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LOGAN, Utah —The Western Rural Development Center has released a DVD training video to help extension educators and agriculture producers increase the profitability of their sustainable agriculture enterprises. The video, “Entrepreneurial Sustainable Agriculture: Alternatives for Processing, Packaging, Labeling, and Marketing into Retail/Internet Environments,” was funded by Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education.

The DVD includes six training segments, each led by an expert in their field. The segments include “The Producer Perspective,” Marketing into Local Markets and Sustainable Marketing,” “New Venture Creation,” “eCommerce Technology and Overview,” “A Primer on Processing Foods to Add Value” and “Farm Bill and Funding Opportunities for New Agriculture Marketing and Enterprises.”

“We organized a partnership of scientists, NGO's and farmers to develop this tool,” said John Allen, “The impetus for this multi-state project was the belief that it is possible to have agriculture that enhances the environment, increases on-farm profitability, maintains a rural quality of life, and supports the communities where the farmers and ranchers live. We hope this tool provides help to those looking for new opportunities that will allow them to continue working the land.”

Allen is the outgoing director of the Western Rural Development Center and served as the principal investigator for the project. He is also a professor of sociology in the Department of Sociology, Social Work and Anthropology at USU.

Produced by Utah State’s K-SAR Video and DVD Productions, the video features experts who were involved in the project from its inception through delivery of a face-to-face training held on the Utah State campus in May 2007.

Each segment has been designed as a stand-alone training or all six segments can be combined to provide a more detailed training on the many components involved in business planning, processing, and marketing agriculture products for retail and Internet environments.

The “Producer Perspective” is led by Linda Gillmor of Morgan Valley Lamb located in Delta, Utah. “When we were doing our business planning, the first thing we had to do was decide who we [as a business] are, and then we had to tell our story,” Gillmor says. She shares her unique perspective as a producer. She discusses how their family business developed and refined the business plan and sales strategy, and how they sell their product through multiple retail outlets including farmers’ markets, restaurants and online sales.

Jim Dyer, an agriculture producer in southwestern Colorado and program director for the Southwest Marketing Network, led the segment on “Marketing into Local Food Systems and Sustainable Marketing.” “Why not make sure that everything that happens after the farm gate is as sustainable as possible,” he suggests.



Dyer provides his audience with information and resources on sustainable marketing and explores ideas for moving into local markets, such as Farm-to-School programs. He also calls upon agriculture producers to consider how they are producing and packaging their products and to question the sustainability of their practices. Through his work with the Southwest Marketing Network, Dyer has a history of grass roots organizing, program development and program delivery around sustainable agriculture marketing issues.

“The economics have to allow not only for profit today but growth into the future,” says Aaron Johnson, who led the segment “New Venture Creation.” Johnson is a professor at the University of Idaho and formerly worked at Oregon State University’s Food Innovation Center. His extensive research on business development and his experience with business start-ups and expansions enables Johnson to succinctly deliver key points for business owners and educators to consider when pursuing a business venture. Johnson has helped hundreds of potential food entrepreneurs evaluate their business concept and develop their business plan. His involvement goes beyond “how to” and “what if” discussions to the research and analysis of business development. Throughout his career he has worked with process engineers, food technologists and marketing specialists in a variety of industries.

Eric Hawley, associate vice president of information technology at Utah State University, provided the training for “eCommerce Overview and Technology” wherein he stresses the relative ease and low cost of gaining a Web presence. “eCommerce is not just about selling online. eCommerce is about communicating,” says Hawley during his segment.

He goes on to shed light on how producers can gain an online presence without investing a great deal of money. He encourages them to consider utilizing peer-to-peer web sites, such as eBay and Amazon.com to sell their products. Hawley is a member of several higher education advisory boards and has presented at numerous eCommerce workshops throughout the West.

Barbara Rasco, a Washington State University scientist, delivers “A Primer on Processing Food to Add Value.” Her unique educational background in food science and biochemical engineering, along with her law degree, enables Rasco to provide her audience with detailed, yet accessible, information pertaining to food processing and the regulations that govern it in the United States.

“As you design your food processing plan, keep in mind you want to keep the food clean, keep the bad things out and kill bacteria if you can,” Rasco says. Furthermore, Rasco discusses the growing markets in specialty foods and suggests agriculture producers could consider developing products for these niche markets. These include ethnic foods, nutraceuticals and others.

“Farm Bill and Funding Opportunities for New Agriculture Marketing and Enterprises” is led by Kim Leval. “The Farm Bill policies impact the programs we tap into for funding, community support and farmers’ markets,” Leval says. She worked for the Center for Rural Affairs and is now employed with Rural Development Initiatives, Inc. She has a long history of working with producers on marketing, small business development and policy issues relevant to sustainable farm and rural development.

People interested in a DVD can contact the Western Rural Development Center at 435.797.9732 or wrdc@usu.edu.

K-SAR Video and DVD Productions is an award-winning production facility located at Utah State University providing full-service video and DVD production to USU and state agencies.

Western SARE is a program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture that functions through competitive grants conducted cooperatively by farmers, ranchers, researchers and agriculture professionals to advance farm and ranch systems that are profitable, environmentally sound and good for communities.

The Western Rural Development Center, hosted by Utah State University, is one of four regional centers funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Services to strengthen the capacity of local citizens to guide the future of their rural communities. The Western Rural Development Center links the research and extension capacity of land-grant universities in 13 western states and four U.S. territories.

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Contact: Betsy H. Newman, 435.797.0218, betsy.newman@usu.edu
Writer: Betsy H. Newman, 435.797.0218, betsy.newman@usu.edu