

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Growing Successful Transitions with Beginning Women Farmer Programs in the Northeast and Texas</b>		
<b>Sponsoring Agency</b>	NIFA	<b>Project Status</b>	COMPLETE
<b>Funding Source</b>	Non Formula	<b>Reporting Frequency</b>	Annual
<b>Accession No.</b>	229299	<b>Grants.gov No.</b>	
<b>Project No.</b>	NMW-2012-00671	<b>Proposal No.</b>	2012-00671
<b>Project Start Date</b>	09/01/2012	<b>Project End Date</b>	08/31/2015
<b>Reporting Period Start Date</b>	09/01/2012	<b>Reporting Period End Date</b>	08/31/2015
<b>Submitted By</b>	Ann Adams	<b>Date Submitted to NIFA</b>	10/30/2015

**Program Code:** BFRDP

**Program Name:** Beginning Farmer and Rancher

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**Recipient Organization**

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**Performing Department**

{NO DATA ENTERED}

**Co-Project Directors**

{NO DATA ENTERED}

**Departments**

{NO DATA ENTERED}

**Non-Technical Summary**

Holistic Management International will successfully train 360 beginning women farmers through the proposed project: "Growing Successful Transitions with Beginning Women Farmer Programs in the Northeast and Texas." This renewal application for a Standard BFRDP Project will continue to build on the success of our previous grant to empower beginning women farmers in the Northeast by further developing capacity in the Northeast and beginning a pilot project of that same curriculum in Austin, Texas where there is demand among beginning women farmers. This whole farm planning curriculum focuses on business planning skills, time management, soil fertility management, and profitable sustainable livestock and crop farming practices. Building on the success of the 2009 NIFA BRFD #2009-49400-05967 "Empowering Beginning Women Farmers in the Northeast through Whole Farm Planning" and our 28 years as a non-governmental organization focused on whole farm planning, HMI proposes to take a two-pronged approach to build greater resilience and success in the USDA's efforts to provide whole farm planning training to beginning women farmers. 1) HMI will expand the systems, collaborations, and curriculum developed from training 270 beginning women farmers in the Northeast and improve the efforts of the whole farm planning collaborators to move toward sustained self-sufficiency in providing whole farm planning programming to beginning women farmers in Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Vermont, and New York and training an additional 270 beginning women farmers while continuing to achieve a 75% retention rate for participants. 2) HMI will address the need for whole farm planning training of 90 beginning women farmers in Texas through a pilot project in the Austin area. We will also build capacity for more whole farm planning programming in other regions of Texas in the future by training four whole farm planning trainers in addition to the 90 participants. This pilot project would demonstrate the efficacy of shifting this program from one region of the country to another and what systems and capacity need to be in place to make a successful transition. Key collaborators for this project are: Small & Beginning Farmers of New Hampshire; Community Involved in Supporting Agriculture of Massachusetts; University of Vermont-Women in Agriculture Network; Women in Agriculture Network-Maine; Connecticut Northeast Organic Farming Association; Central New York Resource Conservation & Development; HMI-Texas Local Coordinator. Beginning women farmers are our target audience as they are a growing population of principal operators in the country with over one million strong. 100% of our budget is targeted for that population.

**Accomplishments**

**Major goals of the project**

Long term goals of project are: 1) Continue to expand the knowledge of whole farm planning among beginning women farmers in the Northeast and develop a pilot project for this program in the Austin, Texas area. This newly acquired knowledge will be translated into management actions that will improve the participants' land stewardship practices, their farm profitability, and the quality of life on their farms. 2) Improve land health and water quality on Northeast and Austin, Texas

region farms by expanding a beginning farmer program in WAgN networks where there are those networks and developing women agricultural networks in Texas that specifically focus on whole farm planning and environmental monitoring and record keeping. 3) Strengthen healthy, safe, local food production by training beginning women farmers in profitable, sustainable agricultural practices and whole farm planning skills, resulting in more viable farms. 4) Build community for the growing population of women farmers so they can assist each other during and after this program. 5) Demonstrate a successful model for teaching beginning women farmers whole farm planning, developing self-sufficiency within the programming network, and transferring this model to a different region. Supporting objectives for this project are: 1) 270 beginning women farmers will be selected from throughout the Northeast and 90 from Texas. 2) These women will be trained and mentored in whole farm planning over the course of three years in seven states. 3) Four whole farm planning trainers will be trained during years two and three of the program. These trainers will be selected from people skilled at working with beginning women farmers. 4) Online support such as webinars will provide a forum for continuing education between trainees and throughout their learning communities during years two and three. 5) Distribute educational materials developed via appropriate websites. The key outcomes of this project are: 1) 360 beginning women farmers trained in whole farm planning in the Northeast and Texas with a 75% retention rate through the ten classes. 2) Four additional whole farm planning trainers trained to build capacity in these regions 3) Evaluation demonstrating that training resulted in at least a 50% increase in knowledge and behavior change. 4) Evaluation demonstrating that at least 25% of the participants achieved improvement on their farms (i.e. acknowledged improved quality of life, profit, and land health) 5) Collaborators assisting more in the funding and implementation of beginning women farmer training programs in the Northeast by 2015 6) Building a successful beginning women farmer program in Texas (as noted by metrics above) that demonstrates the adaptability of this model to other regions of the country.

### What was accomplished under these goals?

Over the three-year period, 381 participants were accepted into the program and 311 graduated (82%) by participating in 70% or more of the trainings. Besides the 7 state coordinators that served Texas, New York, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, and Massachusetts, there were 19 mentors and a pool of 15 instructors.

In addition to the 210 day-long sessions that took place over the three-year period (63 of which were on-farm), there was a program-wide listserve and the ability for participants to take online classes of the courses they missed.

### Materials published/developed

HMI developed online modules for each of our ten place-based sessions using our Online Platform (Canvas) so that participants who missed courses could make up work online. 88 participants utilized that training opportunity.

### Key Outcomes

The program achieved an overall graduation rate of 82%. The average level of participant satisfaction of the program was 95% (88-100% spread). There was a total of 54,424 acres under management by participants and they were providing products to over 9,449 customers in their respective states. All participants had been farming less than ten years with a state average ranging from 3 to 8 years. 83% of participants are either farm owners or farm workers.

Both program goals (getting 50% of participants to experience knowledge change and behavior change) were met as evidenced in data below. The last program goal was 25% of participants experiencing some outcome of improved management as a result of the training. Based on surveys, and depending on the state, an average of 59% of participants experienced improved satisfaction in their quality of life. 83% of participants are able to use resources more effectively. 80% experienced enhanced understanding of farm finances, 79% had new or improved record-keeping systems and 74% have an improved understanding of their farm or ranch eco-system function. Additional outcomes were also measured with top common outcomes noted in the report below.

### BWF 2012 - 2015 Behavior Change

(% of participants completing draft or plan or taking action)

**Texas:** Whole Farm Goal 97%, Financial Plan 92%, Business Plan 86%, Market Plan 81%, Land Plan 95%, Grazing Plan 90%, Bio-Monitoring 89%, Forged New Relationships 100%

**Maine:** Whole Farm Goal 100%, Financial Plan 89%, Business Plan 62%, Market Plan 80%, Land Plan 58%, Grazing Plan 67%, Bio-Monitoring 74%, Forged New Relationships 95%

**New York:** Whole Farm Goal 100%, Financial Plan 96%, Business Plan 74%, Market Plan 68%, Land Plan 77%, Grazing Plan 93%, Bio-Monitoring 65%, Forged New Relationships 96%

**Massachusetts:** Whole Farm Goal 94%, Financial Plan 79%, Business Plan 61%, Market Plan 66%, Land Plan 49%, Grazing Plan 63%, Bio-Monitoring 46%, Forged New Relationships 80%

**New Hampshire:** Whole Farm Goal 91%, Financial Plan 75%, Business Plan 81%, Market Plan 72%, Land Plan 64%, Grazing Plan 62%, Bio-Monitoring 28%, Forged New Relationships 89%

**Vermont:** Whole Farm Goal 93%, Financial Plan 85%, Business Plan 81%, Market Plan 77%, Land Plan 59%, Grazing Plan 70%, Bio-Monitoring 50%, Forged New Relationships 87%

**Connecticut:** Whole Farm Goal 89%, Financial Plan 78%, Business Plan 73%, Market Plan 71%, Land Plan 33%, Grazing Plan 80%, Bio-Monitoring 52%, Forged New Relationships 97%

### 2012 - 2015 Key Post-Session Impacts Experienced by Participants

**Massachusetts:** Enhanced Understanding of Your Farm Finances 68%, New or Improved Record Keeping Systems 74%, Improved Understanding of Your Farm's Eco-System 81%, Improved Ability to Articulate Goals and Objectives of Business to Others 79%, More Effective Use of Resources 78%, Improved Ability to Determine Appropriate Management to Address an Environmental Issue 64%, Improved Understanding of Market 70%, Reduced Farm Expenses 39%.

**Texas:** Enhanced Understanding of Your Farm Finances 87%, New or Improved Record Keeping Systems 87%, Improved Understanding of Your Farm's Eco-System 93%, Improved Ability to Articulate Goals and Objectives of Business to Others 85%, More Effective Use of Resources 98%, Improved Ability to Determine Appropriate Management to Address an Environmental Issue 86%, Improved Understanding of Market 78%, Reduced Farm Expenses 61%.

**Connecticut:** Enhanced Understanding of Your Farm Finances 69%, New or Improved Record Keeping Systems 72%, Improved Understanding of Your Farm's Eco-System 64%, Improved Ability to Articulate Goals and Objectives of Business to Others 84%, More Effective Use of Resources 84%, Improved Ability to Determine Appropriate Management to Address an Environmental Issue 67%, Improved Understanding of Market 54%, Reduced Farm Expenses 33%.

**New Hampshire:** Enhanced Understanding of Your Farm Finances 68%, New or Improved Record Keeping Systems 74%, Improved Understanding of Your Farm's Eco-System 81%, Improved Ability to Articulate Goals and Objectives of Business to Others 79%, More Effective Use of Resources 78%, Improved Ability to Determine Appropriate Management to Address an Environmental Issue 64%, Improved Understanding of Market 70%, Reduced Farm Expenses 39%.

**New York:** Enhanced Understanding of Your Farm Finances 82%, New or Improved Record Keeping Systems 86%, Improved Understanding of Your Farm's Eco-System 72%, Improved Ability to Articulate Goals and Objectives of Business to Others 68%, More Effective Use of Resources 89%, Improved Ability to Determine Appropriate Management to Address an Environmental Issue 75%, Improved Understanding of Market 68%, Reduced Farm Expenses 47%.

**Vermont:** Enhanced Understanding of Your Farm Finances 82%, New or Improved Record Keeping Systems 89%, Improved Understanding of Your Farm's Eco-System 81%, Improved Ability to Articulate Goals and Objectives of Business to Others 83%, More Effective Use of Resources 80%, Improved Ability to Determine Appropriate Management to Address an Environmental Issue 73%, Improved Understanding of Market 69%, Reduced Farm Expenses 47%.

**Maine:** Enhanced Understanding of Your Farm Finances 83%, New or Improved Record Keeping Systems 62%, Improved Understanding of Your Farm's Eco-System 72%, Improved Ability to Articulate Goals and Objectives of Business to Others 69%, More Effective Use of Resources 74%, Improved Ability to Determine Appropriate Management to Address an Environmental Issue 71%, Improved Understanding of Market 56%, Reduced Farm Expenses 37%.

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

As part of the capacity building for the program, nine trainer- trainees were accepted into the Beginning Women Whole Farm Planning Trainer Program that began in year two of the program and began assisting lead instructors at that time. They all completed the producer level training and had opportunity to develop teaching and facilitation skills and were given feedback by lead instructors.

### **How have the results been disseminated to communities of interest?**

#### **Program Outreach**

Information about this program was sent to HMI's email list of over 13,000 emails. HMI's main Beginning Farmer page received 21,019 views since the beginning of this program in 2012. Each year approximately 3400 people viewed the annual enrollment page, and the BWF Conference Proceedings page had 1515 hits page views. Two program flyers were developed for state coordinators to distribute for recruiting. An additional 42 web pages were developed internally or posted by our collaborating organizations or through other media. Nine articles were published in print magazines and three of the collaborating organizations also created their own Facebook pages for the program.

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

{Nothing to report}

#### **Participants**

{Nothing to report}

#### **Target Audience**

381 Beginning Women Farmers were trained with 311 graduating (completed 70% or more of classes)

#### **Products**

{Nothing to report}

**Other Products**

{Nothing to report}

**Changes/Problems**

{Nothing to report}