



Extension Education in Hidalgo County

Making a Difference

2013

and health, and community economic development.

EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE ***Providing Solutions***

Among those served are hundreds of thousands of young people who benefit annually from Extension's 4-H and youth development programs.

Texans turn to Extension education for solutions. Extension agents and specialists respond not only with answers, but also with resources and services that result in significant returns on the public's investment. Extension programs are custom-designed for each region of the state, with residents providing input and help with program delivery. Here are just a few highlights of Extension impacts on this county and its people.

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service has long been dedicated to educating Texans. Extension education evolved nationwide under the 1914 federal Smith-Lever Act, which sought to extend university knowledge and agricultural research findings directly to the people. Ever since, Extension programs have addressed the emerging issues of the day, reaching diverse rural and urban populations.

In Texas, all two hundred fifty-four (254) counties are served by a well-organized network of professional Extension educators and some one hundred thousand (100,000) trained volunteers. Extension expertise and educational outreach pertain to the food and fiber industry, natural resources, family and consumer sciences, nutrition

Hidalgo County – Summary of 2014 Educational Contacts

Educational Programs Conducted, via Group Methods: 1,847

Total Contact Hours at Educational Programs Conducted, via Group Methods: 107,640

Total Number of Participants in Group Methods: 78,052

Total Number of Participants Youth in Group Methods: 44,856

4-H Clubs: 23

4-H Members: 572

4-H Leaders: 55

Youth Curriculum Enrichment Participants: 4,433

Youth Special Interest participants: 16,749

Master Volunteers: 115

Extension Education Club Members: 64

Leadership Advisory Board Members: 29

Committee Members: 58

Task Force Members: 7

Office Contacts: 3,451

Site Contacts: 8,036

Phone Calls: 6,290

Mail/E-Mail Contacts: 27,136

Web Contacts: 6,143

Web Page Views: 33,272

Earth Kind Environmental Stewardship Program: Hidalgo County – 2013

Developed by Barbara Storz, Hidalgo County Extension Agent – Horticulture

Relevance: Landscape Water Conservation is critical to Texas and Hidalgo County. Irrigation of landscapes accounts for sixty percent (60%) of water used during summer months in Texas. Improper use of fertilizers and pesticides result in poor water quality, affecting the long term health of our community. Reduction of landscape water use and protecting water quality is important to the long term sustainability and growth of south Texas.

Response: Fifty-nine (59) Educational programs reaching 1,476 adults were conducted and directed toward water conservation in 2013. These programs addressed collecting rainwater, using native plants, using compost and mulch, water efficient irrigation, drought strategies in the landscape, Earth kind practices, use of native plants, use of native grasses, organic insect and weed control, and building soils for plant health. Additionally, tours were offered for ninety-seven (97) people on drought tolerant landscapes, and twenty-three (23) people toured the native plant garden and rainwater capture system at the South Texas Educational Garden. In addition, three (3) educational demonstrations were set up at local events on rainwater capture.

In addition, the *Recommended Landscape Plant List for Hidalgo County* was updated, posted on our web page and a new slide presentation was developed with help from the Master Gardeners. An article series of ten (10) articles on Earth Kind practices to conserve water was published in two newspapers with a distribution of 180,000 people for each of the ten (10) articles. These articles included information on native and well adapted landscape plants, drip irrigation, mulch and compost and reducing chemical use in the landscape and reducing runoff.

Two (2) grants (\$14,600) allowed Master Gardeners to install a Native and Well Adapted Plant Garden, along with expanding the Rainwater Capture System at the South Texas Educational Garden.

Results: Program evaluations showed that ninety-six percent (96%) of respondents were completely or mostly satisfied with programs; eighty-four percent (84%) of respondents felt they had learned what was necessary to adopt the recommended practices; sixty-seven percent (67%) anticipate benefiting economically as a direct result of what they learned from the activities; and ninety-seven percent (97%) would recommend these educational programs to others.

Future Plans: We are working with Dr. Juan Enciso, Irrigation Engineer - District 12, to design and install an Irrigation System Garden demonstration at the South Texas Educational Garden in San Juan. The Recommended Landscape Plant list is being prepared with photos of plants for our web page. An irrigation workshop is planned for February at the Hidalgo County Extension Office. We will continue the Earth Kind Article Series in the Monitor newspaper in 2014, along with taking advantage of opportunities to utilize the Water Percolation Demonstration at educational events.

V A L U E

Earth-Kind® Landscaping



The Earth-Kind® program teaches participants how to care for gardens and landscapes with environmentally friendly, research-proven techniques. Instructional topics include water conservation, responsible fertilizer application, and non-chemical options for controlling pests. Use of Earth-Kind® practices benefits Texas by saving water and protecting surface and groundwater resources from potential contaminants.

Citrus Greening Disease – Response – Hidalgo and Cameron Counties - 2013

Developed by Barbara Storz, Hidalgo County Extension Agent – Horticulture with Heidi C. Arteaga, Citrus Greening Project Coordinator

Relevance: Citrus Greening Disease was discovered in a commercial grove in San Juan, Texas in January 2012. Additional pockets of the disease have been discovered in residential areas in Mission. Heidi Arteaga, Citrus Greening Project Coordinator, conducts outreach education for residential citrus and coordinates public participation and application of biological treatments against the Asian Citrus Psyllid, the insect carrier of Citrus Greening Disease.

Response: Telephone and e-mail inquiries – Processed six hundred seventy-five (675) inquiries from residents, providing disease information and insect control methods.

- **Home visits:** Visited forty-one (41) quarantine sites to collect samples for testing in San Juan and Mission areas.
- **Presentations:** Provided eighteen (18) educational presentations on Citrus Greening and Vector Control to five hundred seventy-four (574) residential citrus owners and Master Gardener volunteers.
- **Biological Control:** Identified volunteers with suitable lemon/lime trees for outdoor rearing of *Tamarixia radiata*, the biological control agent against Asian Citrus Psyllid. Assisted in the establishment of twenty-three (23) field cages, rearing and releasing approximately two hundred thirty-one thousand (231,000), beneficial insects in locations in Brownsville, Rancho Viejo, San Benito in Cameron and Weslaco, San Juan, McAllen and Mission in Hidalgo.
- **Media Events:** Provided interviews in Spanish and English to four (4) television stations, and five (5) newspaper/magazine interviews. Set up informational booth on a bi-weekly basis at the Farmers Market in McAllen, distributing information and beneficial insects (established with ninety-six (96) residents). In addition, set up booths at events, including the Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show, San Juan Community Event, Pharr Earth Day Event, Vida Verde in McAllen, McAllen Home & Garden Show, San Juan Cinco de Mayo Event, Hub Phest in Pharr, Mission Community Agency/Health Fair and Welcome Home Winter Texans with Mission Chamber of Commerce.

Results: Biological control has been the preferred method in most Winter Texan Parks, and it appears that Asian Citrus Psyllid control has been effective. USDA is working to increase production of the *Tamarixia radiata* and local support from residents who are willing to volunteer their trees for treatment has grown over the year, as more people become aware of this option.

Future Plans: TexaSweet will provide a person to assist with presentations to increase outreach in 2014. Additional methods of biological control are being tested, and we will work with scientists to establish these methods as they become available.

Jr. Master Gardener (JMG) and Youth Programs: Hidalgo County - 2013

Developed by Barbara Storz, Hidalgo County Extension Agent – Horticulture, with Jennifer Herrera, Cameron County Extension Agent - Horticulture

Relevance: Research shows providing children with vegetable gardening opportunities, along with Jr. Master Gardener (JMG) curriculum, improve nutritional knowledge and motivation to eat fruits and vegetables. Vegetable gardening also improves math and science scores, increases vocabulary, and improves the overall student attendance. As our area is consistently high in childhood obesity rates and Type 2 diabetes and our schools suffer high drop-out rates, it is important to the health and welfare of our community to support teachers in developing outdoor activities, aimed at improving student health, nutrition and scientific understanding.

Response: A multi-county, multi-discipline workshop to improve the horticultural skills and nutritional knowledge of school educators is provided annually. Additional support is given to classrooms during the school year by Extension Master Gardener volunteers.

The **Edible School Garden Workshop** attracted fifty-four (54) educators from Hidalgo, Willacy, Starr and Cameron County schools for a day-long workshop with outdoor horticultural demonstrations and classroom activities based on the JMG curriculum, *Health and Nutrition from the Garden*. This workshop was held May 10, 2013 at the North San Juan Community Center and Park.

Results: Of the fifty-four (54) school educators, forty-seven (47) completed an evaluation. Ninety-one percent (91%) of respondents were mostly or completely satisfied with the workshop; eighty percent (80%) anticipate benefiting economically as a direct result of what they learned from this Extension activity; and ninety-eight percent (98%) would recommend this activity to others. Although over eighty percent (80%) of teachers indicated they will develop a school garden, follow-up visits during the year showed that only half this number actually installed gardens. A school dietitian, with Mercedes ISD, did install a garden with teachers and students that started in October 2013.

Collaborations/Partnerships: The Edible School Garden workshop was supported by Precinct 2 of Hidalgo County, the Master Gardener volunteers, and was conducted in partnership with Cameron County Extension.

Future Plans: The Edible School Garden will continue as an annual event and Master Gardener volunteers will continue to assist with workshops and teacher support. A children's garden is under construction at the North San Juan Park by the Master Gardeners and by 2014 this facility will be available for summer and weekend youth programs. In 2013, the teacher training was held at Hilltop Gardens in northern Hidalgo County.

Rio Grande Valley Beef Development Program: Hidalgo County – 2013

Developed by Brad Cowan, Hidalgo County Extension Agent – Agriculture, and Agriculture Extension Agents in Cameron, Willacy and Starr Counties

Relevance: Beef producers can improve their herd or the herds of their customers through more rigid sire selection. Replacement heifers will perform to higher levels when in optimum body condition. Beef producers want to increase the value of bulls by collecting feedlot performance data and carcass characteristics.

Response: Texas A & M Agrilife Extension conducted an official one hundred twelve (112) day bull gain test and a one hundred twenty-six (126) day Heifer Development Program. Numerous data is collected on all animals including: initial and final weights, average daily gain, body condition score, scrotal circumference, sheath score, reproductive tract score, pelvic area measurements, hip height and ultra-sound measurement of backfat thickness and ribeye area. All data is provided to consignors.

Results: A total of four (4) group methods resulted in a total of ninety-nine (99) contact hours of education. A Bull Gain Test & Heifer Development Program has been conducted each year, from 1998 through 2013. Participants indicate a positive economic benefit to their beef cattle operations as a result of their participation.

A total of one thousand thirty-three (1133) bulls, nine hundred sixty-four (964) heifers and one hundred forty-two (142) steers have been entered in the sixteen (16) years the Program has been conducted. Currently, thirty-three (33) bulls and sixty-five (65) heifers are entered in the Program by cattlemen participating from throughout south and central Texas.

Recognition events are conducted during the Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show in order to recognize the award winners in front of their beef cattle producer peers. The Santa Gertrudis breed awards were presented prior to the breed sale held at the Livestock Show, and the Simbrah breed awards were presented during the Open Simbrah judging at the Livestock Show. A feeder pen of steers is in it's third year and adds a new dimension to the Program.

Important collaborators are: Dr. Joe Paschal, Extension Livestock Specialist, Rio Beef Feed Yard management and personnel, Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show officials, and volunteers and the members of the Rio Grande Valley Beef Improvement Association.

Future Plans: In cooperation with the Rio Grande Valley Beef Improvement Association, plans are to continue the Program and perhaps consider marketing alternatives for participants. Another future possibility will be to offer an artificial insemination program for heifers.

Hidalgo /Cameron/Willacy County Crop Production Program: Hidalgo County – 2013

Developed by Brad Cowan, Hidalgo County Extension Agent – Agriculture, and Agriculture Extension Agents in Cameron, Willacy and Starr Counties

Relevance: Nutrient management is an important economic and environmental issue that affects water quality, soil quality and crop productivity. Sugarcane, cotton, grain sorghum and corn are important agronomic crops for the Rio Grande

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Valley. An estimated seventy percent (70%) of sugarcane producers could improve their yields which could enhance the profitability of this crop for all producers. New/underutilized crops, such as soybeans and sesame, need to continue to be investigated.

Response: Agrilife Extension provides educational resources for crop producers to gain knowledge which gives them the information necessary to become more efficient, economically sustainable and environmentally friendly. The Rio Grande Valley Nutrient Management Education Program is a multi-county soil testing Program conducted by specialists and agents with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. The primary objective of the Program is to educate producers about the economic and environmental benefits of soil testing and proper nutrient management. Over the past twelve (12) years, this project has collected over five thousand three hundred (5,300) soil samples representing a total of more than two hundred six thousand (206,000) acres of crop land in Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr and Willacy counties. In addition, through educational workshops and field days, growers have received training enabling them to implement effective nutrient management strategies.

Results: A total of ten (10) group methods resulted in two thousand eighty (2080) contact hours of education. The economic impact of the RGV Nutrient Management Education Program was measured in terms of potential fertilizer savings that have resulted from increased adoption of soil testing. Using soil test recommendations and producer-planned fertilizer rates, the potential savings in nitrogen and phosphate are estimated to be five point two (5.2) and six point two (6.2) million pounds, respectively. Reduction in fertilizer application rates translates into an average cost savings of \$25.77 per acre, depending on crop and management history. Total potential economic benefit to producers since the Program began in 2001 are estimated at \$5.3 million. This analysis does not include the value of environmental benefits.

Ag producers were educated on a wide variety of topics using a number of different methods. Topics included cotton, soybean, grain sorghum, corn, sesame, sunflower and guar production; conservation tillage; risk management; fertility management; marketing and many others. Methods included field days, educational meetings and publications. These included: Cotton Pre-Plant Conference, Grain Sorghum, Corn and Sunflower Field Day, Cotton and Sesame Field Day, Sugarcane Field Day and a Fall Corn Field Day. Research demonstrations conducted on producer farms are used to collect an unbiased source of performance data that is used by growers to help determine the most profitable varieties to select for this area. New efforts to increase producer profits included conducting an irrigated guar hybrid result demonstration.

VALUE

Crop and Forage Production Education



Extension programs in crop production promote best practices that lead to reduced irrigation, safer pest management, and improved profitability of agricultural enterprises. This benefits Texas as a whole by contributing to the quality and quantity of water resources and enhancing both agricultural competitiveness and rural economies.

Important collaborators included: Dr. Dan Fromme, Dr. Gaylon Morgan, Dr. Mark McFarland, Dr. Calvin Trostle, Dr. Tom Isakeit, Dr. John Robinson, Dr. Mark Welch, Dr. Paul Baumann, Dr. Luis Ribera, Dr. Roy Parker, Dr. James Grichar, Danielle Sekulla, Allan Berthold, Ashley Gregory, Rio Farms, Inc., Lower Rio Grande Valley Cotton & Grain Producers Association, Texas Farm Bureau, Texas Grain Sorghum Association, National Cotton Council, Texas Water Resource Institute, numerous local ag industry company representatives and the Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation

Future Plans: Continue soil testing campaign, contingent upon funding and continue important hybrid trials for the major crops. Conduct sesame, soybean or guar variety trials in cooperation with Rio Farms, Inc., local producers and private industry.

Hidalgo/Cameron/County Pesticide Safety Program: Hidalgo County – 2013

Developed by Brad Cowan, Hidalgo County Extension Agent – Agriculture, and Dr. Enrique Perez, County Extension Agent – Agriculture, Cameron County

Relevance: Ag producers have a statutory requirement to obtain and maintain a pesticide license issued by the Texas Department of Agriculture in order to use crop protection chemicals, important tools for agricultural producers. Extension Service is relied upon to provide the education needed in this process. Training is provided to those needing to obtain a license, and continuing education is provided to local producers in order to renew their license.

Response: Educational training events were conducted to meet statutory requirements for producers to be able to obtain a license. Continuing education units were also provided to all participants at educational events conducted, which contained applicable subject matter.

Results: A total of six (6) group methods resulted in a total of eight hundred seventy-five (875) contact hours of education. Four (4) Pesticide Safety Trainings were conducted in 2013. Ninety-eight (98) percent of the forty (40) students received a passing grade on the exam administered by the Texas Department of Agriculture, with an average grade of eighty-six (86).

Numerous continuing education credits were provided to ag producers during the course of the year at almost every agriculture-related educational meeting conducted.

Agents also provided Certified Crop Consultants (CCA) continuing education through the CCA Certification Program. New requirements for continuing education for aerial applicators continued to be a problem for local aerial applicators, which required an educational training that was provided to meet their specific needs.

Important collaborators were: Dr. Don Renchie and Dr. Mark Matocha, Agricultural & Environmental Safety Specialists; local personnel with Texas Department of Agriculture, and Donnie & Kay Dippel with the Texas Certified Crop Advisor Program.

Future Plans: This effort will continue in the future to meet the needs of local agricultural producers and others needing a pesticide license.

Hidalgo County Water Education Program: Hidalgo County – 2013

Developed by Brad Cowan, Hidalgo County Extension Agent – Agriculture

Relevance: Water quality and quantity have emerged as the preeminent issue across the state including the South Region, as indicated through local input, legislative efforts, and numerous other indicators. Agriculture is the largest water user in the state, and agriculture is under close scrutiny because of the potential for negative environmental (water quality) impacts. Water use in the municipal environment including irrigation of athletic fields, in parks and home landscapes, as well as in the home proper constitutes a significant portion of water used in Texas. Programs designed to educate all adult and youth water users on water conservation will help reduce overall water use and increase water use efficiency.

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Water conservation in production agriculture continues to be a priority issue for this area due to the importance of irrigated agriculture to this area and the critically low irrigation supplies available from the Rio Grande River, the primary source for this region.

Response: An Irrigation Conference was held to provide important and timely information to local irrigated agriculture producers designed to help them make the most informed decisions possible as irrigation water supplies are forecasted to be extremely low for the coming crop season.


A Seminar on Water Rights and Public Policy on the Rio Grande was held to provide, both agricultural and municipal users the opportunity to learn more about the legal side of the water issues on the Rio Grande River from three experts in the field.

Results: A total of five (5) group methods resulted in a total of nine hundred seventy-three (973) contact hours of education. Irrigation Conference topics were: Current Water Supply Situation, Forecast for the 2013 Season, Status of Cost Share Funds for Growers through the EQIP Program, Weather Forecast for the 2013 Growing Season, Making the Most of Limited Irrigation, Crop Selection: More Important than Ever, Practical Use of Soil Moisture Sensors to Conserve Water, Trade Show from Private Industry, What's New In On-Farm Irrigation Technology & Will It Pay, and Irrigation District Water Conservation Improvement Projects Session.

Policy right and Public Policy education was delivered to a diverse audience of both ag and municipal users and policymakers. The primary issue was the 1944 International Water Treaty with Mexico. It was discussed from the water planning and legal perspective, from the regulatory perspective and from the international relations perspective.

Important collaborators: Dr. Guy Fipps, Extension Agriculture Engineer, RGV Water District Managers Association, Texas Agricultural Irrigation Association, Rio Grande Regional Water Authority and Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council.

Future Plans: Continue to provide education on both water conservation techniques and water policy.

V A L U E	
Water Conservation Education	
	<p>Texas A&M AgriLife Extension programs that teach farmers, homeowners, and business administrators to conserve water are helping reduce demand on the state's limited water resources. Texans benefit from a safer, more reliable water supply at no additional cost.</p>

Outreach of Risk Management Programs: Hidalgo County - 2013
Developed by Vidal H. Saenz, Extension Agent - CEP (Farm Advisor)

Relevance: Agricultural producers from Hidalgo and Starr counties have been in a tough economic situation for many years due to weather related events, such as extended drought. Because of this, producers have endured large production and financial losses. A series of educational methods were conducted by 1890 Extension Agents to address new and existing risk management products and services.

Response: CEA/Farm Advisor collaborated with U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) - Risk Management Agency (RMA), USDA - Farm Service Agency, 1862 Land Grant University, local Extension Ag Advisory Committees and local agribusinesses to make producers aware of the risk management programs that can be utilized to protect their farm and ranch investments.

The following educational activities were organized, with the input and assistance of Extension Agriculture and Natural Resource Committee and the Hidalgo County Small Farm Advisory Committee.

- We organized a task force to discuss educational programming efforts and individuals involved to address issues. (Crop Insurance Agents)
- Utilized local crop insurance agents to provide outreach on USDA - Risk Management Agency's Pasture, Range & Forage Insurance Program.
- Utilized USDA - Farm Service Agency staff to provide updates on Government assistance programs and sign-up dates.
- Hosted several programs which provided outreach and education on USDA - Risk Management Agency's Feeder and Fed Cattle Price Risk Management Program, and Brush Control Management & Beef Cattle Management.
- Agents evaluated data gathered by program participants, task force members and other stakeholders, which will be Used to evaluate the Program.
- Agents shared the results with local County Commissioners Court, Leadership Advisory Board and other stakeholders.



Risk Management Program Participants

Evaluation Method: One-page retrospective post-test evaluation form was administered to each participant. The survey was used to determine the level of clientele knowledge change required by the educational programming.

Collaborators: The following businesses assisted with resources to make this Program possible:

- USDA - Farm Service Agency
- USDA - Risk Management
- Agency RY Livestock Sales, Inc.
- Starr Soil & Water Conservation District
- Texas - Mexico Border Coalition
- Starr County Farm Bureau

Results: The following results are shared from the Program evaluation to indicate the achievements of this project:

- 91% of participants gained knowledge of buffelgrass varieties in South Texas.

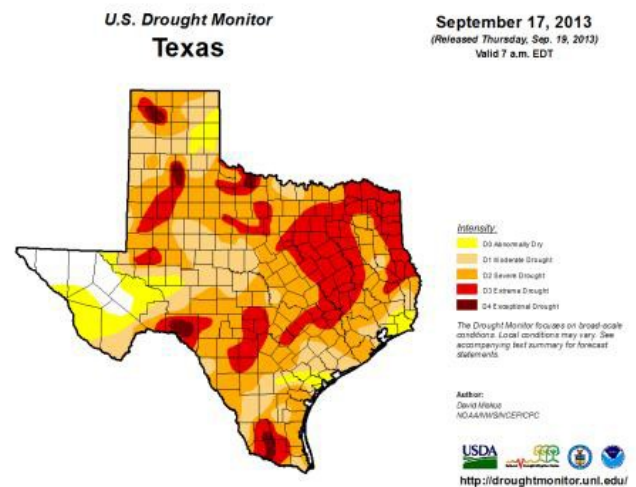
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- 91% of participants gained knowledge of the beef cattle market outlook through the Year 2014
- 77.3% of participants gained knowledge of range management tools to maximize forage production.
- 91% of participants gained knowledge of internal parasite control in livestock.
- 91% of participants gained knowledge of USDA - RMA Pasture, Range & Forage Insurance Program (Rainfall Index).
- 81.8% of participants gained knowledge of USDA - FSA programs and services.

Summary: This Program builds knowledge and changes perceptions concerning risk management and ranching practices. Producer responses indicate a better appreciation for USDA - RMA and USDA -FSA programs. This Program will continue addressing new government programs, as they become available.



Collaboration with USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service in hosting the Ranchers Field Day in Starr County



Drought monitor showing severe drought in the Rio Grande Valley area

Global Food Security and Hunger-Agribusiness Technical Assistance: Hidalgo County - 2013

Developed by Vidal H. Saenz, Extension Agent-CEP (Farm Advisor) Serving Hidalgo, Cameron, Willacy and Starr Counties

Relevance: The Rio Grande Valley, which is composed of Hidalgo, Cameron, Willacy and Starr counties have gone through major agricultural disasters in the last few years. The nature of these disasters has been mainly drought that caused enormous loss of income to the agricultural producers of the area. Many agricultural producers and rural youth face numerous challenges in obtaining financial resources through commercial lending institutions because of the risk involved in farming and ranching and the local banks unwillingness to lend during these times of economic uncertainty. Many of these producers qualify for financing through USDA - Farm Service Agency, but are not aware of their programs or are overwhelmed by the paperwork involved in USDA's loan applications. Knowing that operating loan funds are available through USDA - Farm Service Agency, it is important that Extension offer support in financial planning and

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management to fill out the necessary paperwork correctly and remove all of the obstacles that impede agricultural producers from applying for these loans.

Response: The purpose of this Program is to enhance the business management and marketing skills of agricultural producers who utilize our services. Targeted clientele will learn how to keep, improve production, financial records and generate personal and farm financial statements for use in financial resource acquisition. This plan will address a wide range of activities such as livestock production, brush management, financial management, marketing, and applying for assistance under USDA programs.

The Cooperative Extension Program's **Small Farm Outreach Training and Technical Assistance Program** in Hidalgo County developed the following activities to address this relevant issue:

- The Hidalgo County Small Farm Advisory Committee provided direction for our 2013 programming efforts and assisted in marketing, evaluation and interpretation of this Program.
- Provided outreach of USDA - Farm Service Agency loan programs at many Extension events, workshops and field days throughout the Rio Grande Valley.
- Collaborated with the Rio Grande Valley Agricultural Extension Agents and Ag Science Instructors to provide outreach on USDA's Rural Youth Loan Program to 4-H and FFA members and parents.
- Provided outreach on this Program and programming efforts in the local media for promotion. Assisted ten USDA - Farm Service Agency borrowers in completing the FARM ASSIST Program which helps satisfy the Borrower Training Requirements imposed by USDA - Farm Service Agency.
- Collaborated with County Agricultural Agents in Starr and Hidalgo counties to provide educational programs focused on sustainable agriculture. Programs ranged from best management practices to control brush, feed and nutritional practices for beef cattle and performance testing on bulls and heifers.
- Conducted sixty-six (66) one-on-one financial planning and management sessions for producers and youth seeking agricultural loans.

Evaluation Methods/Results: A two-page retrospective post evaluation form was administered to each program participant, via survey to determine the level of clientele knowledge gained by the educational programming.

Collaborators: The Small Farm Advisory Committee of Hidalgo County provided direction for this Program, in collaboration with the following agencies in order to become successful:

- Several local banks
- Ag Credit and Commodities
- Texas-Mexico Border Coalition
- Texas Farm Bureau
- USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Local Livestock Auctions
- USDA-Farm Service Agency

Results: The following results were shared from this Program evaluation to indicate its' achievements:

- 92% of participants gained knowledge of USDA - Farm Service Agency's Direct and Guaranteed Loan Programs.
- 95% of participants gained knowledge to develop a farm operating budget for their operation in 2013.
- 90% of participants gained knowledge in keeping production and financial records for securing finances for their operations.
- 98% of participants gained knowledge of what their net worth or owner equity was at the end of the Program.

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- 68% of participants gained the ability to fill out a USDA Farm Service Agency loan application properly, without any required assistance.
- 100% of participants were provided the technical assistance in filling out the necessary paperwork involved in preparing their loan applications to submit to USDA - Farm Service Agency.
- 98% of participants were satisfied with the Program and was highly recommended to other producers requiring technical assistance in financial planning and management.

The breakdown of the loan types are as follows: ten (10) Rural Youth Loans, thirty-nine (39) Farm Operating Loans, nine (9) Farm Ownership Loans, and fourteen (14) Microloans.

Benefits/Impacts: All Program participants were able to submit a complete direct loan application to USDA - Farm Service Agency, with all obstacles that impeded their full participation in the Program being removed. Participants saved a 2% fee on their loan requests by not utilizing the services of a private loan consultant. The total amount of money requested for 2013 was \$6,982,910. This amount multiplied by 2%, totaled \$139,658.20, an amount that an independent loan consultant would have charged, with an average savings of \$2,116 for each of the sixty-six participants.



Vidal Saenz, CEA, providing technical assistance with a USDA - Farm Service Agency loan.



Vidal Saenz, CEA, providing outreach on USDA - Farm Service Agency Loans

VALUE

Financial Literacy

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service financial literacy programs provide adults and youth with basic financial education and resources to help them set and reach financial goals and plan for the future. When Texans make better financial decisions and implement recommended financial management practices, they increase their ability to achieve financial security.

- Counties that benefit from Extension Services.

Chronic Disease Prevention and Management: *Hidalgo County - 2013*

Developed by Adelita Muñoz, County Extension Agent – Family & Consumer Sciences

Relevance: CANCER is the second leading cause of death in Texas and it is expected to become the leading cause of death in the United States within the next decade. Early detection is an important way to reduce the impact of cancer. Up to two thirds of cancer cases can be prevented if behavioral changes are made. Hispanics and African Americans have the highest rates of mortality for several kinds of cancer including breast cancer. A large number of Hispanic women in Hidalgo County are uninsured and lack the financial means to get routine checkups, including mammograms. Twelve thousand one hundred (12,100) new cases of breast cancer and two thousand seven hundred (2,700) new cases of skin cancer are diagnosed annually in Texas. Many cases of skin cancer are increasing among teenagers. Skin cancer in adolescents, ages fifteen through nineteen (15-19) is the seventh leading cancer in Texas.

Response/Results: The *Friend to Friend* Program's purpose is to encourage women to get regular mammograms and pap tests for the early detection of breast and cervical cancer, when the disease is most curable.

- 2 *Friend to Friend* events were held in Hidalgo County. Partners were UT-PA and City of Mercedes.
- 185 Uninsured women attended *Friend to Friend* events.
- 1 Physician, several survivors, and other medical professionals urged women to obtain a mammogram/pap screening.
- 25 Total volunteers assisted with events
- 159 Women requested help for screening and diagnostic services.

Results: Sixty Thousand One Hundred Ninety-Three dollars (\$60,193) was paid for mammogram screenings and diagnostics by Cancer Prevention & Research Institute, Texas.

- 75 *Cultivando La Salud*/cancer awareness programs to encourage women to get mammograms
- 819 Women attended *Cultivando La Salud* with two hundred fifty (250) women receiving free mammograms through a grant at El Milagro Clinic. Twenty-two thousand five hundred (\$22,500) savings to the uninsured women.
- 20 Sun Safety Workshops were held for three hundred twelve (312) high school youth.
- 15 Marketing Radio Programs supported the cancer awareness events.

Better Living for Texans – Back to Basics: *Hidalgo County - 2013*

Developed by Adelita Muñoz, County Extension Agent – Family & Consumer Sciences

Relevance: In Hidalgo County, an estimated 231,796 individuals receive benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), historically known as food stamps. Studies have shown individuals who live in poverty

(including SNAP recipients) have dietary intakes that are not in agreement with current recommendations (i.e. Dietary Guidelines or MyPlate). This audience, like many, may not recognize their risk for foodborne illness. Having enough food to eat is also a challenge. An estimated one (1) in six (6) households experience food insecurity in Texas.

Response – Better Living for Texans (BLT): The BLT Program is a cooperative endeavor among Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Health & Human Services Commission (HHSC), and the Food & Nutrition Services (FNS) of USDA. A component of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), BLT offers food and nutrition education to SNAP recipients, applicants, and other low-income audiences to help improve their ability to plan and prepare nutritious meals, stretch food dollars, and prepare and store food safely. BLT also incorporates the *Walk Across Texas* program to promote physical activity.

VALUE

Better Living for Texans



These nutrition programs teach low-income audiences to prepare nutritious meals, stretch their food resources, improve their food-safety practices, and participate in regular physical activity. This not only improves the quality of life and reduces the risk of chronic disease for participants, but also lowers public health care costs.

During 2013, seven thousand forty-five (7,045) Hidalgo County adults completed the BLT Series. This Program focuses on meal planning, stretching food dollars, and adopting selected behaviors that can reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

Results: Participants were mostly female (ninety-four 94%) and Hispanic (ninety-four 94%). More than half of the participants received SNAP benefits (fifty-two percent 52%) or free/reduced-price school meals (fifty-one percent 51%). Programs were done to market BLT

** Based on 141 participants who reported monthly out-of-pocket food expenses at the beginning of BLT and 30-days after the program ended. Changes in out-of-pocket food expenses **were not** significantly different although the downward trend is encouraging.

All 165 out of 180 participants rated the BLT program as “excellent”.

Protecting Our Environment: Hidalgo County - 2013

Developed by Adelita Muñoz, County Extension Agent – Family & Consumer Sciences

Relevance: Hidalgo County has well over 806,552 residents and is growing exponentially in population (2012, Cubit). Water is a precious and limited resource in the County and is estimated in becoming a crisis in our region, if action is not taken now.

Response: Eight (8) education programs were held to empower participants with knowledge on water conservation. Participants were given science-based recommendations to maximize the consumption of water in their home. Four hundred fifty-seven (457) participants signed “leak check” pledges for their homes and have repaired. Awareness of small leaks that cause an enormous amount of water being wasted motivated the signing of the pledge. Two hundred fifty (250) first graders learned the importance of water conservation with hands on activities, such as brushing teeth with a cup of water vs. a running faucet. One hundred twenty-seven (127) eighth graders learned the importance and value of water

with the need to conserve through science – based information, and each received a five (5) minute shower timer to place in the showers to compare with the twenty (20) to thirty (30) minute showers. (Incentives Covered Through A Small Grant)

Volunteers and Entrepreneur Opportunities: Hidalgo County - 2013

Developed by Adelita Muñoz, County Extension Agent – Family & Consumer Sciences

Relevance: Hidalgo County has one of the highest double digit unemployment rates in the nation. There is a need to empower people with appropriate development tools and skills that are supportive of entrepreneurship opportunities. In order to maintain the economic viability of Hidalgo County , we need to educate, train, and provide opportunities for these people.

Response: Hidalgo County has the Master Clothing Volunteer Program that meets weekly to receive training on clothing construction, entrepreneurship, personal development, (including self- esteem, communication skills, business savvy,) starting your business, marketing and a variety of classes that provide them the tools to become entrepreneurs. The volunteers take turns teaching classes and then volunteer to teach at schools, housing projects and adult day care centers. Some of the women had never been addressed as “teacher” and that in itself is an incentive to continue volunteering. Their outreach is phenomenal.

- **1657** volunteer service hours conducted by the Master Clothing Volunteer Program group
- **28** women became entrepreneurs (selling many items constructed with an average of \$157 per week) and others contracted with school choirs, bands, mariachis, sport departments, and cheerleaders (\$650 per week). Those who fear of becoming “businesswomen” and participants sell items at schools (collect a total of \$4,096 weekly) to the county and families.
- **278** Income generating workshops were conducted throughout the County (learned different ways to supplement the family's income.

Future Plans: Master Clothing Volunteers Program will continue in 2014.

Food Protection Management: Hidalgo County - 2013

Developed by Adelita Muñoz, County Extension Agent – Family & Consumer Sciences

Relevance: Each year, an estimated one (1) in six (6) people become ill from food consumption. Common symptoms of foodborne disease include: nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramping, fever and headaches. While some people may view this as a mere case of “food poisoning” foodborne illness has serious health and economic consequences. In fact, foodborne illnesses from five pathogens alone (Campylobacter, Salmonella, Listeria monocytogenes, E. coli O157:H7, and E. coli non-O157:H7 STEC) cost more than \$6.9 billion in medical expenses, lost productivity, and even death. All are

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at risk for foodborne illnesses, but older adults, pregnant women, young children, individuals with chronic disease, and those with a compromised immune system are at an increased risk. Because nearly half of our money is spent eating out, it is imperative that employees who work in retail food service handle food safely.

Response: To meet the need for Quality Food Safety Education in Texas retail food establishments, the Food Protection Management (FPM) Program was developed, which is a two-day certified Food Manager Program that prepares food service workers for the State Certified Food Manager Exam. The two (2) hour Food Handler Program, which is accredited by the Department of State Health Services, trains front-line food service workers on the basic principles of food safety. Both programs are conducted at County level by Extension agents.

Results: During 2013, two hundred twenty (220) registered participants in Hidalgo County, participated in the FPM Program and completed the Food Handler Program. Change in knowledge (pre vs post) was used to evaluate the Food Handler Program. In addition, client (customer) satisfaction surveys were collected from participants.

Food Handler Course – Participant Characteristics: Participants were equally split between male and female, primarily Hispanic were eighty percent (80%) from a variety of age groups. More than sixty-seven percent (67%) identified English as their primary language. Nearly one-third of participants had a high school degree or less; the remaining participants reported completing some college or a college degree. Nearly forty-five percent (45%) had foodservice experience, and a similar percentage reported previously receiving food safety education.

Summary: The Food Handlers Program was successful in helping participants (foodservice employees) increase their knowledge about food safety, as it pertains to the retail setting.

V A L U E	
Food Safety Education	
	<p>Both those who work in food-service establishments and those who simply cook in their own kitchens benefit from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension's food-safety education programs. The resulting improvement in safe food handling benefits consumers by helping prevent food-borne illnesses and the public health care costs they cause.</p>

Improving Family Life: Hidalgo County - 2013

Developed by Adelita Muñoz, County Extension Agent – Family & Consumer Sciences

Relevance: Positive parenting practices play an essential role in children's developmental and later in life's success. Parents are responsible for several key care giving tasks to help ensure that proper physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development occurs for their children. Research indicates that children who grow up with actively involved and nurturing parents reap numerous benefits, including better school performance, increase self-esteem, healthier relationships with peers, and greater access to financial resources. Parents with healthy marriages ensure the emotional development of youth. Families that communicate and that encourage the children to express their feelings are going to have high self-esteem, good mental health, and be well rounded individuals. This also teaches children to have self-controlled emotions. Parents that model good conflict resolution techniques teach their children to discuss vs. using violence. Caregivers also

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play an important role in the child's life. Research shows that an estimated thirteen (13) million children, younger than six (6) years old spend some or all of their day in a daycare. Older, adult population continues to grow with needed assistance on issues of interest to them, such as health care reform, social security and identity theft.

Response: Two hundred two (202) Strengthening Families' classes were conducted to two thousand four hundred fifty-seven (2457) participants in schools, churches, housing projects and the County Extension Office. Families are in crises with the high number of students dropping out of school, getting suspended, getting in trouble with the law, at twelve (23) years and older. Additionally parents that are separated or divorced with dual custody and the involvement of Child Protective Services also experience high stress levels that need to be addressed. The **Strengthening Families** Program were scheduled as a response to these problems and the request of several judges and justice of the peace. The demand for the Program has been overwhelming that classes continue. Weekly classes in English and Spanish were conducted.

Anger Management and Financial Management have been included as a request from the judges.

- **15** Healthy Marriages and Ten (10) Great Dates have been taught to one hundred eighty-six (186) participants.
- **186** A partnership with the Diocese of Brownsville assisted the agent in organizing these classes.
- **120** Fathers participated in FRED (Fathers Reading Every Day). Strong relationships exist between children's literacy skills, academic performance, and future income potential. Children who are read to frequently by their parents are more likely to excel on tests of reading proficiency. **FRED** encourages fathers to make the time to spend with their children reading to them. Four (4) schools participated.
- **1** Senior Summit was held in partnership with City of Pharr, Rio Grande Valley Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and Area Agency of Aging. Seven hundred fifty (750) seniors attended (examined for blood sugar, cholesterol, osteoporosis, dementia, exercise, nutrition, hearing, and eye screenings).

Father Daughter Event: Hidalgo County - 2013

Developed by Adelita Muñoz, County Extension Agent – Family & Consumer Sciences

Relevance: An Event for fathers and their daughters to help them develop strong and positive lines of communication, and to spend time dialoguing topics, such as respect, responsibility, discipline and character:

- **54** Participants attended. Lone Star National Bank was partner. Participants gained knowledge by doing "hands-on" activities on respect, communication skills and dance routines. They listened to speakers address family values, self-esteem and importance of education

4-H and Youth Development

Annual 4-H Program: Hidalgo County - 2013

Developed by Christina Perez, Hidalgo County Extension Agent – 4-H & Youth Development

The 4-H Program provides youth in every Texas County opportunity for personal and mental growth. Youth who get involved in 4-H build their self-esteem and skills, by attending leadership camps, meeting new people, giving presentations, competing in various county, district and state competitions, holding officer positions in clubs, attending clinics and workshops that build their knowledge in various subject areas, and by giving back to the community in the form of community service. There are a total of twenty-three (23) 4-H clubs throughout the Hidalgo County, with five hundred seventy-two (572) club members enrolled, three hundred (300) registered and screened volunteers supporting the clubs, and fifty-five (55) club managers, co-managers, and project leaders.

The Hidalgo County 4-H Program serves youth throughout Hidalgo County. Alone this year, there was a total of 44,856 youth participation that included County 4-H members, in-school Enrichment Curriculum, and Community-based Outreach.

The Hidalgo County 4-H Program carries its own leadership through the County 4-H Council (Youth Organization), and the Adult Leaders & Parent Association (Adult Association). These two organizations provide support for the 4-H Program, to provide opportunities for our youth.

County 4-H Youth Involvement		County 4-H Leadership, Advisory, & Support Organizations	
Chartered Community Clubs	(23)	0 Youth Board Members Attended	(0) Meetings
Members Enrolled in 4-H Clubs	(716)	35 County 4-H Council Members Attended	(8) Meetings
Youth Reached thru Community-based Programs	(16,749)	25 Adult Leaders & Parents Assoc. Members Attended	(8) Meetings
Youth Reached thru School-Based Enrichment Curri.	(4,433)		

Participation in County 4-H Events:

- County 4-H Round-Up (52)
- County 4-H Photography Contest (50)
- County 4-H Food Show (49)
- County 4-H Fashion Show (42)
- County 4-H Food Challenge (25)

County Participation in District 4-H Events:

- District 12, 4-H Leadership Lab (42)
- District 12, 4-H Round-Up (All Events) (31)
- District 12, 4-H Food Challenge (20)
- District 12, 4-H Fashion Show (16)
- District 12, 4-H Food Show (12)

County Participation in State/National Events:

- Texas 4-H Round-Up (14)
- Texas 4-H Photo Contest (6)
- Texas 4-H Recordbook (6)
- Texas 4-H Shooting Games (3)
- Texas 4-H Horse Show (0)

Most Popular Club Projects in the County:

- Photography (226)
- Rabbits (163)
- Goats (Meat) (137)
- Horticulture (126)

Most Popular Curriculum in the County:

- Texas Building Character (1,347)
- Learning to Grow (294)
- Give Water a Hand (167)
- Patriotism Through Preparedness (132)

County 4-H Volunteer Support:

- 253 Registered & Screened Volunteers Supporting Clubs
- 55 Club Managers, Co-Managers, and Project Leaders
- 23,000 Hours Contributed by Volunteers in Support of Clubs

Value of Volunteer Time Supporting 4-H \$491,280

Livestock Show Premium Sale Proceeds \$200,000

4-H and Youth Development

County 4-H Leadership & Personal Development Programs:

- 40 Attended State-level Leadership & Personal Development Educational or Competitive Events
- 140 Attended District-level Leadership & Personal Development Educational or Competitive Events
- 42 Attended District Leadership Lab
- 40 Received 4-H Scholarships (Valued at \$150,000)

Local Training Opportunities for Youth and Adults:

- 3 Recordbook Workshops
- 1 Project Leader Training
- 4 Ambassador Trainings
- 4 Photography Workshops

Significant Leadership & Personal Development Accomplishments From County Events & Activities:

There was an increase in the number of workshops and trainings for youth this year.

County 4-H Agriculture & Natural Resource Programs:

- 546 Livestock Projects (all species)
- 30 Attended State-level Livestock Shows
- 25 Youth Trained through "Quality Counts" Program
- 500 Participated in County Livestock Shows
- 20 Attended District-level Agriculture & Natural Resources educational/competitive events

Local Training Opportunities For Youth And Adults:

- 1 Project Leaders Training
- 1 Poultry Workshop
- 1 Rabbit Workshop

Significant Agriculture & Natural Resource Accomplishments From County Events & Activities:

The Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension had a group of 4-Hers attend the San Antonio Livestock Show and compete with their breeding and market animals.

County 4-H Family & Consumer Science Programs:

- 12 Attended State-level educational or competitive events
- 50 Attended District-level educational or competitive events

Local Training Opportunities for Youth and Adults:

- 2 Storyboard Workshops

Significant Family & Consumer Science accomplishments From County Events & Activities:

One of the County Food Challenge Teams advanced to State Round-Up and placed third in the fruit and vegetables category. Also, one of our County 4-Her placed 1st in the State Fashion Show, and a first timer advanced to State with her storyboard.

VALUE

Character and Leadership Development



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension's 4-H Youth Development Program teaches participants leadership skills and character traits. Participating youth become mentors, role models, and leaders in their schools and communities.

Veterinary Science Program Outcome Report: Hidalgo County - 2013

Developed by Christina Perez, Hidalgo County Extension Agent - 4-H & Youth Development

Relevance: Science and technology is becoming more and more important in today's education. Programs focused in science and technology is becoming more available to youth. This Program is one which will bring more opportunity to youth and one in which can be connect with the careers of Veterinary Medicine, Regulatory Health, Environmental Health & Animal Science. Two years ago, there was an estimated one hundred (100) youth who attended Hidalgo County's Veterinary Science Program Informational in February 2012. Due to the large interest, the 4-H Program decided to start this Program.

Response: Texas A&M AgriLife Extension developed the following activities to address this issue:

- Classes held twice a month for 6th, 7th and 8th graders.
- Local Veterinarians taught the Veterinary Science Program curriculum to students. (4-5 Year Program, 20 lessons per year)
- A committee was developed to plan field trips and activities for the students.

Results: For this current year, students were given evaluations at the end of every other (1) class per month. The evaluation gauged their level of satisfaction and attitude after each lesson. The following results are monthly topics presented. The first results explain the overall satisfaction of the activity, while the second focused on content.

Nutrition & Management of Dogs & Cats & Exotic Pets - September

- 93% of the sixteen (16) respondents were mostly or completely satisfied with the activity.
- 87% of respondents were mostly or completely satisfied with the information being enjoyable.

Introduction to Handling & Restraining Animals – November

- 91% of the forty (40) participants were mostly or completely satisfied with the activity.
- 78% of respondents were mostly or completely satisfied with the information being enjoyable.

Handling & Restraining Livestock - January

- 89% of the forty-two (42) respondents were mostly or completely satisfied with the activity.
- 83% of respondents were mostly or completely satisfied with the information being enjoyable.

Dehorning, Castrating and Docking - March

- 83% of the thirty-nine (39) respondents were mostly or completely satisfied with the activity.
- 77% of respondents were mostly or completely satisfied with the information being enjoyable.

Reproduction & Trans-rectal Palpation in Cattle - May

- 80% of the sixteen (16) respondents were mostly or completely satisfied with the activity.

Seventy-five percent (75%) of respondents were mostly or completely satisfied with the information being enjoyable.

Kids, Kows & More Program Outcome Report: Hidalgo County - 2013

Developed by Christina Perez, Hidalgo County Extension Agent - 4-H & Youth Development

Relevance: As today's youth are further removed from farming, many do not understand the importance of agriculture and how it impacts their daily lives. A poll was taken from a local class of 4th graders of those who felt that Agriculture impacted their lives. Out of the twenty-three (23) 4th graders, only five (5) felt that Agriculture impacted their lives. Through this Program, a simple live demonstration on dairy can help our youth understand where milk from school or home comes from, or a presentation on cotton to help understand what their shirts or jeans are made of. With youth made more aware of agriculture, they are likely to become more appreciative of the world around them, making them better informed citizens, as well as advocates for agriculture.

Response: The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service conducted a two (2) day Agriculture & Natural Resource Program for elementary students (4th graders) and teachers from Willacy, Cameron and Hidalgo Counties. There were seven (7), twenty-five (25) minute rotational sessions, consisting of the following:

- Bees
- Wildlife
- Cotton
- Citrus
- Dairy
- Water
- Sugar

Each classroom teacher was provided with a bag of educational support materials on Science of Agriculture, along with some giveaways for the students.

Recognition: Hidalgo County, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension would like to recognize the partners for their support and assistance with the Kids, Kows & More Program, which are the following:

- Southwest Dairy Museum
- Rio Grande Valley Sugar Growers, Inc.
- Edinburg Citrus Association
- Ladies for Cotton
- Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show
- Cotton and Grain Producers of Lower Rio Grande Valley
- North Alamo Water Supply Corporation

Results: Teachers were given an evaluation at the start of the Program. Out of the seventy-eight (78) teachers who attended, were given evaluations (sixty-four (64) were turned in).

- 53 out of the sixty-four (64) teachers felt that the student's knowledge was **definitely** increased on where the food and clothing actually comes from, and the remaining eleven (11) felt students' knowledge was **somewhat** increased.
- 49 out of sixty-four (64) teachers felt their students and themselves' will **definitely** perceive agriculture in a better light, while the remaining fifteen (15) felt their students and themselves will **somewhat better** perceive agriculture in a better light.
- 53 out of 64 teachers felt their students and themselves' will have a **definitely higher** respect for agriculture after the trip, while the remaining eleven (11) felt **somewhat higher** respect for agriculture.

A group of 4th graders at a randomly selected local school were pre and post tested on their knowledge on the topics that were covered at the Kids, Kows & More Program. Sixty two (62) students were pretested and sixty-three (63) were post-tested. The results indicated a slight increase in the overall test mean of about three point three percent (3.3%).

Community Economic Development

Small Acreage Horticultural Crop Plan: Hidalgo County – 2013

Developed by Barbara Storz, Hidalgo County Extension Agent – Horticulture

Vidal Saenz, Farm Advisor/Extension Agent – Cooperative Extension Program (Prairie View A&M University)

Ronnie Zamora, Cooperative Extension Agent - Community Development in Willacy County.

Relevance: South Texas has a population of over 1 million people and is known for commercial crop production. There is growing interest in small acreage production, as well as small animal production, as large farms give way to development. Additionally, this area has experienced a growth in direct sales outlets with the establishment of the Grow'n Growers Farmers Market, by Extension, and the establishment of several additional markets. Often these small acreage producers have little knowledge of farming and ranching. This activity has generated a demand for basic production programs.

Response: Twenty-five (25) different programs were planned with the Sustainable Ag Committee and conducted with a total of five hundred fifty-nine (559) participants during 2013. These programs included:

- **Horticultural Programs:** grapes, strawberry high/low tunnel production, organic pest control in vegetables, vegetable production, alternative crops-figs, papaya, blackberry, pomegranate
- **Food Safety**
- **Business Planning and Marketing Workshops** were conducted in the following two separate series:
 - One five (5) part series partnering with Sam Houston State University, and
 - A three (3) part series partnering with the Women's Business Center, a local non-profit agency funded by the U.S. Small Business Administration.

In addition, a **Facebook® Marketing Workshop** was presented with the Women's Center, **four (4) workshops** were conducted on **Preserving the Harvest and the Cottage Food Law**, and **three (3) workshops** were held on **Goat Production and Goat Products**.

A grant with the National Center for Appropriate Technology funded the Strawberry Tunnel Workshop, Alternative Crops Workshop, four (4) food preservation workshops and the three (3) goat programs. Several specialists from both AgriLife Extension and from the International Goat Research Center, Texas A & M, Prairie View, provided program delivery, along with two professors from Sam Houston State University and staff from the Women's Business Center.

• The Grow'n Growers Farmers Market moved from San Juan to McAllen in November 2012, resulting in an increase in vendors from fourteen (14) to twenty (20) each week. Weekly sales have increased, on average, by five (5) times the sales in San Juan.

Results: Evaluations indicated participants were sixty-one percent (61%) female, sixty point twenty-five percent (60.25%) Hispanic, and there was an 83.3% increase, in understanding of the material presented; 78.63% expected to gain economically, with a benefit averaging \$425 per acre.

Future Plans: These multi-county programs will continue in 2014 with support from the Sustainable Ag Planning Committee and Extension, and Prairie View specialists/agents. A goat seminar will be offered for a third year and a program on egg production will be added. Additionally, Jennifer Herrera, Cameron County Horticulturist, will partner in horticultural production and food preservation programs.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

Hidalgo County

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