

Empowering Beginning Women Farmers in the Northeast Through Whole Farm Planning

A three year training program managed by Holistic Management International and funded by a grant from the USDA. NIFA #2009-49400 05967

HOLISTIC MANAGEMENT INTERNATIONAL

Yearly Objectives

- Recruit and train 90 women farmers from six states
- Provide 10 six hour sessions with 4 (+) on-farm visits
- Prepare instructors
- Evaluate learning and behavior change
- Provide mentor and management club support
- Group listserv/calendar
- 12 biological monitoring sites
- Train eleven trainers

Course Curriculum

- Introduce Holistic Management whole farm program
- Create a whole farm financial plan
- Increase farm profitability
- Business planning basics
- Create a marketing plan
- Manage time
- Understand soil fertility basics
- Plan land and infrastructure
- Improve land health & sustainable soil building techniques
- Examine enterprise's environmental impact
- Introduce leadership/communication skills

"Being involved with this program has been significant for me in two ways--it has given me a completely new approach to planning for my own land and farming aspirations, and it has shown me a system for assisting farmers that views all aspects of their lives, land, and business as equal parts of the whole that can be managed sustainably without sacrifice."

Jessie Schmidt, Vermont

Program Overview

HMI, along with our partners, have successfully completed teaching whole farm planning to 180 beginning women farmers from Connecticut, New Hampshire, New York, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Maine. With the help of organizations such as Community Involved in Supporting Agriculture, Small and Beginning Farmers of New Hampshire, Women in Agriculture Network-Maine, Connecticut Northeast Organic Farming Association, Central New York Resource Conservation & Development, and University of Vermont, and a host of talented whole farm facilitators and mentors, a total of 120 workshops have been completed since 2010. Year three of the program has begun and we are already planning for the Beginning Women Farmers Conference to be held in March 2012.

Evaluation of this program is multi-faceted, including a retrospective survey to determine actual behavior change and the results achieved from those changes. This is in addition to the evaluation done to measure knowledge change, intended behavior change, and feedback on ways to improve the courses. We have also collected feedback from the mentors, facilitators, and local coordinators to continue to improve the program.



Key outcomes have been that local coordinators are providing more direction for mentor support of participants and these coordinators are also providing greater continuity and support between classes to their participants to build a strong supportive network within each program. This effort has resulted in several more Holistic Management® support groups being developed in these states to support ongoing learning

We also continue to refine the curriculum to improve knowledge and behavior change by simplifying language and concepts while focusing on key learnings for each class. Likewise, we have revised agendas to allow for more experiential activity that focuses on peer-to-peer learning for improved retention of key concepts and providing first steps in changed behavior. This includes creating time so participants can work on their own farm plans as well as learn from examples of farm plans. This focus on discovery learning and giving participants problem solving tools will bridge the gap of content learned in the course and real world application of this concept in the field.

Year One Survey Results

Behavior Change	% Response
Improved Decision Making Skill	87.8%
Developed a Whole Farm Goal	83.7%
Delineated Farm Resources for Management	65.3%
Developed a Financial Plan	42.9%
Developed a Land Plan	34.7%
Developed a Grazing Plan	24.5%



Year Two Survey Results

Knowledge Change		Intended Behavior Change		
Course	Change	Course	Changed Behavior	Response
Soil Fertility	100%	Business Planning	Revise or write a business plan	100%
Leadership & Communication	100%	Time Management	Create systems to prioritize time allocations	94%
Whole Farm Goal	97%	Land Planning	Situate farm layout and/or infrastructure differently	85%
Time Management	97%	Planned Grazing	Implement systems approach to improve plan & soil health through grazing	84%
Financial Planning	95%	Marketing	Expand or introduce new markets	73%
On-Farm Decision Making	85%	Soil Fertility	Monitor for improved soil health	51%
Planned Grazing	56%	<p><i>Holistic Management is more about planning and organizing a successful business, and is oriented towards making the soil and land a better place than when you started.</i></p> <p>Elysa Bryant, Connecticut</p>		
Marketing	50%			
Business Planning	37%			
Land Planning	33%			

Evaluation & Change

Key Programmatic Changes	Program Evaluation
Clarify recruitment materials	Participant evaluation
Simplify language	• Retroactive survey
Create context for personal applications	• Intention to change
Increase peer-to-peer learning	• Ways to improve class
Increase class time to work on own farm plans	• Electronic survey
Reduce lecture & increase experiential activities	• Participant interviews
Provide more direction for mentors	Members & coordinator feedback
Ensure greater continuity between classes	• Coordinator meeting
Improve instructor/participant ratio	Instructor feedback
	Literature research

Before the training we took whatever profit there was at the end of the year. If we wanted more profit, we would add more animals. Now, we plan for our profit. We know what is making money, what isn't, and what's barely making it.

Tricia Park, New York

About HMI

HMI is an Albuquerque-based international non-profit organization. Our mission is to educate people to manage land for a sustainable future.

We believe people count, healthy land is essential, and money matters.

We accomplish our mission by delivering a variety of programs and services designed to educate and support farmers, ranchers and land stewards in their efforts to enhance the land through Holistic Management®, a whole ranch/farm planning system.

For more information, contact Dr. Ann Adams,
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Please Help Us Grow

As a non-profit organization, HMI is always grateful for donations in support of our mission. Visit our website at www.holisticmanagement.org or phone our Development Department at 505-842-5252 to find out how you can contribute.

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