Frontier Extension District # 11

2014 FARM BILL EDUCATION

K-State Research and Extension assumed the lead role in farmer education for the 2014 Farm Bill in Kansas. In the Frontier Extension District, the Farm Service Agency and Extension held nine educational meetings with a total of 550 local producers attending. Many other producers called or visited Frontier District offices for information. Producers learned about the new safety net programs and better understood if they should reallocate base acres and whether they need to update program payment yields.

The U.S. Farm Bill is a comprehensive piece of legislation that covers most federal government policies related to agriculture in the United States, and is typically renewed every five years. This year, producers have the option to select between two safety net programs, Price Loss Coverage (PLC), and Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC), and have the opportunity to reallocate base acres and update program yields. Producers have to decide what is best for their operation. The decision is difficult to make, knowing that the choice will last for the life of the farm bill. To assist producers with this decision, educational meetings were held and computer decision tools were used. In Kansas, the OSU-KSU decision tool was used most often. Extension agents ran the computer program while producers provided information. In many cases, when the producer learned how to run the program, they were able to run other farm numbers and price scenarios at home to help make their decisions.

Producers have been appreciative of the assistance they have received from Extension agents. Many have commented that they understand the Farm Bill much better after working through the computer program. One producer commented that “the one-on-one conversations and question/confusion answering have made the most difference.” Another farmer said that “without the Extension education component, making decisions on this Farm Bill can be like ‘flying blind.’ Until you run a scenario through a tool with your data, it is impossible to understand your options.”
Frontier Extension District

Assistance with Project 17

Extension agents from the Frontier Extension District are working with Project 17, a regional economic development initiative. The initiative was created to improve not only economic opportunities, but also quality of life of those who live, work, and play in 17 counties (which includes Anderson and Franklin counties) in Southeast Kansas.

With generational poverty high in the region, a national program, Circles USA, has been started in Ottawa and two other Southeast Kansas communities. The program uses middle-class support networks to help families break the cycle of poverty.

The Frontier Extension District Family and Child Development agent is serving on the Guiding Coalition/Leadership Team of Ottawa Circles, and is co-chair of the Income and Educational Team. The team works with local employers, workforce development agencies, adult education, community colleges and banks to provide resources and support to help Circle Leaders (individuals in poverty) meet their educational and employment goals.

During the program, Circle Leaders participate in a 12-week class to establish goals and future plans, and learn new tools to secure and sustain better jobs. Once individuals graduate from the class, they are matched with two community volunteers known as “Allies,” who also attend training. A critical key to the success of Circles USA, is matching Allies to Circle Leaders for at least 18 months to help the Circle Leaders achieve their goals. Allies offer coaching, job leads, problem-solving help, and the essential modeling required to secure and retain good jobs. Some meals for the weekly Circles classes are provided by the Franklin County 4-H Council Community Service Committee.

Agent Specialization in the Frontier Extension District

On July 1, 2014, Anderson County joined Franklin and Osage Counties to comprise the Frontier Extension District. Originally created in 2010, the district now has offices located in Garnett, Ottawa, and Lyndon. With the new addition, Kansas has a total of 45 counties in 16 extension districts across the state.

As part of a district team, extension agents now dedicate more time to a specific area of program focus. At the same time, staff members have access to more district resources and support as they work together in a larger team. Across the state, the district structure as expanded educational opportunities, delivery methods, and community service learning. Extension agents work with volunteer program development committees whose members represent all counties in the district, as well as a district governing board to develop educational programs based on the district’s needs.

District staff members and their program specializations are: Fran Richmond, District Extension Director and Community Development; Shannon Blocker, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Horticulture; Darren Hibdon, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Crop Production; Rebecca McFarland, Family and Consumer Sciences, Family & Child Development; Janae McNally, 4-H Youth Development; Rod Schaub, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Livestock Production; and Nancy Schuster, Family and Consumer Sciences, Nutrition & Food Safety.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

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