

IMPACT

 University of Idaho
Cooperative
Extension System

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Course Shows Reality of Small Acreage Farming

The Situation

Land in the Inland Northwest is a combination of large farms and smaller urban fringe parcels. Owners of both are seeking information and training on how to be good stewards of the land and earn income from it. Many have not had any experience or training in farming and or direct marketing.

Our Response

In 1998 and 1999 Kootenai County Extension offered an 11-week (33 hour) small acreage farming/market gardening course in Coeur d'Alene ID. The course topics included Goal Evaluation, Land Evaluation, Marketing Options, Business and Farm Planning, Financing, Production of Herbs, Vegetables, Tree fruits and Small fruits, and Value-added Products. In 1999 several topics were added including Pastured Poultry, Sheep & Goat Production, and Internet Marketing. In addition, three Saturday and two Wednesday evening farm tours were offered to class members. The 1999 class members were also encouraged to develop farm plans.

Evaluations were conducted at the end of each course. A follow-up evaluation was mailed to the participants of the 1998 course in the fall of 1999, and to the participants of the 1999 course in the fall of 2000.

Impacts

- **All members of both courses indicated they would recommend the class to others.** Comments included " It was very informative and I especially enjoyed the practical way in which it was presented by having actual farmers come in and tell their ways of doing things and what successes and failures they'd realized."
- **Ninety-four percent of the 1998 indicated that taking the class helped them proceed.**
- Other comments from the **1998** class in the **post evaluation** (mailed a year after participants completed the course) included the course taught them to
 - "plan carefully - plan ahead;"
 - "was invaluable in starting to tame some steep acreage and experiment with trees and vegetables....,"
 - "our farm plan is on slow forward but I have definite plans and 'unplans' that I hope to accomplish. This was a great class - I might even take it again if we change sites."
- When the **fall, 1999 class** was asked immediately after completing the course if it helped them proceed with their farm plan, **fifty-three percent indicated they would proceed.** Comments from this class included
 - "course was very informative - more research on my part needs to take place,"
 - "I need to settle on something specific instead of a shotgun approach,"

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- "I realize that what I am interested in is more the horticulture side of farming - perennials - nursery flowers, etc."
- A **post evaluation of the 1999 class** was conducted in the fall of 2000. Seventy-five percent of the class returned evaluations. When asked **if the course helped them move forward with their farm plan, 80% of those returning the evaluation said "yes."** When asked what decisions they made as a result of the course, participants comments included:
 - "Re-evaluated business goals - did LOTS more on record keeping and accounting;"
 - "We set up a rabbit business...very worthwhile classes;"
 - "It has us thinking more about diversifying our wheat/barley/grass seed farm;"
 - "I'm being a wee bit more cautious and I have eliminated some of my more fanciful ideas;"
 - "We are looking at developing an organic line of meat products;"
 - "Through the course, I was introduced to a regional micro enterprise program. I took their course on putting together/setting up a small business;"
 - "Create and try to stick with a business plan - to assess family expectations and how they fit in...very important!"
- The 20% answering "no" to this question said the course had helped them decide NOT to farm. One participant explains, "As a result (of the course) I realized **I didn't want to raise a farm crop** (but) was more interested in landscape design. I took a landscape design class through Spokane Community College, and was hired as a gardener by (a local) golf course. I also have designed and landscaped two private homes. The course helped me realize where my interests are."

The Future

- The course is planned for Plummer in the spring of 2001, and in Moscow in the fall of 2001.
- Rural Roots Assoc. Univ. of Idaho, and WSU received a Kellogg Partnership 2020 grant to develop a yearlong on-farm education program

in which this course will serve as the introductory module. The other modules will include an in-depth farm planning module, and an on-farm internship.

For More Information

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Related Impact Statements

Other Small Acreage Farming Impact Statements available through Kootenai County Extension include:

- Panhandle small acreage farmers track temps and pests, 6Oct2000.
- Small acreage farmer explores organic weed control options, 27Dec99; updated 6Oct2000.
- Farmers teaching farmers - a hit, 27Dec99.
- Task Force sprouts Rural Roots Association, 15Aug99.
- Small Acreage Farmers Build Momentum, 29July98.
- Inland Northwest community food system assessment task force formed, 8Oct97.

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