

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

“Funding for Farmers” series brings new research & structures to Palouse area farms

AT A GLANCE

In addition to education, small acreage farmers need access to resources for on-farm projects that support their operations.

The Situation

Small acreage farmers participating in local input sessions on the Palouse expressed a need for access to capital and funding for on-farm projects that support their operations. Farmers may be eligible for, but unaware of, programs that can help them implement on-farm research projects, install conservation measures or expand their business. Entities providing this type of funding include the USDA Western Sustainable Agriculture Research Education (WSARE) program, the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) and the KIVA loan program.

Our Response

Between winter of 2016-2018, University of Idaho Extension faculty collaborated with community partners to offer multiple educational programs on grant, cost share and no-interest loan options for small farmers. Target audiences included small farmers and ranchers, agriculture technical assistance providers and community members interested in supporting local agriculture. Offered in multiple formats and at different times of day, 219 stakeholders were reached over the two year-period.



Left: Susan Fluegel of Grey Duck Farm. Photo by: Jane Fluegel.
Right: Hoop House Workshop 2016. Photo by: Iris Mayes.

In December 2016, UI Extension collaborated with USDA-NRCS to offer a workshop on hoop houses (also called high tunnels) and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) cost-share funding for hoop house construction. Workshop topics included hoop house designs, structural issues and how to site them. The workshop included two farm visits where participants entered hoop houses that were warm on a snowy day and learned about snow load and other technical aspects of hoop house management.

In January and October of 2017 and November 2018 UI Extension partnered with Rural Roots, a small farm non-profit organization, to host three evening sessions on “Funding for Farmers.” Held at local farm-to-fork brewery frequented by small acreage farmers, these

sessions covered the KIVA loan program, EQIP program and WSARE producer on-farm research grants. The October 2017 presentation included a live Facebook feed. Two additional programs were offered using distance technology, a Zoom presentation to an Inland Northwest Farmer group and October 2018 live webinar that was recorded and is available at: www.cultivatinguccess.org. During the live presentations and webinars, speakers were available for question and answer sessions.

The table shows the number of attendees at each event; several were interested in applying for funding.

Program	Date	Attendees
Hoop House Workshop	December 2016	20
Funding for Farmers	October 2017	16
Funding... Facebook Live Visits	During and after program	139
Presentation to Inland Northwest Farmers	October 2017	7
Local Financing for Farm & Food Businesses	January 2017	17
Funding... Online Webinar	October 2018	4
Funding... Post-Webinar visits	Since October 2018	2
Funding for Farmers	November 2018	14
Total Attendees		219

Program Outcomes

Several people applied for and received grant and EQIP funding due to this outreach effort. Susan Fluegel of Grey Duck Farm in Whitman County, WA, attended one of the “Funding for Farmers” sessions

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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and applied for WSARE funding. She was awarded \$20,000 to study the relationship between flower architecture and pollinators. Her study, “Does More Diverse Plant Architecture in Pollinator Habitats Influence Native Pollinator and Beneficial Insect Abundance and Diversity?” which, includes on-farm research of commercial crops, will begin in spring 2019.

Three of the hoop houses funded by USDA-NRCS were the direct result from our educational programs. One couple who attended the Hoop House Workshop in December 2016 was awarded EQIP funding to build a hoop house on their property. They volunteer as 4-H program leaders and contribute extra produce to local food pantries through Backyard Harvest, a local non-profit providing food access to low-income families and seniors on the Palouse. The couple will be able to provide more fresh produce for themselves and others while also teaching youth and conserving soil and water on their property. Being able to see the structures close-up and their role in conservation helped all participants understand the hoop houses potential.

The Future

University of Idaho Extension will continue to partner with local organizations to extend information about funding opportunities for small farms at area workshops and conferences, such as the annual Palouse-Clearwater Food Summit and Cultivating the Harvest Small Acreage Farming Conference. Recordings are available through the Cultivating Success™ website and [Idaho Small Farms and Local Food](#) Facebook.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

The “Funding for Farmers” series was hosted by UI Extension educators, Iris Mayes and Colette DePhelps. Cooperators include Chris Johnson and Pamela Pavek from USDA-NRCS, Marci Miller from Rural Roots and UI Extension educator Lauren Golden (Lauren serves as the Idaho representatives for WSARE). Robin Ohlgren, a local consultant, helped represent the KIVA loan program.