Making a Difference in Fisher County 2019

Fisher County

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In Fisher county field crops account for 80% of total agricultural production. Fisher County has approximately 495,000 acres in agricultural production which contributes $30 to $50 million annually in economic impact. The two largest contributors to annual agricultural income are cotton which produces 50% of that income and livestock which brings in 30%. The county has started to see an above average corn crop for our area that has started interest in farmers to seek an alternative crop to rotate in the area.

Some of the major issues in Fisher County consist of herbicide resistant weeds and proper use of how to manage the new technologies that are being offered. This was an below average year for cotton, we had several producers that were unable to get a crop harvested. Most of the cotton that was harvested was anywhere from 50 to 100 pound cotton. This year we were able to harvest our county test plot that consisted of 15 varieties of cotton. We experimented with 13 new technologies and used two traditional varieties of cotton to see yields. The Fisher County CAB and stakeholders have recognized the need to have programs that would help address herbicide resistance, new technologies and seeking out other markets to better the production in Fisher County. This year there was a lot of questions dealing with Hemp production, farmers are seeking out alternative crops that may help out with the last few years of below average cotton crops. The target audience for our plan included field crop producers, seed/herbicide dealers, crop consultants, and other related contributors.

- Fisher County Cotton Workshop (20 participants)
- Auxin Trainings (30 Participants)
- Fisher County Ag Day (22 Participants)
- Result Demonstrations (2 Cooperators)
- Farm Bill Update (18 Participants)
- Newsletters (3)
- Individual Assistance-Site visits to farms and ranches utilized year around to educate landowners.

The overall results of this years programs were extremely positive, and did meet the goals laid out by the county advisory board and ag committee members. Results indicated that producers plan to utilize the new technologies to manage crop and range land and showed a growing need to use new technologies of herbicides to help control unwanted weeds. In the county test plot we were able to see how last years cover crop assisted in the growth of young cotton. The cover crop provided a shield from sand and wind and farmers were able to see surrounding fields that did not use a cover crop how the cotton was behind the other. Over the past two years farmers have seen the benefits of cover crops and with the help of soil testing can really benefit their cotton crops. Overall, during the Cotton Workshop, producers indicated an economic impact of $19.65 an acre. The impact of the program in Fisher county showed an

impact of $725,800 among surveyed participants. Overall, during the Fisher County Ag Day, producers indicated an economic impact of $20.56 an acre, and showed an overall impact of $854,945 among surveyed participants.

Family & Community Health

This year Fisher county 4-H had members get involved in Family and Consumer Science. Fisher county 4-H members still really focus on the agricultural end of what 4-H offers. This year we had five 4-H members participate in the county and district food show. I have reached out to people in the community to help with this contest. This year on of my 4-H leaders started working with 4-H members on the food show. We held the first county food show in over six years and the five contestants did extremely well. We took four members on to the district show where one member placed 5th. Adult leaders went and judged the food challenge to see how that contest works so that they can get members involved in that contest in the future. This year Fisher 4-H had an increase in members and with the help of adult leaders 2020 looks great for Family and Consumer Sciences to grow in Fisher county.

4-H & Youth Development

This year Fisher county 4-H numbers are up and still climbing. We had lost members in the past due to parents moving and graduations, but this year we bridged a gap with Rotan schools and have started to gain members back from that community. I feel that this year bridging the gap with the schools has come along way in both communities. This year's county stock show was an huge success. Members of Fisher county 4-H received on average of $1,200 on their show animals and so did members of Rotan and Roby FFA. This was a huge impact for the kids of Fisher county. Our county sale produced over $80,000 in sale animals and with add on will bring over $100,000 to the youth of Fisher county. I feel this alone will help the county on an economic scale but also help all areas of 4-H and FFA programs in the county.

This years focus in 4-H was teaching the water cycle to both Roby and Rotan schools. In Fisher county, like most counties in West Texas, there is a growing need in water education. The need is there because our area has an average rainfall of 19 to 22 inches a year. Being that Fisher county is an farming community students need to learn and understand the need to conserve water and understand how the water cycle functions. This year I used the water table in both Roby and Rotan schools to help teach the water cycle to 5th grade students. I picked 5th grade because this is the grade level that takes the STARR test and some portions of the Science test deals with the water cycle. I had both groups take a pre and post test to see what level of knowledge they had over the water cycle. My main goal was to teach the students with a visual aid that will allow them to see how the water cycle works. With the use of the water table students seen how rivers can displace soil to other parts of the river and visually see how erosion happens after a rain.

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office in Fisher county worked with 5th grade science teachers in both Roby and Rotan schools to develop a plan to teach and improve overall knowledge of the water cycle and help improve STARR results. This plan's primary goal was to give visual learners a tool that would assist in test questions. Our main goals are as follows:

- Increase knowledge of the water cycle
- Increase students knowledge on how erosion happens
- Increase knowledge of how ox bowls are formed
- Give students a visual aide to help with the STARR test

In order to reach the goals mentioned above, plans were made with local 5th grade teachers and administrators to set up times to give pre test and dates to demonstrate the water table.

The overall results of the 2019 Water Project were extremely positive. There was an increased knowledge gained from pre and post test. On the pre-test both groups averaged around 75 percent on the test. On the post-test both groups scored over 90 percent. I received great reports from both teachers saying that after the STAAR test came back that students did extremely well on questions dealing with the water cycle.

The Fisher county Extension office plans to continue water education every year before the STARR test to help both schools prepare their students for the test.