Farming for Cash: A Continuing Training Program for Veteran, SD, & LR Beginning Farmers

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What Did We Learn?

• Beginning farmers (BF) faced many challenges
  – Finding farmland: key farming decision
  – Labor shortage: key farming decision
  – Local marketing is not as easy as showing up at a FM
    • Lack of access in farmers’ markets because of competition
  – Easy ways to make more $$$
    • Did not plan to use Kentucky’s FM regs (home processing, temporary food vending permits) to increase income
  – Lot of expert-to-farmer communication but very limited farmer-to-farmer communication
    • BF-to-BF collaborations can be very helpful (works better with women BF)
  – Low-cost agroforestry: a missed opportunity
Project Audience

• Goal is to serve beginning farmers via Community Based Organizations (CBO) in Kentucky
  – The chosen CBOs have an agriculture program
  – They serve limited-resource, refugee, recent veteran BF
  – Current interests: horticulture, poultry, apiculture with keyword: sustainability
  – Stage of farming:
    • Most refugees have ag background in home country
    • Most urban SDF are exploring with few start-ups
    • Most Veteran BF are in first 10 years with some startups
Partners/Collaborators

• Key people on our team
  – Community Based Organizations
    • Louisville Grows, urban non-profit CBO; recruitment, education, direct project
    • International Center of Kentucky, CBO serving refugees; recruitment, education, direct project
    • The Growing Warriors Project, CBO serving returning veterans; recruitment & education
    • The Laurel County African American Heritage Center, CBO serving SDF; recruitment & education
  – College of Agriculture, Food, and Environment, Univ. of Kentucky
    • Education in poultry mgmt., AgrAbility; Assistance in recruitment
  – College of Agriculture, Food Science, and Sustainable Systems, Kentucky State Univ. (Project host)
    • Education, recruitment, project mgmt.,
Map of Collaborators
Key Approaches

• Train BF to use social media & internet to acquire farmland, communicate, & marketing
• Workshops/courses/demonstrations with focus on LR/SDF-style farming
  – Before you farm: learn how to make key farming decisions
    • Estimating land, labor, & capital for enterprises & operations scales
    • How should BF invest their resources for the “biggest bang”
• Incubator farms: at each CBO with their own budgets
• Apprenticeships & Mentoring: KSU & UK provide mentors; CBO farm managers to become mentors
• Technical assistance: KSU and UK Extension; SSAWG workshops, Third Thursday Thing
Overall Target Outcome

By the end of this project, we will have helped:

• 300 people (including 67% socially disadvantaged and 33% veterans) trained
  – 90% of trained people will overcome barriers & start a farm
  – 75% of BF that start farming will also participate in the local food economy
  – Create long-term BF training infrastructure for collaborating CBOs

• Evaluations: Quarterly BF surveys documenting progress
What do we have to share?

• Networking with Facebook: opening doors for new farmers
• Low-investment, part-time, urban farming
  – Hydroponics & sustainability
• Agroforestry: limited-resource style
  – Cheap forested land
  – Edible mushroom culture
  – Apiculture
  – Hydroponics
What do we hope to learn from other projects?

- Innovative ways of farmland acquisition
- Innovative ways of farm financing
- Low-investment, low-risk technologies with local marketing success
- Success stories in organized production and marketing among BFs with respect to local food production
Thank you

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