

Maine Beginning Women Farmer Program Results

We've just tabulated more results of our [Beginning Farmers & Ranchers: Women in the Northeast & Texas program](#). These are from the 2013-2014 season in Maine. This program, funded by a grant from the USDA/NIFA Beginning Farmer/Rancher Development Program, was coordinated by **Gail Chase** of Women's Agricultural Network of Maine. This group finished their Holistic Management learning sessions in June and their final farm mentor visits in July. Lead instructors were Whole Farm Planning Instructors **Gail Chase and Diane Schivera**. Diane was also the mentor for the program as a collaboration with Maine Organic Gardeners and Farmers Association.

Of the participants responding to the final evaluation

- 70% are currently farming
- The average years of farming was 3 years
- The average acres under production was 7 acres under production
- The average age was 39 years old
- The types of farm operations were as follows:
 - Cattle/Cow/Calf (2), Vegetable/Fruit/Produce (4), Poultry (1), Goat (1), Pork (2), Flowers (2), Eggs (1).
- The total customers of all participants was 72
- 100% plan to continue farming

Testimonials

"I now have tools to help me determine what enterprises to start."

"I have better relationships with my customers because I needed to talk to each of them about raising prices. I learned how much they value my product."

"Because of the class teachers and class members, I have much more confidence in my ability to really figure out my finances. I think this confidence has helped me approach wholesale markets."

Here are some of the key outcomes:

BWF PARTICIPANT BEHAVIOR CHANGE	% of participants
Forge Relationships That Positively Impacted You	100%
Holistic Goal/Whole Farm Plan	100%
Financial Plan	100%
Marketing Plan	86%
Biological Monitoring	86%
Grazing Plan	50%
Business Plan	17%

Key Post Program Outcomes: Participants Experienced Increase In	% Participants Experiencing Change
Satisfaction with Communication	100%
Satisfaction with Time Management	100%
Satisfaction with Ability to Determine Needed Profit	100%

Satisfaction with Ability to Make Complex Decisions	100%
Satisfaction with Quality of Life	83%

Post-Program Impacts	Percent of Participants
Human Resource Management	
Clearer sense of what your farm is managing towards	71%
Better Ability to Determine Resources Available to You	86%
More Efficient Use of Resources	57%
Improved Decision Making	86%
New Policies and Systems Implemented	43%
Better Relationships	71%
Financial Resource Management	
Enhanced Understanding of Your Farm Finances	100%
Improved Ability to Articulate Goals and Objectives of Business to Others	71%
New or Improved Record Keeping Systems	57%
Clearer Sense of How Your Business Is Projected to Grow in Future Years	57%
Improved ability to discern most appropriate market channels	57%
New markets you have entered	43%
Ability to Identify Business Challenges from Previous Years	43%
Strategies for More Effective Reinvestment in the Business	43%
Improved ability to determine most effective enterprises	43%
New enterprises or products (including value-added) you are selling	43%
Increased Farm Profits	29%
Reduced Farm Expenses	29%
Natural Resource Management	
Reduction in Feed Costs	100%
Improved Ability to Manage Animals	100%
Less Stress for Farmers	100%
Less Stress for Animals	100%
Improved Understanding of Your Farm's Eco-System	71%
Improved Understanding of Your Forage Composition	71%
Improved Ability to Determine Appropriate Management to Address an Environmental Issue	57%
Improved Herd Health	50%
Longer Grazing Seasons	50%
Reduction of Overgrazed Plants	50%
Enrollment in Government Programs for Grazing (NRCS, FSA, etc.)	50%

Course and Topics	% Participants Experiencing Knowledge Change
Session One – Goal Setting	
Develop a Whole Farm Goal	89%
Define What You Are Managing Towards	89%
Integrate Social, Economic, and Environmental Factors into Decision-Making	78%
Inventory Farm Resources	78%
Identify Needed Farm Systems and Protocols	67%
Defining Effective Management Team	56%
Session Summary	100%
Session Two – Time Management	
Ability to Make Complex On-Farm Decisions	80%
Assess How Time is Spent on Farm	70%
Effectively Manage Time on Your Farm	50%
Session Summary	80%
Session Three – Financial Planning I	
How to Increase Farm Net Worth	91%
Determining Viable Profitable Enterprises for Your Farm	91%
Determining Your Farm's Projected Revenue	82%
Identifying Logjams and Adverse Factors on Farm	82%
Ability to Develop Balance Sheet	64%
Session Summary	100%
Session Four – Financial Planning II	

Monitoring Your Financial Plan	88%
Assessing Farm Cash Flow	75%
Skills in Developing Whole Farm Financial Plan	75%
Getting Profit You Need from Your Farm	63%
Delineating Farm Expense Categories	63%
Prioritizing and Cutting Farm Expenses to Guide Reinvestment	63%
Session Summary	88%
Session Five – Marketing	
Using Whole Farm Goal and Financial Plan to Develop Marketing Plan	100%
Marketing Outreach Towards Your Whole Farm Goal	100%
Effectively Promote Products and Services	86%
How to Develop a Marketing Plan	71%
Profitably Price Products and Services	67%
Session Summary	100%
Session Six – Business Planning	
Ability to Use Holistic Goal to Guide Business Strategic Plan	100%
Knowledge of Resources for Developing Strategic Plan for Farm	83%
Attitudes Towards Value of Having a Business Plan to Guide Farm	83%
Ability to Implement Systems and Projects to Move Towards Whole Farm Goal	83%
Ability to Develop a Business Plan for Farm	67%
Ability to Use Financial Plan to Determine Viable Markets for Farm	67%
Session Summary	100%
Session Seven – Leadership and Communication	
Awareness of Communication Patterns on Farm	100%

Using Whole Farm Goal to Guide Communication on Farm	100%
Effective Communication Tools for Farm	75%
Conflict Resolution Skills for Farm	75%
Sense of Yourself as a Leader	75%
Session Summary	100%
Session Eight – Land Planning	
Prioritize Land and Infrastructure Development/Investments	100%
How to Incorporate Natural Resource Issues into Land Planning	100%
Design Strategies to Build Resilient, Diversified Farms	75%
Assess Management Considerations to Guide Land Planning	75%
How Permaculture Fits into Holistic Land Planning	75%
How to Incorporate Social/Legal/Contractual into Land Planning	50%
Session Summary	100%
Session Nine – Grazing	
Value of Grazing Planning	100%
How to Assess Recovery Periods	100%
How to Assess Quantity of Forage in Pasture	100%
How to Improve Land Health with Livestock	100%
How to Determine Number of Animals Your Pasture Can Support	100%
How to Determine the Number of Paddocks	100%
How to Determine Grazing Periods	100%
Session Summary	100%
Session Ten – Soil Fertility	
Indicators of a Healthy Farm Eco-System	83%

Ability to Monitor Farm Eco-System Health	83%
Benefits of a Covered Soil	67%
Importance of Improving Soil Fertility Sustainably	50%
Benefits of Biodiversity	50%
Understanding Eco-system Processes on Your Farm	50%
Session Summary	83%

Increased Confidence In . . .	% of participants
Human Resource Management	
Developing Written Whole Farm Goal	100%
Delineating Farm Resources for Management	100%
Building an Effective Management Team	100%
Identifying Systems and Protocols for your Farm	100%
Using Testing Questions	100%
Communicating with Farm Workers	100%
Providing Leadership on Your Farm	100%
Manage Your Time on Your Farm	90%
Make Complex Decisions on Your Farm	90%
Communicating with Decision Makers	75%
Providing Recognition for Farm Workers	75%
Financial Resource Management	
Getting Profit You Need From Your Farm	100%
Monitoring Your Farm Financial Plan	100%
Promoting Your Farm Products	100%

Developing a Marketing Plan that Meets Your Farm's Needs and Goals	100%
Developing a Business/Strategic Plan	100%
Identifying Resources to Assist You in Developing a Business/Strategic Plan	100%
Implementing Important Strategic Systems and Projects	100%
Prioritizing Cutting Farm Expenses to Guide Re-investment	88%
Determining Weak Link in Farm Enterprises	88%
Identifying Cash Flow Issues on Farm	88%
Determine Your Farm's Net Worth	82%
Increase Your Farm's Net Worth	82%
Determine Viable Profitable Enterprises	82%
Ability to Identify Logjam/Adverse Factors	82%
Determine Your Farm's Projected Revenue	73%
Pricing Your Farm Products	71%
Assessing Your Competition to Understand Your Farm's Strengths	71%
Ability to Prioritize Land/Infrastructure Improvements on Farm	100%
Natural Resource Management	
Ability to Incorporate Natural Resource Issues into Land Planning	100%
Assessing Quantity of Forage and Pasture	100%
Determining the Number of Animals Your Land Can Support for Grazing	100%
Determining How Long Animals Will Stay in Each Paddock	100%
Monitoring Your Farm's Eco-System Health	100%
Assessing Recovery Periods	80%
Calculating the Number of Paddocks for your System	80%
Improving Eco-System Health on Your Farm	67%

Ability as a Grazer	60%
Intended Behavior	% of participants
Develop a Whole Farm Goal	100%
Using Testing Questions	100%
Implement Time Management Tools or Processes	88%
Change Leadership Practices	75%
Financial Resource Management	
Complete or Modify a Business Plan	100%
Complete or Modify a Financial Plan	86%
Complete or Modify a Marketing Plan	86%
Enter Financial Data Regularly	75%
Determine Profit Up Front and Cap Expenses	73%
Change Enterprise Assessment	73%
Change Record-Keeping	64%
Strategically Reinvest in Farm	63%
Monitor Financial Plan	63%
Prioritize and Cut Expenses	50%
Change Business Planning Practices	50%
Natural Resource Management	
Change Land Management Practices	100%
Conduct Biological Monitoring on Farm	100%
Complete or Modify Written Land Plan	75%
Change Eco-System Health Practices	67%

Session Satisfaction	Class Percent rated good or excellent
Whole Farm Goal Setting	100%
Time Management and Decision Testing	90%
Holistic Financial Planning	100%
Enterprise Analysis	100%
Marketing Planning	100%
Business Planning	100%
Leadership & Communication	100%
Holistic Land Planning	100%
Holistic Grazing Planning	100%
Holistic Biological Monitoring	80%