Our Farms, Our Future: The Next 30 Years of Sustainable Agriculture

SARE PROJECT ENC11-127

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Ensuring Sustainable Agriculture in the Face of a Changing Climate

Objective

The objective of this project was to provide regionally tailored climate change and sustainable agriculture professional development for Extension educators. We wanted Educators to increase knowledge and confidence about communicating climate information and learn from farmers on the topic, leading to the development of effective programming on sustainable agriculture and climate change for farmers. The target audience for this project was NCR Extension educators and NRCS personnel who work with agricultural communities.

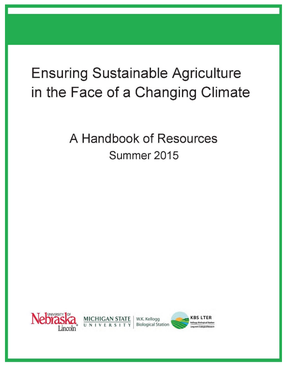
Images from the Michigan workshop.
Top: J.Doll facilitates the farmer panel.
Bottom: small groups explain the climate system.

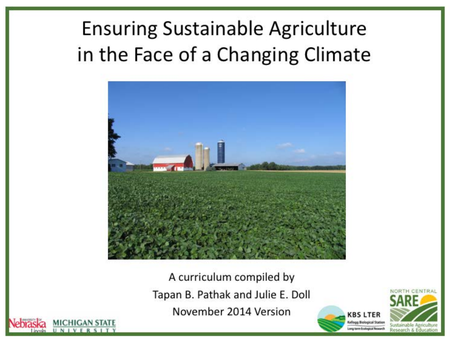
Outputs

We completed the following activities as part of our SARE project:

- Creation of a *Climate Change and Sustainable Agriculture Resource Handbook* and *Curriculum;*
- Two climate change and sustainable agriculture workshops.

Each workshop included regionally-tailored scientific information, a farmer panel, speakers, small group discussions, and a demonstration of the curriculum. Regional trainings were designed to improve knowledge and awareness of educators on climate change interactions and foster collaboration among the educators.





Top: the resource handbook. Bottom: the PowerPoint curriculum.

Outcomes

Post-workshop Evaluation Results
91% increased their understanding of basic principles related to agriculture's relationship to climate change.
96% agreed that because of this event, their motivation increased to implement knowledge in the area of sustainable agriculture and climate change.
91% reported an increased ability to address climate change questions with science-based information and climate change curriculum.
86% attributed increased involvement in multistate extension and outreach collaborations on sustainable agriculture and climate change because of this event.
95% left the training with increased confidence that Extension professionals and farmers are able to make informed choices that lead to sustainable agriculture in light of climate change.
At the event, 87% of attendees agreed they experienced co-learning between farmers and other Extension educators.
76% of attendees agreed that at this training information was gained during the interactive discussions with educators and farmers to help choose pertinent, realistic approaches to help agriculture adapt to climate change.
93% thought the facilitative discussion and other interactive elements of the training improved their understanding of varied viewpoints on the topic of sustainable agriculture and climate change.

Six-month Follow-up Evaluation Results
87% of participants reported the training somewhat to greatly improved their ability to respond to climate change questions from others with science-based information.
67% reported they had used the materials in the Resource Handbook.
100% indicated some to very high satisfaction with all the materials available electronically.
65% of participants said they will not use the factsheets provided in Spanish. However, 35% reported they might use the Spanish materials, including passing it along to colleagues.
No participants had used the curriculum in its entirely.
18% had partially used the curriculum slides in presentations with others.
12% had used the discussion questions that accompanied the curriculum or the audience worksheet handouts provided.
Of those that had used the Resource Handbook and Curriculum materials, a total of 733 people were reported as reached with the materials, by 16 different program participants with the average audience size 44 (range 2 to 250 people).

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