



Assessing Producer Risk Management Education Needs – Special Emphasis Audiences

August 2017

Cheryl Griffith
Public Relations and Communications Specialist
North Central Extension Risk Management Education Center

Introduction

Located at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the North Central Extension Risk Management Education Center (NCERMEC) is one of four centers competitively funded by the USDA-NIFA to carry out a comprehensive program of risk management education focused on agricultural producers. These four centers (supported by a fifth center for online administration) implement a competitive grants program to fund educational institutions, farm and commodity organizations, lenders, consultants, NGO's and other risk management education providers to deliver educational programs directly to farmers and ranchers.

As part of the risk management education process, this Center conducts an enhanced assessment of the north central region to assess risk management needs related to special emphasis audiences. USDA defines special emphasis audiences as those whom are underserved, including Hispanic and Latino, Hmong, Native American, African American, Women, Beginning/Returning and Veteran farmers.

Representatives of the NCERMEC met with representatives of each of these groups to work to determine the issues and some of their identified needs. Topics of discussion included: changes in the workforce, workforce development, producer decision making, relationship building, mentoring, program delivery, marketing products, communication, cash flow and profitability, adding value to product, safety, (product and personal) looking long-term, agriculture diversity, more efficiency and sharing the knowledge for future generations.

Identified Risk Management Needs

USDA considers these producers underserved in part because traditional agricultural programming has failed to reach them. In turn, there are many barriers that have not been bridged by previous risk management programming. The following items were shared by participants of these special emphasis groups during discussion:

1. The political culture in our country in regard to immigration to the United States has changed dramatically since the 2016 general election. Not only are migrant workers concerned about their future in this country, they are also concerned about their ability to continue working in their current jobs. As a result, workforce development education for producers who hire immigrant workers has become a much bigger risk management need. This will be an increasing need for the near future.
2. Also related to changes in our culture, minority groups and veteran farmers noted that they feel the need for increased security on their property and in the information they share with the general public and government agencies.

3. The most important and recurring theme with all of these audiences was relationship building amongst and between educators, and members of these special emphasis groups. It was noted that once a good relationship is developed that trust will follow, albeit slow.
4. Mentoring and the establishment of peer groups would be very good tools for several of these audiences especially for minority, women and beginning producers. Giving these groups this opportunity to work with experienced, established producers would give them invaluable experience, if they are willing.
5. The most important and recurring theme and issue in all of these audiences was the establishment and building of trust with outsiders to their group. The importance of trust in this relationship cannot be overstated. Most relationships with special emphasis audiences are slow to develop; requiring much effort by both parties and can be costly, in both time and money.
6. Transparent communication between all parties is valued very high. Many families have one family member fluent in English who serves as a translator and as a go-between to communicate to their family members. It is advantageous to have the same person providing information and working with individuals consistently as a relationship of trust is built and established.
7. It was noted that underserved audiences prefer one-on-one, face-to-face learning over traditional workshop/meeting methods. Knowing this makes mentoring, farm tours and farm/ranch demonstrations preferred learning activities.
8. Available Internet access for most is quite variable. Most people have cell phones but may not be properly trained in smartphone use or aware of what educational information is available to them on-line. Many families do have someone in the household with adequate Internet skills, but on-line educational efforts may have to be revised to serve those with limited access and knowledge.
9. The current state of the agriculture economy requires that producers have careful and accurate knowledge of their cash flow. This is also something that needs to be taught to all of the special emphasis audiences for maximum profitability.
10. It is known that many special emphasis group producers tend to operate smaller more diverse types of agriculture productions and in this time of limiting production costs, many are adding value to their operations instead.

Managing These Risks and Educating Special Emphasis Producers

One item that members of all the special emphasis groups noted is something all producers should keep in mind in this challenging agricultural economy; that would be for educators to encourage their producers to continue to look at the long-term future and “what-if” consequences to decisions made today. Overall, educational programs that target underserved audiences, needs to address this long-term thought, other existing barriers and build trusting relationships to ultimately improve the potential to have positive risk management education outcomes and results.

One of the resources available to address risk management education is the North Central Extension Risk Management Education Center. This grant program is available to all entities that can deliver and address these needs and reach producers with their programming. More information on the North Central Center, this competitive grants program, previously-funded projects, or other risk management issues is available at <http://ncerme.org>.



United States
Department of
Agriculture

National Institute
of Food and
Agriculture