



Risk Management Toolkit for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers II

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Project Introduction

Expended Amount: \$34,314

Technology and agriculture go hand in hand. Looking to the future there will continue to be an ever-growing presence of technology in farming and ranching operations nationwide. In the last decade farmers and ranchers have incorporated a variety of technology-driven strategies into daily management decisions. iPhones and iPads have become a staple in the lives of both the young and the old alike. This project focused on helping producers to become better decision makers by being able to access vital information on markets, weather, farm records and equipment at any place or time.

Project Participants

The 172 participants in the project ranged in age from early twenties to over seventy with an average of nearly fifty and were predominantly male (80%). They farmed all the major commodities in Texas (corn, cotton, grain sorghum, peanuts, rice and wheat) as well as specialty crops and livestock of all kinds; their farms ranged in size from 1 acre to 25,000 acres. They all had one thing in common, however: the desire to make a novelty item into a useful management tool.

Project Area

The project area covered the entire State of Texas with workshops in 20 locations from the northern tip of the Panhandle in Perryton to the Gulf Coast

in Corpus Christi. Since completion of the project, I have been asked to give an overview presentation to the American Farm Bureau, New Mexico Crop Production Association, Eastern New Mexico Ag Expo and Iowa Farm Bureau.

Project Outcomes

It is hard to quantify actual outcomes from an educational program such as this; however, project participants estimated the knowledge gained at the workshops would benefit their operations by roughly \$1,000 each. In follow-up surveys one participant indicated a return of over \$0.50 per bushel due to timely action taken by using the smartphone applications taught in the workshop. One of the key lessons we learned over the two years of this project was that with this new technology there has also been a major shift in the way people learn about new technology. Gone are the days of a shelf full of operator manuals and a two-day workshop to learn how to use the latest new gadget. A new iPad comes with nothing more than a single small notecard with a picture of the device showing where the four external buttons and switches are and a list of three Apple web sites the user can go to for more information. People learn to use their new devices from other users. This new “peer-to-peer” learning environment means participants who attended our workshops likely shared what they learned with others within their sphere of influence. Although it is hard to quantify the reach of this project in this learning environment, we did hear of many instances of the knowledge being passed along.

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■ Quotes

“Very helpful. Will take time to work through programs to fully understand the tools presented.”

“Great knowledge to have. Thanks.”

“Very informative presentation. Looking forward to using the cost of production and water cost apps! Thank you!!”

“The speakers have so much info it’s hard to process at one sitting!”

“Good workshop. Very informative. Beneficial in learning iPhone and iPad operation in addition to getting a look at helpful apps without having to download them myself. I am leaving with a list of 8 or 10 apps that I believe will help me in the day-to-day operation of my cattle ranches.”

“Very helpful. Will take time to work through programs to fully understand the tools presented. Great knowledge to have. Thanks.”

■ Project Success Story

Yes, I have used several of the apps that were discussed at the meeting. Probably the one I have used the most is Jackie’s Aggie 42 game! It has helped me relieve stress and frustrations! This in turn saves me money the next day! How much is hard to say! I also have weather apps and market apps that I already had that I use quite frequently to make plans for the operation. The market app (through PCCA) helped me contract my milo at just about the season high back in the summer, which made me \$1/cwt over the cash price at harvest.

Ricky Yantis
Lamb County, Texas farmer

***Sandra Martini, H. L. Goodwin and Ronald L. Rainey**, Grant Coordinator and Co-Directors, respectively, of the Southern Risk Management Education Center, serve as editors of this report series. To learn more about risk management education programs and resources, visit the Southern Center web site (<http://srmec.uark.edu>) or the Extension Risk Management Education Program link (www.extensionrme.org).

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