

RuralCONNECTIONS

A publication of the Western Rural Development Center

GET THE FULL ISSUE. EXTENSION'S ROLE IN SUSTAINABILITY

In this issue of *Rural Connections*, Western Extension Agents, Faculty, and Specialists examine the 100-year history of Cooperative Extension and its unique position to effect nationwide change as it pertains to sustainability outreach and education.

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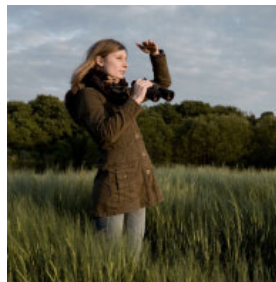
EXTENSION SUSTAINABILITY OUTREACH

Rising to Meet Public Demand

BY ROSLYNN BRAIN

What is Sustainability?

Working as a statewide sustainable communities Extension Specialist, I am often asked this question. My short response is: "sustainability is living with an environmental ethic." Why does the environment serve as my basis in working with sustainability? Because without healthy air, open space, clean water, nutritious food, and clean energy, money and social issues would not matter as we could not survive. [Read More.](#)

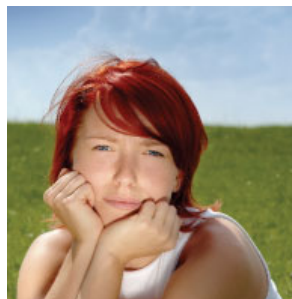


THE SUSTAINABILITY REVOLUTION

Where are we now? What do we need to know?
What happens next?

BY VIVIANE SIMON-BROWN

"May you live in interesting times." This article offers a snapshot of our time, based on my interpretation of the 2012 UN RIO+20 work report *The Future We Want*, and the 2005 edition of Andres Edwards book, *The Sustainability Revolution: Portrait of a Paradigm Shift*. I would like to highlight five key points to know about the Sustainability Revolution; and identify internal stumbling blocks - and catalysts - for Cooperative Extension professionals involved in sustainability education. [Read more.](#)



LAND USE AND SUSTAINABILITY IN THE WEST

Extension's Efforts in Land Use Planning and Sustainable Development

BY MARK APEL

University-based Extension programs throughout the West have long been known as a credible resource to help rural communities address a multitude of issues ranging from childhood obesity to better gardening practices and water conservation. However, as the West has seen an influx of new residents and its rural areas transformed in a relatively short period of time, several compelling trends have emerged to engage university-based Extension efforts in a new programmatic direction of land use planning and sustainable development. [Read more.](#)



THE IMPERATIVES AND CHALLENGES OF ADDRESSING CLIMATE RISK IN COOPERATIVE EXTENSION COMMUNITIES

An Opportunity or an Obstacle to Extension Work?

BY GREGG GARFIN

At the 2013 Extension Sustainability Summit, Extension professionals expressed a diversity of opinions on whether the topic [climate change] should be viewed as an opportunity or an obstacle to Extension work (Brain, et al., 2013). Some participants in climate change discussions expressed discomfort about discourse with their clientele on the topic; their group conclusion, crudely stated, sounds something like, "climate change is the third rail for most Cooperative Extension professionals." An informal tally of Cooperative Extension climate change web-based pages, products, initiatives, formal programs, annual report announcements and strategic plan commitments, which I conducted for this article, demonstrates the diversity of approaches to the topic. My tally shows that 16 states have explicit climate change programs or



research and outreach themes, and 14 refer to climate change in documents and news articles, but lack programs. [Read more.](#)

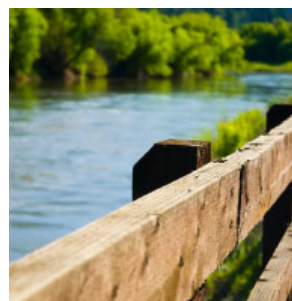
EXTENSIONS'S ROLE IN IMPROVING WATER RESOURCE SUSTAINABILITY

Extension has a 100-Year History Working on Water Issues

BY BOB SIMMONS

It is well understood that water is key to life on Earth, it is also a finite resource that must be properly stewarded. Earth's water is continually cycling through our atmosphere, precipitation, surfaces waters, and groundwater, as well as much more gradually through glaciers. Saltwater makes up 97 percent of earth's water, glaciers 1.7 percent, which leaves only 1.3 percent of that water as potentially useful for people and ecosystems in our ground and surface waters. The role of Extension in water sustainability issues is many-fold. Indeed, Extension has been working in these issues since its inception, as water is integral to agricultural production and quality.

[Read more.](#)



SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

Charting Extension's History and Food System Models for the Future

BY ROSE HAYDEN-SMITH

2014 marks the centennial of the passage of the Smith-Lever legislation, which created the Cooperative Extension Service. The centennial provides an important opportunity to look forward and to actively chart a future that reflects changed circumstances. As we stand on the threshold of a second century of work, urgent and complex challenges face us, including the need to feed a world population projected to reach 8 billion by 2025; limited environmental resources; climate variability; declining public investment in scientific and agricultural research; and the social, cultural, and geopolitical conditions peculiar to our time. There is also a question of our relevance as an organization and a system of practitioners. Are there enough of us? Are we organized and deployed effectively and in ways that strategically take advantage of our assets? As an organization, have we reached consensus on the meaning of "sustainability," the term that defines much of our work today? [Read more.](#)



ENERGY EXTENSION IS CENTRAL TO SUSTAINABILITY

Extension is Retooling to Address Energy Issues

BY MILTON GEIGER

At the 100-year anniversary of the creation of the Extension system, the amended Smith-Lever Act of 1914 now charges the system to "...aid in diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information on subjects relating to agriculture, *uses of solar energy with respect to agriculture, home economics, and rural energy*, and to encourage the application of the same..." (Emphasis added). Despite having two out of the four charges of the national Extension system related to energy, Extension activities in these areas are poorly defined. For example, agriculture has clearly delineated components, such as range management, 4-H livestock judging, horticulture, or soil fertility, but no such clear focus has emerged for Energy Extension. [Read more.](#)



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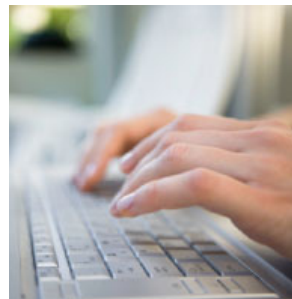
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