



State of Wisconsin
Governor Scott Walker

Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
Ben Brancel, Secretary

DATE: March 11, 2015
TO: Board of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
FROM: Ben Brancel, Secretary *Ben Brancel*
Daniel Smith, Administrator, Division of Agricultural Development
Daniel M. Smith
SUBJECT: Wisconsin Farm Center Bureau Report

PRESENTED BY: Kathy Schmitt, Bureau Director, Wisconsin Farm Center

RECOMMENDATION: Informational purposes only. No Board action is required.

SUMMARY / BACKGROUND

The Wisconsin Farm Center works with farmers to improve their wellbeing so they can Grow Wisconsin Agriculture. Staff work with farmers to provide objective information they can use to make informed decisions. Assistance is provided through the use of a toll-free helpline as well as individualized service at the farm table. Core services include:

- Financial consultations and feasibility analysis
- Farm succession planning
- Mediation
- Rural Electric Power Quality
- Dairy Herd Diagnostic services
- Minority and beginning farmer services
- Specialty enterprise development
- Information and referral resources

This verbal report will provide highlights of the Wisconsin Farm Center's activities and current trends. The following outline contains the information that will be presented.

Agriculture generates \$88 billion for Wisconsin

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Wisconsin Farm Center
Report to the Board of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
March 11, 2015

Highlights

Outreach

Goal: Increased visibility and awareness, increased referrals and cases

- Focused more on presentations vs exhibits at conferences
- 25 since October
- FSA state, regional meetings
- Beginning Farmer Classes – UW RF; Madison College, UW Short Course SBDG
- Ag Organizations: Farm Bureau Annual Meeting, NFO Convention, WFU State Convention, PDPW. UW EXT. AEA, WI Dairy Plant Representatives Conference

Succession Planning

- Collaboration with UW Center for Dairy Profitability and UW Extension
- Farm Succession Planning Advisory Group
 - Consists of an accountant, lawyer, lender, WFC, Extension, UW Madison
- 3 meetings in October (Eau Claire, Appleton, Madison) for professionals working with farmers on succession planning.
 - 65-90 people in attendance at each one
 - Developing common messages and resource pool
- Helps beginning farmers and senior farmers develop plans for transitioning the farm management as well as the estate.
- Numerous speaking engagements on the topic

Work with Hmong Ginseng growers

- Separate track at GBW annual Spring Grower's meeting
 - Hmong growers are behind their counterparts in understanding nuances of growing ginseng
 - Led to collaboration with ginseng researcher Mary Hausbeck, PhD at Michigan State University to plan small group workshops designed to help bring them up to speed.
 - 6 workshops to be translated into Hmong over the growing season
 - Funded by a Specialty Crop Block Grant

- Midwest Organic Farming Conference

- Collaboration with Farley Center, MOSES
 - Took 65 Hmong growers
 - 2 workshops presented in Hmong by Hmong growers
 - 2 Hmong interpreters for first day of the conference
 - Funded by Specialty Crop Block Grant
- Awarded grant from North Central Risk Management Education for pesticide application training for Hmong growers
 - New educational approach to teach pesticide application by modifying the existing curriculum and making cultural adaptations.
 - Working with Dane County UW-Extension, ARM, UW-Madison. Pilot project to reach 40 Hmong growers (including ginseng growers).
 - Goal is that 75% learn techniques to apply to their farming operations.
 - 20% take the pesticide applicator test and pass it.

Focus on enterprise development

- Reallocated existing position to focus on grazing, organics, specialty crops and small livestock species. Focus at the Farm Gate.
- Helps beginning farmers get objective information to base decisions on.
- Companion position in WI Food and Ag Business Center that focuses on markets.
- Services include resource and network connections, gathering cost of production benchmarks, individual consultations.

Mediation

- 29 mediation cases opened in FFY 14
- 15 covered cases under the USDA mediation grant (includes FSA financial and program disputes)
- 12 family mediation cases not covered by the USDA grant
- 23 volunteer mediators

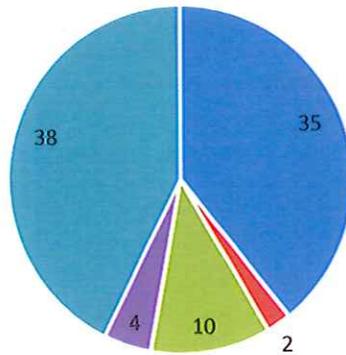
SharePoint

FC staff member developed SharePoint programs for the division to use to track data.

- Tracking events, contacts, cases, outcomes
- Started using it this fiscal year
- Currently 95 active cases
- 40 closed cases and 9 cases on hold

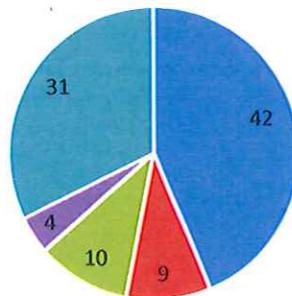
Client Characteristics (July 2104 through mid-February 2015)

Primary Concerns



- Business and/or Financial Planning
- Counseling
- Herd Based Diagnostics
- Stray Voltage
- Transition Planning

Secondary Concerns



- Business and/or Financial Planning
- Counseling
- Herd Based Diagnostics
- Stray Voltage
- Transition Planning

- Outcome measures include:
 - Consulted with an attorney – measure of successful completed on a succession plan
 - Continued farming in the same enterprise
 - Continued farming in a different enterprise
 - Expanded
 - Orderly Exit
 - Data will be available at end of fiscal year

Trending on Helpline

- Increased requests for help from cash grain farmers
- Increasing number of callers looking at bankruptcy options