



Risk Management for Illinois Farmers Transitioning to Organic and Identity-Preserved Crop Production

The vision of The Land Connection (TLC) located in Champaign, Illinois, is community-based food systems in which every farmer has the opportunity to grow food in a sustainable manner, and every person can access local and organic food. They conducted this 2016 risk management education project because of a need for traditional growers interested in transitioning to organic grain production to expand their knowledge of their production and marketing risks.

Producers were offered workshops and other various resources to assist them in identifying and eliminating production, marketing and financial risks in their current or future operations. These workshops showed 127 participants the benefits of a multi-level transition to organic production, crop insurance, marketing alternatives for business financial risks and they developed a familiarity with ATTRA resources. Producers understood the risks and benefits of farming organic as well as how to

formally transition their operation. As a result, 25 producers analyzed their alternatives of contract production, input costs, and business and strategic planning. 15 producers then implemented official documentation forms for organic certification.

New organic producers Jaci and Will were looking for the information and tools to transition to an organic, no-till operation. They knew it would be very risky for them because neither had any prior experience in organic production. Will stated the most valuable take-away they received from this project was the ability to network with other producers. The relationships they developed were vital to the success they've had on their operation. Specifically he said they originally planned to plant transitional corn but after discussing this with other organic farmers and agronomists they met at a workshop, they encouraged him to plant beans, wheat and rye, which proved to be much more economically successful.

As a result of this project, Will has started and continued a partnership with specialists at the University of Illinois creating the IDEA Farm Network. Launched in 2017, this network provides a place for producers to share ideas with their peers. "This IDEA Farm Network is directly connected to the networks created during TLC's ERME project," according to Will.



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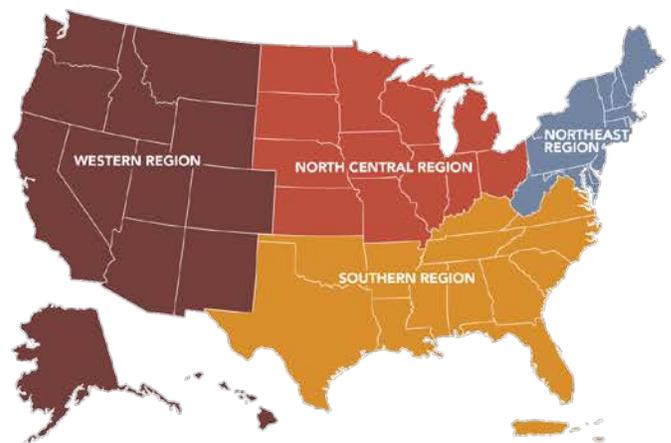
National Institute
of Food and
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“Educating America’s farmers and ranchers to manage the unique risks of producing food for the world’s table.”

Extension Risk Management Education (ERME) is delivered through four regional centers that provide grant funding and leadership within their regions.

Projects are producer-focused, results-based and encourage public-private partnerships. Funded projects must identify targeted results that will help producers manage risk and then describe how the project will measure those results.

Extension Risk Management Education has funded innovative programs that have generated tangible results for producers in every state. ERME is committed to funding results, providing transparent accountability, and encouraging collaboration. View the accomplishments of all funded projects on our website.
<http://ExtensionRME.org>



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