host of the field trip would be an effective, interesting guest speaker. Responses from the trainees for each site were:

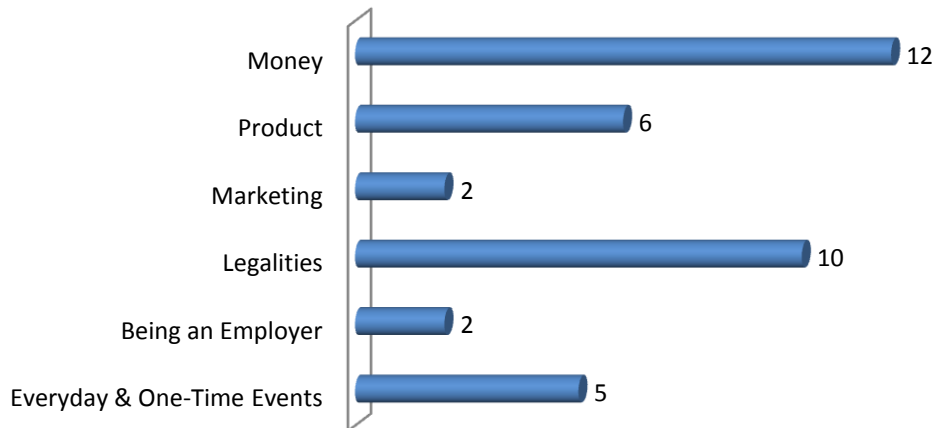
- Ritter Family Farm (TN)
 - They raised produce and wanted a way to use surplus or less beautiful product.

- Alley Cat Tea (TN)
 - The entrepreneur owned a restaurant which burned down. They wanted to do something else. They were well known for their fruit tea.
- Benton's Country Hams (TN)
 - Alan Benton's family raised hogs and cured pork. He learned and bought this business in 1973. He bought it for something to do in between jobs and never left.
- Blackberry Farm (TN)
 - The Bell family (founders of Ruby Tuesdays) started the farm in the mid 1970s at a corporate retreat for Ruby Tuesdays. They decided to open it to the public. Their son developed an interest in the value-added agriculture component.
- Reynolds Family Farm (TN)
 - Susan has always cooked and canned as she was one of eight children on a 500 acre farm. She liked doing it, and it is something she can do from home.
- Keyes Creamery (MD)
 - A daughter who came back to the farm.
 - The Creamery has been a dream for the Keyes family since the dairy farm was started over 50 years ago (three generations of Keyes.) It has taken this long to bring the Creamery into fruition mainly because of costs and their ability to create a sound business plan given their space and manpower constraints.
 - The Keyes family has operated a dairy farm for several generations. The idea of producing ice cream was originally Megan's grandfather's, and the family has been working toward this goal for many years.
- R&R Products / Down Home Salads (WV)
 - Was out of work and needed to provide for his family.
 - Lost job, went to selling produce, then into making products from produce.
 - Lost his job
- Gunnoe Farms -- Sausage and Salad Company (WV)
 - The business started as a side job. The founder's father had a grocery store. Founder used his father's facility at night to make sausage. He also sold the sausage.
 - Started by current owner's grandfather (a hog farmer), salads 'line' added by 2nd generation (1972).
 - Generational family business
 - Family business – took it over from her father.
- Panorama at the Peak -- Farm Fresh Dining (WV)
 - Decided to purchase the restaurant and move to the area. Had a long time interest in healthy food.
 - Was retiring, wanted a second venture in life, very interested and local and organic foods
 - Passion to provide a dining experience.
- Glascock's Produce (WV)
 - Farm has been in the family. Dropped out of college and had family to support.
 - It was his grandfathers, then his fathers and two uncles - now he operates his fathers portion
 - Left college after the first year and had nothing better to do than work the land his father owned.

- Mock's Greenhouse and Farm (WV)
 - Re-married and moved to WV. Needed to make a living.
 - Moved from PA where was a Christmas Tree Farmer with Events (corn mazes, etc.) on the weekend. WV property wouldn't house the trees and drive would withstand the events so with limited flat land started the greenhouses and hydroponics
 - Passion for farming and not wanting to have a job(punching a time clock)
 - To support his family.
- Bloomery Plantation and Distillery (WV)
 - They developed a lemon cello that taste tests proved was better than what was currently available.
 - To make a better handcrafted Limoncello that would be as good as the ones in Italy.
 - Tasted the drink in Italy and could not find a comparable option in the US
 - Found a product that was not available in West Virginia
- Good Faith Farms -- Charles Barton's organic sheep (WV)
 - Bought the farm and the sheep from a friend/neighbor.
 - To help change the way "We Eat"
 - He purchased the property and the sheep came with it! He was ready for a second venture in life.
 - Always wanted to be in business for himself and a friend talked him into buying property in the area. The lambs came with the property and he turned it into a business.
- Black Dog Coffee (WV)
 - Started roasting (coffee) as a hobby
 - Brian loves coffee and he learned enough to make the 'Best Coffee' at least in WV
 - (He) loved coffee! lived upstairs to a coffee shop
 - Lived in apartment above someone that did this and decided he could do it too, only better.
- Rumbleway Farm (MD)
 - Robin and her husband Mark bought the farm and by experimentation started getting into bigger and bigger projects. Producing and marketing her products is something Robin really enjoys - she reiterated many times that in order to do this, you really have to enjoy it. She also seems like a motivated person who enjoys the challenge of doing new things.
 - For a new career
 - They liked the farm, and started going to the PASA and Future Harvest conferences and liked what they saw that other livestock producers were doing. Also influenced by Joel Salatin. The value-added foods were an offshoot of what Robin Way was already doing for her own family (canning and preserving), and provided additional products for shoppers to purchase when they came for the livestock products.

The sixth question asked of trainees had to do with the risks and challenges of food business ownership: *“Describe one challenge that the entrepreneur faced in starting or building the business.”* Along with the previous question, this allows for assessment of the field trip host as a possible guest speaker (people who have “never had a challenge” won’t be as believable). The responses that were provided have been clustered in specific theme categories to provide a better sense of where the major challenges existed. On the following page, a chart illustrates frequency of each category being noted, illustrating the most significant areas of stress or challenge for entrepreneurs. The chart is followed by the actual responses gathered from trainees.

Food Entrepreneurs' Challenges



- **Money**

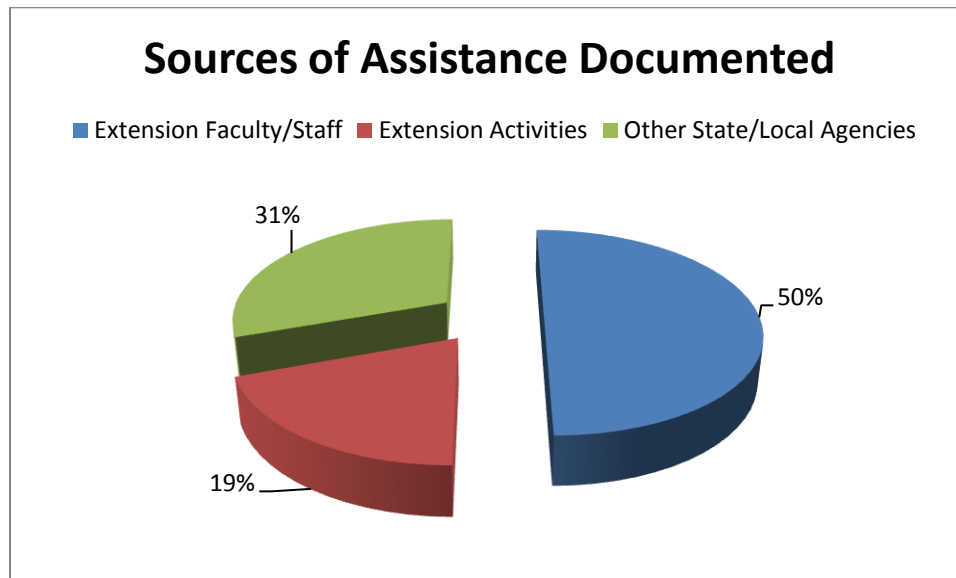
- In the past years he has ventured into new processes and has had success and failures. For him the 90's were tough. Very close to bankruptcy.
- Money and risk. Needed \$25,000: sold pre-paid Black Dog Bucks as a way to raise money.
- Fine-tuning their finances and really drilling down on what parts of their farm operation, and marketing outlets, were profitable and which weren't. Robin said that it took them 20 years of farming to really get a handle on that aspect of the business.
- Having money out to customers and them not paying.
- Financing (2)
- Capital - was turned down by 10-20 financiers / banks before got just enough money to start 2 greenhouses - now has 22
- Obtaining capital to purchase large coffee grinder
- Trying to grow the business without a lot of resources.
- Robin didn't seem very phased by challenges! I think she thrives on them. However she did mention that they are just getting their record keeping more organized this year.
- High percentage of taxes paid on the product
- The capital investment for their commercial kitchen was a challenge.

- **Product**

- Obtaining all the local food needed within a reasonable travel distance of the restaurant (2)
- Robin also mentioned that the poultry company made a mistake with their order one time, which required them to make a lot of adjustments to their production schedule. In the end it was a good thing, however, because it introduced them to a new type of faster-growing bird that they had not used before
- Growing lemons in West Virginia
- Gaining "Certified Organic" by USDA was somewhat of a challenge (4)
- They are challenged by formulating a recipe - scaling up and by processing for packaging - (shelf life and shelf stable product) At different times of the year the fresh produce comes from different places and is of varying quality. (3)

- **Marketing**
 - Farm is rather remote. People came for Ag Entertainment for did not come back for bedding plants and produce.
 - For a long time, the Benton's had a difficult time getting the word out about the product. A change in the food culture and some assistance from Southern Foodways Alliance and Blackberry Farm helped.
- **Legalities**
 - Working with City of Huntington and Cabell-Huntington Health Department and FAD.
 - Regulatory - some of the rules had to be writing to accommodate this type of business.
 - Regulations with the sales. She never said she couldn't do it. Always worked to figure out a way.
 - Keeping current with all regulations (4)
 - Regulations have been challenging. Their small facility is a limitation now. They run two shifts and outsource some production (although quality issues have been a challenge with this.)
 - Regulations for the acidified foods (FDA processes) have been challenging. Finding markets that work well for them have also been challenging. It was hard to find information on how to get started.
 - Megan Keyes shared many challenges with us during our visit. One such challenge was working with the Department of Planning and Zoning. When the Keyes family presented the Department with a professionally drawn map of the property they own, the Department rejected it and brought movement with the Health Department to a stand-still because one agency wouldn't move forward without the others' sign-off. Additionally, the Department made them redraw the map of the property and plant border trees along a fence that the Keyes family believes are/were an unneeded expense. Forward movement came at the behest of local county officials calling on behalf of the farm and the Keyes family to urge the Department to move forward with approving their plans to expand.
 - Permitting, especially at the county level, created many hardships for the Keyes. It was difficult for them to get information about specifically what they needed to do to be in compliance. Often they had to do what they thought was right and then wait for the permitting agencies to tell them whether or not it passed and any corrective action necessary.
 - Everything related to production and sale of alcohol. 8 man days of paperwork each month. % off the top of sales for tax, etc.
 - Dealing with multiple regulatory authorities. Health Departments, Dept of Labor, and Dept of Agriculture
- **Being an employer**
 - When asked about challenges the current owner's response was theft. That probably is because she knows she has a salesman that is stealing but does not know yet who it is.
 - Employee theft was stated a big challenge.
- **Every day and one-time events**
 - Currently stink bugs
 - Recovery from 2012 flood - had to change business: removed slaughter facility.
 - Farm has been in family for years - but he works 52 weekends out of 52 weekends - he works a lot!!
 - The time to do all the work and preventive things that needs to be done.
 - Sewer system with slaughter house - consequently moved slaughter house to VA

The seventh question asked the trainees to “Describe the role that the Extension or other business consultant played in this venture.” This reinforces the need for business owners to network, have advisors, and generally be part of the “system.” When names are spoken more than once, this suggests resources to which the trainee can turn. It is interesting that several people going on the same field trip might hear a “different message” about the entities that were beneficial. This chart shows that ½ of the support documented came from Extension faculty or field staff.



Actual responses were as follows:

- **Extension Staff Support**
 - Bill Morris from Food Science assisted them with regulations and kitchen design.
 - Faith Critzer and Eric Goan in Food Science are assisting with product development and Has assisted with some knowledge of growing lemons and raspberries
 - Assisted with networking of farmers
 - Dr. Milton, a meat scientist, assisted in product and process development.
 - Faith Critzer has worked with them on acidified foods processing issues.
 - Faith Critzer helped them learn about regulations and develop food processes.
 - Took food safety classes offered by WVU.
 - Extension has helped them connect with farmers.
 - County Agriculture Agent has consulted with Charles concerning the sheep and other products he is growing.
 - Robin mentioned that Dale Johnson had given her good insight on pricing and budgets. Robin also seemed to converse frequently with Ginger to bounce around ideas - about regulations, marketing, etc. Extension is not Robin's sole source of information, but it seems to have been a solid and respected resource for some of her specific questions and challenges.
 - Dale Johnson, of UMD Extension, worked with them on analyzing their finances and providing them with on-site assistance and spreadsheets so they could evaluate the business's profitability.

- Jeff. County Ag Development Agent helped with many aspects of start-up with local and state requirements
- Jefferson Co. Ag. Development agent for Jeff. Co. (EDA) was helpful in getting site secured and up and running
- Has helped start and support the local farmer's market where this family is a large contributor
- Mike the county agent is helping him find niche markets
- Helped him find info on GAP and get certified to sell produce wholesale (3)
- Supported his business by purchasing product and helping him to get into the farmer's markets
- Offering educational opportunities and networking
- **Participation in Extension Programming**
 - She was a member of LEAD MD and attended Annie's project
 - The daughter (Megan Keyes) who runs the Creamery, has a good relationship with several Ag Extension Agents and has participated in the Annie's Project Program.
 - The Keyes worked with Ginger briefly during the initial planning stages. Megan also completed Annie's Project with me which I hope helped her along the way!
 - They got her involved in pastured poultry. She has attended many conferences on marketing, production and other educational workshops
 - Extension: no role in lamb business; now eXtension is testing specialty crops (produce) on his farm
 - Was a 4-Her growing up - had BIG influence in life (2)
 - They helped him get into farmer's Markets and even helped start some farmer's markets.
- **Other State/Local Agencies' Support**
 - NRCS helped with grants to put in a pond and high tunnel.
 - State Health Dept helped a lot.
 - Conservation farmer of the year. Stays connected to take advantage of programs available.
 - The county development authority's agriculture development personnel worked with this enterprise.
 - GAP certification - assistance and on-going support
 - Very involved with WVDA over the years.
 - WV Dept of Ag educational opportunities. Linda Whaley State Health Department helped him with the FDA approval process
 - USDA - FDA(WVU & VT helped review and update their HACCP plans)
 - Did receive help from Health Department
 - Dept of Ag assisted them in coming up with the Black Dog Grass Roots Stimulus Project - coupons in \$10 increments and advertising
 - County regulatory offices are working to help come up with some county regulations that may help with state regulations that are out dated. .

The following question allowed the trainees to apply what was learned, personally: *“What did you learn about this business venture that you can apply to your own work, assisting farmers adding value and/or food entrepreneurs?”* Again the responses are quite varied, and reflect some learning of the realities of food business ownership (seminal words have been highlighted to indicate the specific idea of the response :

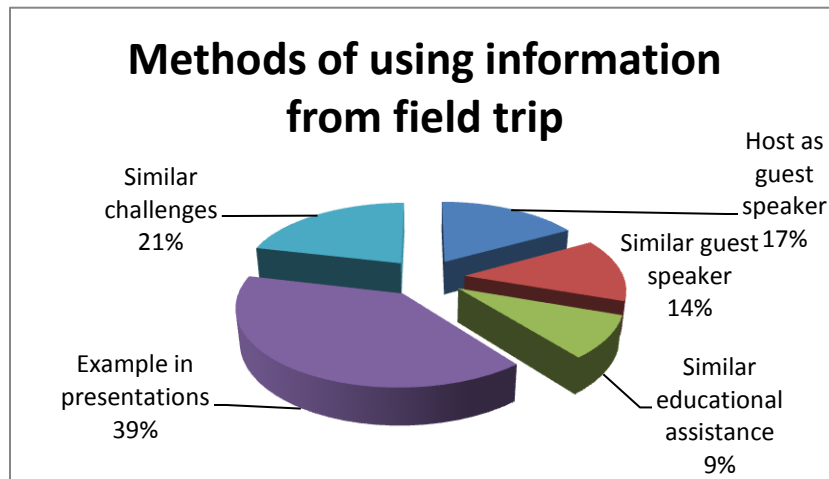
- **Marketing** may continue to be a challenge even for long-established businesses.
- The owner gave this advice to farmers - "If there is one thing I've learned through this process it is **patience**. Don't be hasty. Take your time."
- This enterprise has turned down business for large retailers or restaurants because they were afraid they couldn't produce enough product at their high quality. **Sometimes "no" is the best answer.**
- They had some good advice for farmers - 1. **tour facilities** to see what you might need as far as space, facility and equipment. Make sure to get that right the first time. 2. **Find a market** before you produce. 3. Learn about regulations...they can seem overwhelming.
- I definitely learned a lot about **equipment sourcing and planning**. The Keyes family used many different avenues to source not only their kitchen equipment (ice cream machine, 3-bay sinks, etc.), but refrigeration and freezer units for storage and display in the retail store. The Keyes utilized eBay, the restaurant supply store, and a local used restaurant equipment purveyor. I am excited to share this kind of information with other entrepreneurs who are concerned (and rightfully so), with the cost of equipment.
- Megan shared a few valuable lessons, the most memorable to me being to **plan for it to take longer and cost more than you think**. They ran into a lot of problems, but Megan seemed to view those hurdles as a normal part of getting the business off the ground. If a new business owner is expecting the journey to be difficult, I think he or she will have a better attitude in dealing with the challenges that come with starting up.
- The owner talked about the need for as he termed it, **education up front**. Learn food safety.
- The original owner, the current owner's father, used what she termed **common sense in building the business to ensure food is kept safe**. Currently everything they receive is USDA inspected, they have onsite lab, etc. to help ensure food is safe.
- I was interested in **how determined they were to maintain their standard of locally sourced food** whenever possible.
- Positive attitude "**Thinking outside the box!**" Personal touches
- The **personal attention to customers**. When Brian first started the business and until recently he delivered coffee to customers. His employees are always very friendly and want to be sure they meet the customer's needs.
- Robin is such a passionate and motivated person, and she is (self-proclaimed) dedicated to helping other farmers succeed. Her **positive attitude and desire to keep growing and improving** is something I hope I can impart on others. She has learned a lot through a combination of keeping herself educated by attending conferences and through trial and error. These are crucial character traits for an entrepreneur; although the skills we teach people are important, the attitude we impart is equally as important to their success!
- She gave a great talk about how they **looked at the numbers and organized the record keeping**. They had an intern that helped to streamline the process so she now inventories, records and reconciles on a regular basis. Her method of doing this was great. I also found it interesting that she didn't do this until two or three years ago after many years in the business.
- The importance of **tracking all expenses**, tracking what happens on the farm from day to day, and **really critically analyzing what is, and what is not, working**. So making sure that in my work

with farmers/food entrepreneurs I provide the tools they need to effectively analyze their businesses from Day One.

- **Create the demand** before you build the next greenhouse.
- **"Show me the regulation"** When owner has demands made of her by regulatory agencies that she's not familiar with - she says "show me that regulation in writing please."
- Small business owners **need to do a lot of research on their product** - especially if it is a niche market and become somewhat of an expert
- Although he distributes to several locations, retail sales from his location account for 90% of his sales - **location matters and offering customers an "experience"**
- That **small business owners struggle with regulations** and policy and need support and assistance in this area
- He at one time had a **recall for label that did not declare an allergen.**
- That **grants and funding** are available for such things are irrigation and the conservation districts are helpful with this funding
- You need to research your product and your production and have the process well mapped out in advance - a **good business plan**
- **Tenacity** - keep at it and use common sense
- **Purchasing raw products** - the flavor can change (i.e. cabbage) and it is hard to create large scale product that consistently tastes the same
- **Importance of being GAP certified** and how it could open doors to expand opportunities
- **Word of mouth** as important marketing strategy
- **State Liquor Board employees are helpful and friendly** to work with it is the laws that they must work with that are not friendly to businesses in WV
- Organic certification process and hydroponics as **methods in production of food.**

At this point, the survey shifted gears from a focus on the farms and businesses visited to a set of reflections about how the knowledge gained would be applied as they started to teach "Food for Profit" classes and assist farmers one-to-one in developing their value-added and direct marketing ventures. This is the heart of the professional development project – empowering the trainees to go into the community with the knowledge and confidence to deliver effective education.

The trainees were encouraged to think how they might use the connection built during the field trip, by responding to the question, “Which of the following best describes how you will interact with the farmer/food entrepreneur you visited, as you pursue your work?” They chose as many of the five statements below as they judged appropriate.

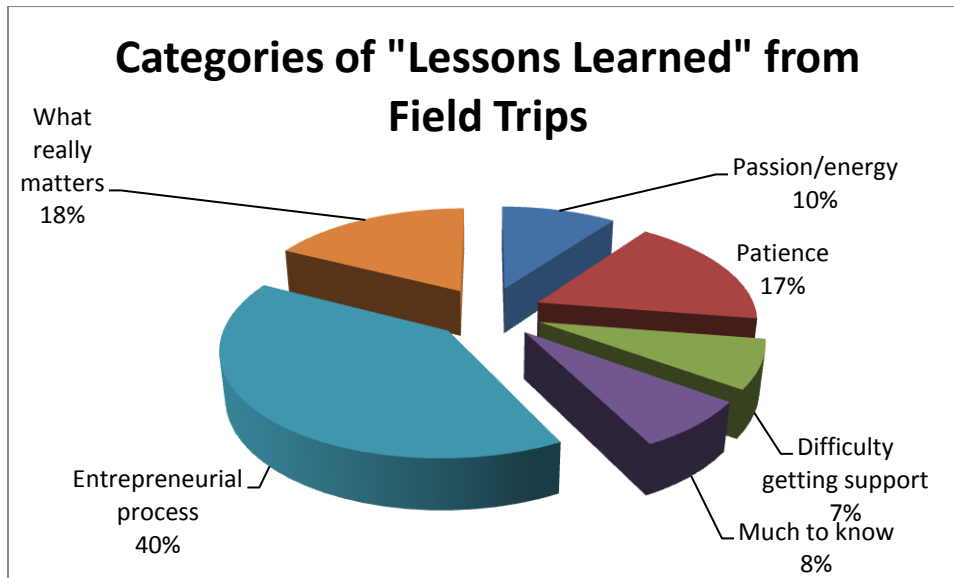


Below you see the alternative responses offered to the trainees. Numbers of people who selected the statement, and the percentage of times the response was selected out of overall 40 field trip reports, are shown in parentheses.

- I will ask the farmer/food entrepreneur to be a guest speaker for a workshop (15 – 38%)
- I will look for a similar farm or food business, closer to home, to invite that business’ owner to speak at a workshop (12 – 30%)
- I will assist my clients with similar educational support to what was provided to this farmer/food entrepreneur (8 – 20%)
- I will use what I have learned as an example in my workshop presentations (35 – 88%)
- I will be aware of, and looking for, the challenges met by this farmer/food entrepreneur so that my clients can be proactive in mitigating problems or risks (19 – 48%)

It is notable that the greatest number of trainees indicated that they would be able to use their field trip experience as examples as they teach new food entrepreneurs what they need to know to set up and operate the business ventures, as most of the students in “Food for Profit” classes are women, and research shows that adult female learners’ experience is enhanced by hearing “case studies” or “stories” as part of their involvement in classes.

With the final question, trainees were given one more chance for reflection in what they personally learned, in responding to: “*What was the most important idea or concept that you learned from this field trip?*” The answers show learning about agriculture, about entrepreneurship, and about the community in which businesses must exist, clustered under the headings of having passion/energy, exhibiting patience and dedication, working through the difficulty of getting support, needing to know much, dealing with the entrepreneurial process, and centering on what really matters. Distribution among those key categories was as illustrated here:



Actual words that were captured from the surveys show the breadth and depth of learning about the entrepreneurial process that took place during the field trips:

- **Passion/energy**
 - Passion about a business can be an advantage or disadvantage.
 - I think I answered this question the same way for Rumbleway Farm - but attitude is everything! Starting a food business is challenging, but with the right attitude and enough dedication it is doable. This creamery has been a family dream for many years and took many years to come to fruition, but they got it done. I am very impressed by the work that Megan has done, especially as a young person without many years of experience. With the right attitude, you can do great things!
 - Attitude! Robin's journey to build this business was probably not an easy one, but she said almost nothing negative the entire time we were visiting. She was upbeat and excited to share her experiences. She considered the things that didn't work for their business (like selling at farmers' markets) to be stepping stones, not mistakes. She is a confident, positive, motivated woman, and her attitude towards her business was inspiring to me! With all the daunting regulations and all the potential risks, it's important that we communicate this passion and excitement to our entrepreneurs.

- The Glascocks had a great personality and said a plus that they had going for them was to give samples. They knew they had great products and when people tasted them they would buy. He had use eating right out of the field and it was terrific.
- **Patience**
 - It can take significant time to get things right. Stephen has been working on the project for 13 months - 12 hours a day/7 days a week.
 - The business struggled for the first 20-25 years. They were tempted to go to a faster/cheaper production method but didn't. They wanted to keep quality and authenticity. Now they are highly sought after.
 - Faith said something great - Dream big but start small.
 - My major take-away from this field trip is that food entrepreneurs need to be prepared for a long journey. It took the Keyes family years and years to realize this part of their dream (opening the Creamery) and it takes vision to keep moving toward a dream that isn't happening quickly.
 - Once you get the business open, you continually work to 'Hone the Concept'
 - It is very possible to start small and slowly grow over time - maintain the quality in your product
 - It took him 1½ years to get financing he needed to install 3 green houses. He was persistent had a great business plan and didn't take no for the final answer.
- **Difficulty getting support**
 - Not all Extension offices are aware of what is needed to start a food business or where within Extension they can go to connect with someone who does. This may serve as an agent in-service opportunity.
 - Organic Certification not impossible but have to decide whether it is worth the time and cost.
 - "We" need to do a better job helping would be producers find everything that available to help them - and locate all the regulatory agencies they'll be involved with.
- **Much to know**
 - I like learning about the process part of the business. The start and then expansion and the necessary steps in between.
 - Don't borrow and don't sell on credit. Learned about Packer rules which, as I understood, means the farmer gets paid first. In an earlier business this gentleman got caught in the middle when the business he sold to on credit went out of business. As he told us he had to pay the farmer even before his taxes. He filed bankruptcy.
 - "Old School" common sense.
- **The entrepreneurial process**
 - Sampled so much good food! Wide variety of fruits and vegetables. Developing products so they have product to sell at markets year round.
 - Learned a lot about hydroponics and GAP certification
 - Learning a lot about meat and meat sales but definitely regulations.
 - Think big early: the Ways built their kitchen at the very beginning so they could more easily add products and remain compliant with health department regulations. This enabled them to grow, and expand their offerings, without having to wait to get the kitchen built.
 - Build and document demand - and eventually a banker will listen to you.
 - Unique approach to "Crowd-funding"

- Biggest challenge: Employee theft + Every business that we visited talked about 'evolving'.. you have to evolve - change your business as conditions change. This was so great to see this in practice over 3 generation.
- Packer rules hurt him as a producer.
- How nice and down to earth small business owners can be - the freshness of a product has tremendous value
- They have a lab in house to test products and for not ship until test results are confirmed. Insurance costs are a significant fixed expense.
- How critical and important GAP certification is
- We enjoyed a fabulous lunch that was provided. They are only open part time and not sure if profits are sustaining the venture.
- I was so impressed with how clean and sterile the building was for its age
- Health department does have many that respect and appreciate them and their assistance
- Their suggestion to others - get your business license and that they built up their customer base from farmers' markets
- CCOF was the organization that awarded him the organic certification.
- **What really matters**
 - Their interest in supporting local farmers.
 - Greeted everyone that comes in their door and asks how they heard about them.
 - The personal attention to the customers. How creative he was in building his business especially when he needed to raise funds to expand the business. He started the Black Dog Coffee Grass Roots Stimulus Club where members basically prepaid \$500 for coffee.
 - A quote the owner said, "land sustainability - we need roof sustainability"
 - Product packaging is very important
 - Although menu variation is good, there must be some consistency on the menu for repeat customers (their favorite dishes)
 - Half of the people that come to the store front business come from other states. The owners have worked hard to become part of the community

Summarizing what was learned about the field trips, the importance was not just attending, but integrating what was seen and heard into an overall perspective about what it means for farmers and food entrepreneurs to begin to sell their products to the public. The trainees did exhibit, through their responses, that they had a better idea about the realities of starting and managing a food business. When added to the information provided through webinars, this first-hand collection of concepts and experiences will stay with the Extension educators as they provide support to future food entrepreneurs.