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Program Name: Beginning Farmer and Rancher

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Non-Technical Summary

The agricultural processing sector and the production agriculture sector together account for \$15.2 billion in total economic output in Utah after adjusting for multiplier effects. Based on Utah's 2008 Gross State Output, production agriculture and its associated processing sector accounts for 13.9% of total state output. NASS Utah 2007 agricultural census data indicate 25,762 operators on farms and ranches. Of these, 30.2% (7,766 operators) were present 9 or fewer years on the farm. Additionally, the same data indicate an average age of 54.6 years for operators. The demands of food production created by a doubling of food demand over the next 50 years will create challenges in sustainability and production. New ranchers often find it difficult to get started or to continue the family tradition of producing food and fiber. This group has also been shown to participate less in government programs and farm and ranch differently. One difference is beginning farmers embrace and incorporate newer technologies when compared to those who have been farming or ranching longer. In the most recent NASS census data, approximately 5% of ranch operators were under the age of 34 years (260 statewide). While age is not a definitive indicator of "beginning ranchers" this provides some clue to the number. In three of Utah's more prolific ranching counties (Box Elder, Cache, and Rich), 40 ranch operators could be considered "beginning". The Beehive Master Beef Manager Program (BMBM) was created to educate Utah cattle producers about best management practices and to mitigate risk. The Cow/Calf Management Guide and Cattle Producer's Library (CCMG) was used as a reference for the BMBM Program, together with supplemental materials provided by the various instructors. The BMBM program model will be used and called the Beehive Master Livestock Manager (BMLM) program. With profit margins continuing to grow smaller and input costs ever increasing, the beginning rancher is forced to look towards niche income areas. Niche markets such as Organic Beef and Natural Beef, offer chances for beginning ranchers. But these niche groups will take only top performing cattle, uniform genetics, and the requirements for participation are often unclear and daunting. Premiums are also available when producers incorporate marketing techniques such as uniform genetics, lots, age and source verification, and verifiable health (preconditioning) programs. Our Utah beginning rancher program will incorporate these value added programs into our instruction and genetic benchmarking to demonstrate the value of utilizing these programs. In Utah, 67.1 percent of the state is federally owned. The majority of Utah cattle spend some time on public lands. These grazing allotments have been pivotal to the success of Utah ranchers. Ranchers continue to improve these grazing lands. Under the direction of federal (NRCS) and Utah grazing improvement programs (UGIP), ranchers have done tremendous work to strategically enhance range utilization and profitability from these allotments. Our Utah beginning rancher program will work with UGIP to demonstrate the value of range improvement to beginning ranchers.

Accomplishments

Major goals of the project

This program will involve (1) education, outreach, and mentoring to beginning ranchers through the Beehive Master Livestock Manager program (BMLM); (2) demonstration and education on enhanced genetics and value added programs through genetics testing; and (3) demonstration and education of grazing improvement programs through the Utah Grazing Improvement Program (UGIP). Through the BMLM we will also introduce social networking and mentoring to participants. Using the Beehive Master Beef Manager Program model, beginning ranchers will be trained in livestock best management practices on topics ranging from beef quality assurance, animal health, nutrition, selection, marketing, human resource management and range/pasture management. One resource used will be The Cow/Calf Management Guide and Cattle Producer's Library (CCMG). Using this guide and library, topics will be developed by specialists to educate beginning ranchers. BMLM Program Outcomes 1) Attendees will gain additional knowledge on best management practices on a wide variety of topics. 2) Participants will obtain certification in Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) allowing them greater market access to a variety of niche markets. 3) Mentoring with more seasoned ranchers will be made available and set up through this program with help from the Utah Cattlemen's Association's Young Cattlemen and Utah Farm Bureau's Young Farmer and Rancher programs. 4) Attendees' base knowledge and post participation knowledge will be assessed to determine program success. Attendees of the BMBM programs, particularly Box Elder, Cache, and Rich Counties, will be selected to participate in several value added opportunities to demonstrate benefit from these newer technologies. These include: a. Age and Source Verification of calves b. Genetic markers for selection c. Preconditioning program participation and verification Genetics and Value Added Program Outcomes 1) Participants will learn to answer questions such as: Which bull is breeding my cows What traits is he passing on to my heifers and cows Is my breeding program improving my end-product 2) Ranches will receive herd benchmarks for selection traits 3) Beginning ranchers will be able to establish selection goals based on established benchmarks 4) With this level of management, beginning ranchers can begin to target additional markets for their cattle Beginning ranchers will become aware and participate in land stewardship through our beginning rancher grazing improvement program. Participants will be presented information on land stewardship. Participants will be offered the opportunity to apply for federal and state land improvement grants. And, participants will receive help and resources to apply for federal and state land improvement grants. UGIP Participation Outcomes 1. Beginning ranchers will become educated on sustainable land stewardship 2. Sustainable grazing principles will be presented and demonstrated 3. Beginning ranchers will be provided assistance in land/range monitoring 4. Beginning ranchers will be encouraged to develop a land stewardship plan.

What was accomplished under these goals?

We accomplished additional training in land stewardship by partnering with UGIP and providing a retreat for beginning ranchers. This represents our 6th retreat over the past three years. Using a T test, significant learning occurred in all eight areas evaluated by the attendees who completed the evaluation. These retreats have been extremely successful. And when attendees were surveyed in one Grazing Improvement area, three land improvement projects were traced back to various workshops and retreats.

Ranchers' genetic samples continued to be evaluated and results returned. An interesting finding is that parentage done on calves indicated that some bulls were less productive than other bulls. Ranchers find this very valuable when making genetic selections.

What opportunities for training and professional development has the project provided?

We provided opportunity for training and professional development through tuition scholarship or support for a number of current programs. This included Intermountain beef 3910, a week long workshop devoted to carcass evaluation and traits. Beginning ranchers who attended provided positive feedback on merit. We also provided scholarships to attendees of our Utah Beef Cattle Field day where they learned principles of cattle management and timely topic updates. Beginning ranchers were also invited to an extension retreat. Finally, tuition waivers were provided for attendees of the ranch management program who were beginning ranchers at Bridgerland area technical center.

How have the results been disseminated to communities of interest?

We attended and reported at the Beginning Rancher and Farmer 2012 PD program in Rochester Minnesota 6 December 2012.

What do you plan to do during the next reporting period to accomplish the goals?

{Nothing to report}

Participants

{Nothing to report}

Target Audience

During the final year of the project our target audience continued to be beginning Utah ranchers.

Products

{Nothing to report}

Other Products

{Nothing to report}

Changes/Problems

{Nothing to report}