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INITIAL AWARD YEAR: 2009

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PERFORMING INSTITUTION:

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COMMON FIELD - A WHOLE FARM MANAGEMENT EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR BEGINNING FARMERS

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY: A Common Field: A Whole Farm Management Education Program for Beginning Farmers is designed to provide a basic foundation of production, marketing, management, and networking skills that will give beginning farmers an opportunity to succeed in today's challenging agricultural economy. This project is a Standard BFRDP with a focus on whole farm planning using production and management strategies, and business management and decision support strategies to enhance the long-term viability of beginning farmers. The program will be designed as a tool that can be used for all beginning farmers. The project will focus on farmers who are completely new to the industry, as well as individuals who have some knowledge of agriculture but are first-time farmers. Participants will engage in a two-year program. The first sessions of the program will focus on management and planning, intertwined with production information to keep the farmers engaged. The middle sessions will focus on production skills, selected according to each individual farm plan, which will include hands-on training. The final sessions will focus on mentoring and actual implementation of the plans created in earlier sessions. After completing the program, beginning farmers will have a basic foundation in production skills, marketing skills, and management skills on which to build their farming operation. Along with that knowledge base, the beginning farmers will also have a mentor and a network of resources to access grants, educational programs, and other resources for improvements in their operation. Each participant who completes the training program will have a proposed farm plan, along with implementation needs. This will include plans for financing, land acquisition/access and further technical training. Finally, to encourage the producer network, a quarterly newsletter will be developed and focused specifically on beginning farmers. A sampling of topics could include: FSA and NRCS program reminders, marketing updates, recordkeeping tips, and so forth. A sub-goal of the project is institutional change after the funding is finished; we expect our comprehensive Kentucky extension system to have an enhanced ability to move beginning farmers into the category of those operating sustainably.

OBJECTIVES: The three main objectives of the project clearly align with the project priorities of the Standard Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Development Program. Objective 1: Beginning farmers in Kentucky will have a better understanding of, and increase their use of, federal, state and local agencies and their services, with a particular emphasis on USDA-NRCS, SDA-FSA, and the programs available through the Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy. This objective falls under the business management and decision support strategies that enhance the financial viability of beginning farmers and ranchers through resources and referrals. Farmers have many opportunities to take advantage of environmental quality, access to capital, production, and educational programs through federal, state and local agencies. Many beginning farmers are not aware of the network of resources and programs available to producers, as they begin a new production operation or as their operation grows. By giving beginning farmers the resources and a network to access these agencies, it opens the door for opportunities now and as they become established farmers. Objective 2: Beginning farmers in Kentucky will make better farming decisions through recordkeeping, farm planning, and financial management. This objective falls under the

roduction and management strategies to enhance and stewardship by beginning farmers and ranchers whole farm planning, and the business management and decision support strategies that enhance the financial viability of beginning farmers and ranchers financial management training and entrepreneurship business training. As new business owners, beginning farmers need to have an understanding of not only the production challenges they are facing in their operation, but also of the financial challenges. If the farming operation is unable to succeed financially, then the long-term viability of the farm will not exist. By giving beginning farmers the basic management tools of farm planning, record keeping, and financial management, it encourages them to look at the operation as a business venture and encourages them to make sound long-term financial decisions for the farming operation. Objective 3: Beginning farmers in Kentucky will make better risk management decisions for their farms by incorporating marketing decisions, enterprise diversification to spread risks, valuating value-added and direct marketing opportunities, and incorporating other risk management options. This objective falls under the marketing strategies that enhance the competitiveness of beginning farmers diversification and marketing strategies. Giving farmers a better understanding of marketing opportunities and niches within their area of production, allows beginning farmers to focus their operation and develop a long-term plan with potential marketing outlets as components of the planning. Instead of providing a one-size-fits-all program, we will identify the critical areas for each beginning farmer based on their financial, marketing, and enterprise mix and then provide a tailored education program and assistance.

APPROACH: The Common Field curriculum component is a 12 month program designed to support beginning farmers. Specific extension specialists, county extension agents, and industry leaders will be identified as experts in each topic area and will be used to aide in the curriculum development and delivery of materials. The 12 month program allows producers to experience each "season" of the farming operation. Ideally, the first series of classes would be offered in a winter meeting format, where producers would attend one three-hour session per month. The winter session will be followed by a series of spring/summer on-farm demos, and return to the classroom setting in the fall for three additional sessions designed to link all of the components together. The On-line Curriculum The on-line curriculum will be designed around the same basic topics as the face-to-face delivery. Cornell University's, NY Beginning Farmer Project, on-line Beginning Farmer Learning Units will be used as a base for the program. Contact has been made with the coordinator of Cornell's program to elicit support for this project. The established curriculum and website design will be adapted to meet the diverse needs of Kentuckians. Producers participating in the on-line curriculum will be invited and encouraged to all on-farm demonstration sessions. Mentoring Mentoring of beginning farmers is critical to their success. Traditionally this has taken place in the context of family or community, but today many beginning farmers do not have the family or community connection as a resource when they begin farming. The program will work with beginning farmers to connect them with experienced farmers with a similar enterprise interest, so that they will have a mentor that understands the challenges, both production and financial, that the operation will face. This will assist producers in translating the knowledge gained in the classroom to on-farm practical experiences. KSU's professional and paraprofessional staff will work with beginning farmers who are African American, Mennonite, limited-resource, small farmers and women. Their outreach activities will include one-on-one education on the farmer's farms, educational outreach meetings for beginning farmers, educational workshops including monthly "Third Thursday" educational workshops on farm management, marketing, and farm enterprises, and mentorship programs coupling existing farmers with beginning farmers in the targeted counties. A Hispanic outreach program is also included in their educational activities. UK's local mentoring program will also be used to help identify farmer mentors across the state to take part in the program. To supplement KSU and UK's formal mentoring and one-on-one training programs, A Common Field will employ the product of two ongoing programs targeted toward leadership development and entrepreneurship. The Kentucky Agricultural Leadership Program has graduated approximately 220 participants since 1987. The Kentucky Entrepreneurial Coaches Program has graduated approximately 100 highly trained coaches. Graduates from both these programs were trained to lead and stand ready to engage with beginning farmers.

PROGRESS: 2009/09 TO 2012/08

OUTPUTS: In the final project year of KyFarmStart, there were three project groups including 12 of Kentucky's 120 counties, covering a total of 42 counties from start to finish of the project. There were 118 participants, bringing the 3 year total up to 342, the three year project goal was 250. Topics covered in the program two to three hour sessions included: Missions and Goals, Enterprise Evaluation, Business plans, Management and Recordkeeping, Government Resources, Marketing resources, farm equipment, Legal topics (ag issues and policies, water quality), industry focused production field day, Soil and nutrient management, leadership development, sustainable farming (Soils, Water, etc.) ; The Farm & Your Legal Risk; KyFarmStart Field Day; Organic Garden Production Field Day; Cattlemen's Field Day. The project also experimented with specialized training programs across groups. Twelve participants participated in an "Introduction to farm equipment and farm safety" workshop. In cooperation with Kentucky State University, a special group for the Louisville area refugee group was conducted in partnership with Catholic Charities and the Americana Center. The focus is on community gardening for home use, sharing in the community, and selling at farmers' markets. More than 50 participants from nine different ethnic groups participated on one or more sessions (covering topics including: planning the garden; organic and sustainable disease and pest control; fertility management; composting; and, marketing. A special training session was hosted for participants who were interested in pasture based beef finishing. This was a 6 hour one day training for beginning farmers. Based on feedback from the participants more of these refugee trainings focused on hands on learning in the field versus the classroom format from the previous year. Production practices that were introduced in 2010-2011 were taught in demonstration plots. Mentoring was projected to be the only activity taking place in year three of the grant but due to low numbers of mentors and plenty of funding and resources for additional groups, KyFarmStart instead offered the face-to-face program in the final year of the grant. The Louisville Refugee Group, the Old Louisville area group and the Green River area group conducted these trainings. The quarterly newsletter was designed and completed, with the first edition distributed in September, 2011. Kentucky State University's 2010 Small, Limited-Resource, Minority Farmers Conference had 150 participants, there were seven FARMSTART beginning farmers mentored by Small Farm Assistants, we had an additional 34 mentored beginning farmers, not including the 40 refugee farmers. Two special sessions were conducted - one focused on promotion and recruiting diverse participant groups and a second on whole farm planning for small farms. The Third Thursday Programs is also used as a KyFarmStart resource, and about 78 participants were beginning farmers. **PARTICIPANTS:** Nothing significant to report during this reporting period. **TARGET AUDIENCES:** Nothing significant to report during this reporting period. **PROJECT MODIFICATIONS:** Nothing significant to report during this reporting period.

IMPACT: 2009/09 TO 2012/08

The KyFarmStart project evaluation includes participant surveys, six months after the last session to measure short term outcomes, along with focus groups of each group. The first survey had a response rate of 57 percent and the survey of the second year participants had a response rate of 52percent. Results presented represent the first two of three project cohorts. * Participants' change in knowledge gained was assessed and results were significantly positive. In every one of 11 categories, the percentage of beginning farmers indicating they were at a "no knowledge" or "beginner" level declined, while those indicating a "knowledgeable" or "expert" level increased. The self reported level of knowledge doubled in six categories. For example, in the area of "legal aspects of farming", 22percent reported a "knowledgeable or expert" level of knowledge before the program, while 70percent rated themselves in that category after the program; for soils, the percentages are 32percent before and 72percent after. The most dramatic improvement was in farm business plans. Only 7percent were at "knowledgeable" or "expert" level before the program, but 84percent felt that they were at one of those levels after completing the program. * Among the first two cohorts, the KyFarmStart Program met the expectations of 86percent of participants, and while 5percent felt that KyFarmStart failed to meet their expectations. Approval ratings were higher in the first year. * KyFarmStart improved the level of involvement in the farm business, with 68 percent being involved or very involved before the program, compared to 88 percent after the program. * While mentoring was offered,

6percent of the program participants did not plan to participate. Focus groups data suggested that mentoring was happening, but in an informal framework. * The typical KyFarmStart participant had a farming operation with 460 acres (more than twice as large as the Kentucky average farm) and 6 years experience. Fifty one percent of KyFarmStart participants defined themselves as part-time farmers. The legal status of participants farms was 63percent sole owner; 2percent partnerships and 18percent some type of corporation. * About 62 percent of the second cohort were males and 1 percent were married. * Among the KyFarmStart participants 6percent have received some high school education, 5percent are high school graduates, 23percent have some college education and 55percent are college graduates. * 2percent are under 30 years of age and 42percent are over 45 years of age - a bimodal distribution; * Limited resource farmers with gross farm sales not exceeding \$150,000 and a household income of less than \$25,000 represented 16percent of survey respondents. * KyFarmStart Participants are involved in a number of enterprises. Beef cattle, vegetables, grain production and forage production represent the most common industries, but almost every enterprise possible in Kentucky is being considered.

PUBLICATIONS (not previously reported): 2009/09 TO 2012/08

no publications reported this period

PROGRESS: 2010/09/01 TO 2011/08/31

OUTPUTS: The project's logic model outputs are listed as - * face to face educational sessions, * on-farm demonstrations, * on-line curriculum, * KSU small farms conferences * mentoring During the second project year (fall 2010- fall, 2011), there were five project groups including 11 of Kentucky's 120 counties, covering a total of 30 counties so far in the project. There were 115 participants, bringing the two year total up to 244. (The three year project goal is 250.) Topics Covered in a typical face-to-face program, 2-3 hour sessions: (Mammoth Cave West area) Mission and Goals, Whole farm planning; resources- FSA, NRCS, Fish & Wildlife, Forestry, Governors Office of Agricultural Policy; Resource Inventory, Enterprise budgets; Farm Profitability (Business Plan Development); Sustainable Farming (Soils, Water, etc.) ; The Farm & Your Legal Risk; KyFarmStart Field Day; Organic Garden Production Field Day; Cattlemen's Field Day. The project also experimented with specialized training programs across groups. Twelve participants participated in a "Introduction to farm equipment and farm safety" workshop. In cooperation with Kentucky State University, a special group for the Louisville area refugee group was conducted in partnership with Catholic Charities and the Americana Center. The focus is on community gardening for home use, sharing in the community, and selling at farmers' markets. More than 50 participants from nine different ethnic groups participated on one or more sessions (covering topics including: planning the garden; organic and sustainable disease and pest control; fertility management; composting; and, marketing. Mentoring networking/meeting sessions at the annual conferences of the Kentucky Cattlemen's Association; Kentucky Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association; Kentucky Women in Agriculture. Mentoring was also provided on a group basis by farmers in the Northern Bluegrass group. The on-line portion of the project (www.ca.uky.edu/KyFarmStart) includes modules on farm planning, enterprise selection; supporting worksheets; FAQ's for beginning farmers, including loans and other resources; and information about on-going county based sessions. The quarterly newsletter was designed and completed, with the first edition distributed in September, 2011. Kentucky State University's 2010 Small, Limited-Resource, Minority Farmers Conference had 150 participants, there were seven FARMSTART beginning farmers mentored by Small Farm Assistants, we had an additional 34 mentored beginning farmers, not including the 40 refugee farmers. Two special sessions were conducted - one focused on promotion and recruiting diverse participant groups and a second on whole farm planning for small farms. The Third Thursday Programs is also used as a KyFarmStart resource, and about 78 participants were beginning farmers. PARTICIPANTS: Extension agents from over 30 counties have now participated in the KyFarmStart program. Before leading a group, most of these agents participated in agent training provided by state level extension specialists. Extension specialists from many disciplines provided direct training to participants. They come from program areas including: livestock, horticulture; soils; economics; marketing; entomology, agricultural engineering; resources and nutrient management; forestry; communications. Partner organizations, following the project plan, include: Farm Services

agency; Natural Resources Conservation Service; Ky Ag Finance Corporation; the Kentucky Cattleman's Association; Kentucky Women in Ag. New (unplanned partners) include: the Agricultural Legacy Initiative of the Community Farm Association; Catholic Charities and the American Center - both refugee serving organizations. Two graduate students, along with their major professors, are conducting research on beginning farmers in cooperation with the project. TARGET AUDIENCES: The average KyFarmStart participant had a farming operation with 432 acres and 6 years experience. Forty-six percent of KyFarmStart participants define themselves as part-time, while 54% work full-time * Among the KyFarmStart participants 4% have received some high school education, 14% expressed high school graduate as their education level, 26% pursued some college education and 55% are college graduates; 37% are under 30 years of age and 40% are over 45 years of age - a bimodal distribution; * Limited resource farmers with gross farm sales not exceeding \$150,000 and a household income of less than \$25,000 represented 18% of survey respondents. PROJECT MODIFICATIONS: Nothing significant to report during this reporting period.

IMPACT: 2010/09/01 TO 2011/08/31

The KyFarmStart project evaluation includes participant surveys, six months after the last session to measure short term outcomes, along with focus groups of each group. The first survey had a response rate of 57%. Results presented represent the first of three project cohorts. * Participants' knowledge gained was significant. The self reported level of knowledge doubled in six categories. For example, in the area of "legal aspects of farming", 28% reported a "knowledgeable or expert" level of knowledge before the program, while 70% rated themselves in that category after the program; for soils, the percentages are 33% before and 73% after. The KyFarmStart Program met the expectations of 93% of participants with the 6% remaining neutral. The other 3% felt that KyFarmStart failed to meet their expectations. * The average KyFarmStart participant had a farming operation with 432 acres and 6 years experience. Forty-six percent of KyFarmStart participants define themselves as part-time, while 54% work full-time * Among the KyFarmStart participants 4% have received some high school education, 14% expressed high school graduate as their education level, 26% pursued some college education and 55% are college graduates 37% are under 30 years of age and 40% are over 45 years of age - a bimodal distribution; * Limited resource farmers with gross farm sales not exceeding \$150,000 and a household income of less than \$25,000 represented 18% of survey respondents. * KyFarmStart Participants are involved in a number of enterprises. Beef cattle, vegetables, grain production and forage production represent the most common industries, but almost every enterprise possible in Kentucky is being considered. * Mentoring - based on focus group content, participants received mentoring from many sources, including experienced farmers, (surprisingly) other beginning farmers with complementary skills and experiences; and county extension agents. Several participants are interested in participating in the KyFarmStart Mentorship Program, with 66% responding that they plan on participating. * An outcome which is difficult to capture is the number of participants who drop out of the program because they learn that farming is not a good use of their resources. One agent reported that two of her participants directly told her that the project saved them many thousands of dollars by helping them understand what farming entails, information which removed the romanticism of farming and, from their perspectives, enabled them to make good decisions for their families.

PUBLICATIONS: 2010/09/01 TO 2011/08/31

APPROACHING BEGINNING FARMERS AS A NEW STAKEHOLDER FOR EXTENSION Lee Meyer, Jennifer Hunter, Ani Katchova, Sarah Lovett, Dawn Thilmany, Martha Sullins, and Adrian Card, CHOICES, 2nd Quarter 2011 26(2)

PROGRESS: 2009/09/01 TO 2010/08/31

OUTPUTS: Outputs: Outputs in the project's logic model are listed as - * face to face educational sessions, * on-farm demonstrations, * on-line curriculum, * KSU small farms conferences Demographics: Socially disadvantaged: 37 (29%) Limited Resource: 21 (16%) Farm Workers 83 (64%) Females: 36 (28%) Currently Farming: 100 (78%) Less than one year in farming: 30 (23%) Total: 129 participants in four groups in 15 of Kentucky's 120 counties. Face to Face: Four multi-county programs were implemented during the first year. * Anderson, Fayette, Franklin, Jessamine, Mercer and Woodford counties (Ky River Area)- 47 participants * Pulaski, Wayne and Russell Counties (Cumberland River, 25 participants) *

avies and Henderson Counties - Green River Area (30 participants) * Scott, Harrison, Bourbon and Nicholas counties - N. Bluegrass area (27 participants) Topics included: Resource and Nutrient Management, Water Quality Plans, Farm Estate Planning Forage/Livestock Field Day Farmstead and Natural Resource Inventory - Financing Your Operation Farm and Legal Risk Sustainable Farm Living Small poultry Flocks Bee Keeping Enterprise evaluation, Budgeting Small Ruminant Production Forage Production Vineyard and Winery Animal composting Business Plans Land Use Planning Beef Production Technology Field Days - Each included at least three field day to provide experiential learning opportunities. Topics included: Commercial Vegetable and Fruit Production and Agritourism Small Ruminant Production and Forage Production Farm Safety (PTO, Sun, Chainsaw, ATV, Water, Mower) Cattle backgrounding and Grazing; Young Orchard; Vineyard and Winery On-Line Curriculum: Web Site: www.ca.uky.edu/KyFarmStart A web site has been designed and launched. It includes self-paced lessons which are designed to be a supplement as well as a replacement to the face to face classroom setting that is provided throughout the state at county extension offices. We understand that sometimes the best time to study and research is closer to midnight and this is one alternative to the county extension office setting. Why do I want to farm Mission, Goals and Tactics - Coming Soon! Establishing the reason that you want to farm will be key in determining your enterprise selection, marketing strategies, and business plan. Identifying your personal farm mission, goals, and tactics to achieve your goals allows you the opportunity to clearly identify why you want to farm. What do I want to farm PRIMER (currently available) Identifying a viable farm enterprise will build upon the management skills and strategies from the previous chapter. Your current access to land, labor, and financial resources will greatly influence your enterprise. Clearly thinking through your enterprise selection on paper prior to implantation can help you evaluate the potential for success. Modules in the early stages of development include: soils, woodlot management, environmental considerations and farm business planning Kentucky State University Small Farm Conference: All participants have been invited to attend. The program will include sessions targeted to beginning farmers. PARTICIPANTS: The Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service has promoted the KyFarmStart program (Kentucky Beginning Farmer Program) through a variety of outlets. Media outlets have been used to both publicize the award of the USDA grant and to recruit beginning farmers for training. a. Newsletter: 3 Publicity and recruitment materials have appeared in variety of newsletters targeting beginning farmers in Kentucky. Examples of newsletter publications include: University of Kentucky Department of Agricultural Economic Newsletter University of Kentucky Department of Agricultural Economic, Economic and Policy Update Kentucky Women in Agriculture Quarterly Newsletter b. Workshop and Related Event Flyers/brochures - 5 A statewide promotional flyer for the KyFarmStart program was produced. Additionally, each county-level program produced a brochure specific to their county programming. c. Audio/video tapes or CDs - 1 The University of Kentucky Department of Agricultural Communications developed a KyFarmStart promotional video. The video has been distributed on DVD and posted to YouTube d. Websites - 3 The Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service has developed the KyFarmStart website, www.ca.uky.edu/kyfarmstart, which provides clientele information on educational programs offered as part of the KyFarmStart program, it also provides direct links to the educational material. The KyFarmStart program has also been promoted directly on the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture and the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service homepages. e. Media Exposure - statewide The KyFarmStart program has received statewide media exposure. The Department of Agricultural Communication provided a statewide press release which was placed in numerous local newspapers. Additional articles have appeared in statewide media outlets, such as The Lexington Herald Leader, The Lane Report, The Farmer's Pride, Minority Landowner, and Cow Country News. Local county extension agents have also provided news article to local media sources. The KyFarmStart program has been promoted with a statewide radio announcement as well as local radio promotions provided by the county extension agent. f. Number of peer -reviewed journal articles - N/A TARGET AUDIENCES: Demographics: Socially disadvantaged: 37 (29%) Limited Resource: 21 (16%) Farm Workers 83 (64%) Females: 36 (28%) Currently Farming: 100 (78%) Less than one year in farming: 30 (23%) Total: 129 participants in four groups in 15 of Kentucky's 120 counties. PROJECT MODIFICATIONS: Nothing significant to report during this reporting period.

IMPACT: 2009/09/01 TO 2010/08/31

Outcomes: The target audience over the three years is 250 participants. There were 129 of the target in the first year of the program. Participant interest in the program has increased, and we expect to support seven to ten groups in year two and significantly exceed the goal of 250 participants. The planned outcome, (from the logic model in the proposal), "Participants will increase knowledge and skills in the areas of external resources, enterprise management, production strategies, production requirements, marketing, inventory of resources, and management." All of the groups covered the topics for the planned outcomes in specific sessions. We have developed an evaluation instrument which will focus on behavior change immediately following the each group's last session (only one is finished as of 15 October 2010) and after one year. One specific, short term outcome is that one group has organized a trip to the Chicago Board of Trade to continue and expand their learning about marketing strategies.

PUBLICATIONS: 2009/09/01 TO 2010/08/31

0 publications reported this period