A Practical Approach to Attracting Immigrants and Other Minority Groups to Sustainable Agricultural Programs on the Delmarva Peninsula

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Abstract
Attracting immigrants and other minority producers to sustainable agricultural programs is one of the most challenging tasks faced by extension professionals. However, regular communication between extension professionals and minority communities may reveal great insight into how to reach and engage this emerging clientele.

Methods
Two grant projects were developed by Delaware State University Small Scale Vegetable and Livestock Program and funded by Northeast Center for Risk Management Education. These projects were designed to expand knowledge and skills within immigrant and other minority communities in Delaware and beyond. The goals of the projects were (1) to increase risk management knowledge and (2) to increase clientele capacity to grow and sell ethnic and high value agricultural products in order to satisfy a growing demand for these crops.

Discussion
Over the past four years, Delaware has experienced an increase in agricultural economic activity due to greater participation in the market by minority and immigrant producers in the Delmarva region. In 2012, more than seven acres of high value, ethnic and specialty crops have been grown and marketed in Delaware.

Conclusions
Attending social events frequented by the minority clientele, is a promotional means by which minority participants may be attracted to extension programs. The ability to relate and converse with this clientele is key ingredients to increasing minority participation in extension events and expanding the diversity of producers who are and generate income in the agricultural industry and contributing to global food security.

References
3) USDA Agricultural Census 2007 publication – USDA National Agricultural Statistical Service State of Delaware – Pg. 25, Table 17

Acknowledgements
First, we would like to thank the agencies for providing the funding for this project. Funding for these projects came from Delaware Department of Agriculture, USDA-NIFA and Northeast Center for Risk Management Education. Special mention should be given to immigrant organizations such as La Esperanza and Pastor Israel Figueroa for helping us to reach the Hispanic community. And finally, I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr. Albert Essel and Dr. Dyureep Marshall, as well as my student assistants, for their assistance in delivering sound extension programs in the Hispanic community.

Introduction
Delaware has 530 small farms that are owned by women, African Americans, Native Islanders and people of Spanish-speaking origin (2007 USDA-NASS Agricultural Census); immigrant producers make up a negligible percent of this group.

Through the 2008 Small and Beginning Farm Series and the 2009 Immigrant Producer Series of Workshops, Delaware State University Small Scale Vegetable and Livestock Program identified the need and concern of the immigrant clientele who wanted to get involved in agricultural production and marketing. New immigrant producers wanted to satisfy three basic needs: (1) to increase the production of agricultural products that are popular in their homelands; (2) to satisfy market demand for ethnic and specialty produce in the Delmarva, Mid-Atlantic and Northeastern regions of the United States; and (3) to generate income through agricultural production and marketing. Thus, Delaware State University Cooperative Extension developed and delivered educational programs to targeted ethnic and minority groups.

One of the major challenges faced by Delaware State University Cooperative extension was the limited participation by immigrant and minority groups in agricultural extension events. Inevitably, there were very few minorities that were either owning or managing agri-business enterprises.

Results
The 7 workshops in the series attracted 126 participants and more than 250 participants to extension events related to the projects. Other events included farm visits, bus tours, and Small Farm conferences. The target audience also benefited from fact sheets and other information via one-on-one contact, telephone calls, e-mails and university websites. Eighty percent of the participants said that their knowledge increased by attending these series of workshops and related extension events.

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