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IMPROVING THE COMPETITIVE POSITION OF WISCONSIN'S ANIMAL AGRICULTURE – PHASE II

Final report to the Agricultural Diversification and Development Grant program of the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

The project was originally purposed by the Wisconsin Agribusiness Council, Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association, Wisconsin Pork Producers Association, UW-Madison College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and UWEX-Cooperative Extension. A steering committee was identified and chose Donald Peterson as chair. Members of the steering committee over time included Don Peterson, Bill Geary, Mark Liedl, Dan Gorton, Ed Brooks, Pat Luby, Jack Rutledge, Dick Vilstrup, Neal Jorgensen, Bruce Jones, Dan Short, Dick Hauser, Keri Retallick, Mike Dummer, Jerry Marr, Sam Miller, Dick Vathauer, Ron Caldwell, Mark Beisbier, Ellery Jensen, Dick Clark and Karl Gutnecht. The steering committee held regularly scheduled meeting at three-month intervals. Following Don Peterson's untimely death, Dick Vathauer became interim chair for the duration of the project. Anna Maenner of AMC provided administrative assistance to the project. Her initiative and timely support of the project kept the committee's activities moving smoothly and productively.

The first activity was sponsoring an animal industry-wide conference to identify the challenges, restriction, limitations, and opportunities facing Wisconsin's animal agriculture. That conference, New Dimensions and Directions, was held on February 25-26, 1997 and attended by 119 animal industry leaders. Key presentations, reactor panels and small group discussions generated a significant list of conclusions and industry needs. These were published in a proceeding, which was distributed to those attending and to other stakeholders including the agricultural press.

The next activity followed Dick Vathauer becoming the executive director of the Blue Ribbon Leadership Committee. Membership on the Blue Ribbon Leadership Committee included the Wisconsin Agribusiness Council, Wisconsin Agri-Services Association, Wisconsin Aquaculture Association, Wisconsin Association of Meat Processors, Wisconsin Bankers Association, Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association, Community Bankers Association, Wisconsin Egg Producers Association, Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation, Wisconsin Farm Credit System, Wisconsin Farmers Union, Wisconsin Federation of Cooperatives, Wisconsin National Farmers Organization, Wisconsin Pork Producers Association, Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Sheep Breeders Cooperative, Wisconsin State Grange, Wisconsin State Horse Council, Wisconsin Turkey Federation, Wisconsin Veal Growers Association, Wisconsin Veterinary Medical Association, Wisconsin Women in Agriculture, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection, Wisconsin Department of Commerce, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, UW-Madison College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and UWEX-Cooperative Extension.

The Blue Ribbon Leadership Committee held its first meeting on November 13, 1997 and 26 leaders representing 20 animal organizations and four state agencies attended. Lavern Ausman, Elk Mound and Larry Clark, Lodi, were elected co-chairs. The conference reviewed the wealth of information from the February New Dimensions and Directions conference and identified four priority issues on which to focus their joint efforts in 1998. Those four issues were published and distributed to all organizations represented. The issues were distributed to other interested organizations and to the agricultural press.

The four issues for 1998 were 1) explore alternative arrangements and opportunities through informal partners, networks, contracts, alliances and joint ventures that can contribute to profitable production, marketing alternatives and new market development, 2) become involved in local and state land use discussions including policy development and implementation, assist in developing and publicizing successful models and examine local zoning laws and rules for obstacles to competitive and profitable agricultural production systems, 3) lead in developing alternative agricultural business structures and production systems for new, current, transitioning and exiting livestock operations and assist in developing new intergenerational business transfer and succession methods, and 4) provide livestock producers with education and training programs to develop personal, business, management and strategic leadership skills that will enhance long term changes for improved competitive and profitable livestock operations.

The four priority issues were widely distributed to member organizations, press, agencies, and educators and general farm audiences.

The land use issue generated considerable activities through increased involvement in local land use discussions. It also focused on the nutrient and manure management policies and educational activities. The Blue Ribbon Leadership Committee received a presentation on the Trempealeau County self-certification nutrient management plan training program from Dennis Frame, Trempealeau County Agricultural Extension Agent. The committee supported the training program and wrote strong supporting letters to the Secretaries of the Departments of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection and Natural Resources and the Deans of UW-Madison College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and UWEX-Cooperative Extension urging similar state-wide efforts to educate and train livestock producers. Additional communications were sent to all county board members and town officials providing them informational resources and contact people on land use issues and nutrient management.

A critical limitation emerged on where livestock producers could obtain current information on land use policy, background information, alternative livestock production systems and a whole host of related issues all impacting on animal agriculture. Working with the Departments of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, Natural Resources, UW-Madison, UWEX, and federal agencies of Farm Service Agency, and Natural Resource Conservation Service, CAARD gathered information and resources into a common information resource, the ONE-STOP SHOP. The ONE-STOP SHOP is an information resource on a large number of issues and policies affecting animal agriculture. It is located on the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection Secretary's page. It has been a widely used resource and is ongoing in development.

The Blue Ribbon Leadership Committee and the steering committee have received numerous briefings on a wide array of topics. Briefings on nutrient and manure management, alternative farm business structures, odor, niche marketing, agricultural policy, agency policy and regulations, and educational programs provide the scope of activity and interest.

1.

The original project had eight objectives. The key objective was 1) to improve the competitive position, profitability and long-term economic well being of Wisconsin's animal agriculture. The supporting objectives included 2) to capitalize on the accomplishments and momentum generated by the recent Animal Agriculture Leadership Conference held February 25-26, 1997, which was an all-important first step in achieving the overall objective cited in number 1 above, 3) to build a strategic planning framework, involving key leaders, agencies, agribusinesses, institutions and organizations, which will facilitate the development of collaborative action strategies designed to accomplish the first objective and will enable their effective implementation, 4) to assess out-of-state competitive challenges and identify regulatory changes and supportive legislation which will foster profitable growth and expansion of Wisconsin's animal agriculture, 5) to apply, as appropriate, the lessons learned from the successful programs and experiences of other states which have significantly strengthened and enhanced their animal industries, 6) to identify and show case successful production and marketing models, both in-state and out-of-state which have significantly strengthened and enhanced their animal industries, 7) to improve the level of business/financial management and marketing knowledge and expertise necessary for the profitable increase in dairy, livestock and poultry numbers, and 8) to preserve and achieve an animal agriculture large enough to maintain and enhance the important infrastructure necessary to give producers nearby marketing outlets and which furnish thousands of jobs to Wisconsin citizens.

The original objectives covered the productive activities of the project. While the objectives did not have to be modified in any way, emphasis did change over the course of the project. Objectives one and eight will be reported more accurately by history than by this short report. However, an important critical start has been made with significant progress on objectives 2,3, 4, 6 and 7. Ongoing activities are continuing on all of these objectives especially 3, 4, 5 and 6 which impact 7, 8 and ultimately 1.

2.

The ADD grant provided funds to use the services of Anna Maenner to facilitate and carry out the activities of CAARD and the committee. Her administrative services and support played major rolls in the project's success. For example, the mailing of informational materials and resources to all of the county board members and town officials was a monumental task. She accessed the list of current people, their addresses, compiled the information to be sent and made the mailing. I have had several responses form town and county officials on the helpfulness of the information. The grant funds also supported the several conferences held by the Blue Ribbon Leadership Committee, which encouraged individuals and organizations support and participation.

The project was very successful in capitalizing on the momentum first generated by the February, 1997 conference. Ultimately 23 organizations and four state agencies actively participated and became involved in helping animal agriculture become competitive. This will be an ongoing success and activity. A very successful November 1997 conference brought together 20 organizations and four agencies to significantly improve communications and recognition of common issues that they could work on together. Briefings on key issues informed organizations and agencies on educational programs available, information for immediate use, resources available, and current state of knowledge of critical issues such as odor and changing policies and opportunities to have input into policy hearings.

The significant challenges were and are the change necessary for the industries to become competitive, the change necessary from agency policy and ultimately society's better understanding of animal agriculture's role, needs, and contributions to society's betterment. The latter will be an ongoing challenge. From a short term perspective, we did not have enough resources in people to generate as much information as we would have liked, for example complete descriptions of 30 production systems for beef cattle, 21 production systems for swine and 13 production systems for sheep not mention other species.

The attached publications outline some of the public outreach activities of the project. The most widely used resource will be the ONE-STOP SHOP web site and its links to an enormous amount of information. The information on and linked to through the ONE-STOP SHOP will be kept current through the efforts of many people. For example, the management training information from the Ag-Ventures Management Program from the Center for Dairy Profitability is available in every county in the state for the asking and includes five notebooks of information, case studies, and work sheets for farm managers.

3.

The CAARD project was outlined to the state's Board of Agriculture and to the Secretary. The CAARD project was presented at two Winter Ag Expo conferences which included the annual meetings of the Wisconsin Agribusiness Council, Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association, Wisconsin Pork Producers Association, Wisconsin Beef Improvement Association, Wisconsin Angus Association, Wisconsin Polled Hereford Association, Wisconsin Simmental Association, Wisconsin Red Angus Association, and Wisconsin Livestock and Meat Council. Additionally, presentations were made to two group meetings of the county extension agricultural agents, Wisconsin Sheep Industry Conference, six dairy steer meetings, two beef cow meetings, and numerous other small groups.

The agricultural press has been invited and has participated at many CAARD presentations. The Wisconsin State Farmer, County Today, AgriView and the Wisconsin Agriculturist have run articles on CAARD activities and issues. A mailing was made to all state newspapers through the Wisconsin Newspaper Association. Individuals in three other states, Minnesota, Iowa and Illinois have asked about CAARD activities.

4.

CAARD project has been and is achieving the results originally expected. CAARD has captured the momentum of the animal industries, focused efforts on a limited number of issues on which it could have impact, and has made its opinions heard by industry leaders, educators and legislators. The critical momentum and strategic framework are in place for future results. The conferences were able to get organization leaders face to face with one another and discuss issues common to all. Thus, they realized that they had much in common. The periodic meetings of the leadership committee provided the opportunity for agency leaders and educators to demonstrate what was available and how to access it. Existing policies were discussed in context of information not emotion. New issues such as odor have been highlighted as future challenges ahead of their becoming highly visible public concerns. The expectations will continue to elicit responses from the CAARD structure.

Results have been limited to a limited number of issues because of the limit on the time and number of people involved. More results will be forthcoming in the future as resources are reallocated and issues resolved and become manageable for other groups. Expectations were high, even for the four priority issues. While a good start has been made, more results can be expected as the momentum continues.

The products of this project were creating understanding among a wide group of livestock industries of their common challenges and what they could do together on specific issues. CAARD has captured the momentum of the animal industries and created a strategic framework for future common activities on priority problems. The CAARD group has developed a limited number of publications highlighting the importance and role of animal agriculture for use with both agriculture and non-agriculture audiences. That publication has been widely distributed and well received. Several publications focused on informing animal agriculture have successfully conveyed increasing understanding among animal and poultry industries. The ONE-STOP SHOP web site provides a common location for specific information on local and state land use regulations and additional useful information to producers and consultants. CAARD has developed positions on self-certification nutrient management plan training and conveyed that position successfully to agency Secretaries and Deans with satisfactory response. CAARD responded to the EPA/USDA Animal Feeding Operations policy draft. Legislators have been informed of the importance of strongly supporting the federal activities leading to interstate shipment of meat and meat products from state-inspected processing plants and the opportunities it will offer small community meat processors.

The member organizations of CAARD learned they had many common challenges and issues on which they could work together. They also realized they could set aside their specific differences to successfully work on common issues. Equally important, the CAARD organizations felt comfortable working together on common issues.

The project will enhance animal organizations talking to one another, discussing positions, developing common positions and working together to make favorable things happen for all livestock. This will assist all livestock and poultry industries in becoming more profitable and competitive in the world's marketplace. Every farm, every rural community, every animal industry will benefit from a better understanding of issues impacting them, alternatives, and what they can do together. Collectively, more information will be available to producers who can become more competitive and thus more profitable. This increased farm profits will increase the stability of rural communities and increase the available resources to producers and local communities.

5.

The ONE-STOP SHOP web resource will help everyone in the state regardless of where they are. They can access the information from any Internet link. Producers, consultants, bankers, and suppliers can access the information. This increased information should increase the competitive positions of producers. Better understanding among producers and agency regulators, legislators, and the public will result in more competitive conditions for all concerned.

6.

We do not have any traditional research available except for the distribution. However, we have antidotal information of greater participation by animal and poultry producers in local land use discussions, we do have indications of such.

7.

Attached are copies of the following publications that CAARD published or contributed to or resulted from involvement of the CAARD project.

ENTERING THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: WISCONSIN'S ANIMAL AGRICULTURE
Consortium of Animal Agriculture Resource Development
Consortium of Animal Agriculture Resource Development: Our Role
New Dimensions and Directions
CAARD Focus issues for 1998
ONE-STOP SHOP for farmers

It is important that CAARD continue to bring together animal and poultry groups in forums for discussing issues, hearing a variety of positions, learning what is known, understood, and unknown on important issues, developing consensus positions, and communicating those positions to educators, legislators, society leaders, and themselves. CAARD's most important role is to be the forum for discussion among animal and poultry industry leaders. CAARD forum will be where issues are discussed, positions are developed, and those positions communicated to leaders, legislators and society.

CAARD has asked the Wisconsin Agribusiness Council if the council would provide administrative services for ongoing CAARD activities. The Council has indicated they will and will provide limited funding for CAARD communications. CAARD will become an unofficial interest program of the Wisconsin Agribusiness Council.