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A Networking Approach Using Extension Educators, Subject Matter Specialist, USDA and State Departments of Agriculture Personnel have Successful Assisted Immigrants and Other Minority Groups in Delaware and the Mid Atlantic Region

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Situation, Problem and Challenges

• According to a CBG 2013 survey study, 87% of small producers received most of their production and marketing information from Cooperative Extension and USDA agencies.
  • Minority and immigrant producers generally have limited resources and lack the know how to access USDA program and resources to increase productivity on their operation.
  • This has resulted in the stagnation of agricultural activity in some minority community and reduction of agricultural production in others.

• According to the USDA Agricultural Census 2012, Delaware has 107 farms are minority owned or operated.
• This represents 4.2% of all farms owned in the state.
Function of entities providing agricultural services to producers

- **Extension**: provide non-formal research based education to producers, consumers and young people on agriculture programs - The goal is to encourage healthy lifestyles, food security and job - primarily through land grant universities.

- **USDA**: Provide technical information, training for new and young producers - financial support to the agricultural industry through, i.e., crop insurance, EQUIP program, loans programs –through NIFA-FSA-NRCS-RD.

- **State Departments of Agriculture**: administers – irrigation enhancement programs- land lease assistance. Certification programs for agricultural professionals, food safety inspections- Issue permits and licenses i.e. pesticide, well drilling, issue phyto-sanitary certificates.
Communication flow to Minority and Immigrant Producers

• Extension agents or educators provide information to producer on resources and programs that available to meet their need

• Extension Educators contact Subject matter Specialist, USDA or State Departments of Agriculture personnel for technical information, resources or programs to assist producers

• Specialists and experts assist educators in delivering program and resources to producers
  • Producers communicate with subject specialists and personnel in federal and state agricultural agencies at conferences, field days, workshops, and other specific events
Result of Communication Flow

• In this type of communication different situation can arise:
  • Producers receive technical information and resources which may be late in some cases and untimely in others.
  • Producers can make hasty decision because of late access to science based information. It compromises the producers ability to make decision which are sound. Untimely decisions can impair performance on the farm.
  • This leads to a reduction in the production and marketing activities on the farm, resulting in economic loss to minority and immigrant farming communities.
  • In some case it can be a factor that influence a producer to leave farming and seek other forms of employment.
New approaches to provide technical assistance to Producers

- Delaware State University Small Farms Program has informally adopted a strategy of involving USDA Agencies– Delaware Department of Agriculture – and University Specialist - Extension agents in program planning, farm visits and group meeting.

- A cadre of agricultural service providers working in a team setting, can provide a conduit for the efficient flow of information and resources between providers and producers.

- This is possible as all entities within this network share similar mission of increasing the magnitude of agricultural activity enhancing economic developments and food security.
Example of Collaboration

• Conduction Farms Survey to address business planning for a CBG Farmers Network Project in 2013 and 2014

• University Specialist, USDA 1890 Program Liaison and extension agents collaborated to conduct a research study that evaluate the viability of underserved farms and rural communities.

• Agents and specialists got a comprehensive view of the challenges and opportunities that producers face from year to year. The USDA personnel is then able to share with her USDA colleagues the challenges and opportunity faced by underserved producers.
Examples of Collaboration

• Technical Assistance to Address Production and Marketing Risks
  • USDA Personnel voluntarily accompany extension agents to conduct one on one consultation and farm visits – on soil conservation, farm management, business planning, crops production and marketing –
  • USDA personnel was eager to use their field experience to address farms problems.
  • In fact, some of the USDA personnel had prior field experience and their expertise has proven to add value to the productivity of farming operation in counties and states.
  • The presence of USDA in the field assists extension educators to deliver relevant information and programs to producers in a more timely fashion.
Examples of Collaboration

• **Education and Training to Address Financial Risk**
  • In 2015, USDA through its agencies – Agricultural Marketing Services along with Delaware Department of agriculture collaborated to conduct the AMSTA grants writing project.

  • The AMSTA project – seeks to increase grant funding opportunities for local food and farmers market promotion programs through – ultimately benefit minority producers.

  • NIFA-AMS provided the program and funding for the project

  • Delaware State University/University of Delaware conducted the project

  • Delaware Department of Agriculture was the major promotion avenue for the grant writing project.
Examples of Collaboration

- **Compliance with State and Federal law to address legal risk**
  - Officers from APHIS – Delaware Department of Agriculture and Delaware State University worked to address concern with obnoxious weed
  - Immigrant Asian producer – ipomoea aquatica – water spinach – shipped to DC and NY markets-
  - This crops- was on the federal obnoxious weed list but didn’t affect fauna and flora in DE –
  - 3 entities work together to allow DDA to remove plant for the list
  - Producer continue to grow this crop legally.
Impact of Collaboration

Successful Impacts

• Immigrant and other minority community they became better acquainted with agricultural programs for producers.

• The collaboration have also benefitted women as well as youth in agriculture
Impact of collaboration

New producer – high tunnel production

Increase crops production through drip irrigation

- Collaboration has allowed for the following
- expansion of high tunnels, drip irrigation
- organic production
- Growing minority participation in local food hubs and farmers markets
Impact of Collaboration

Bitter Melon and Garden Egg Production

Crops Diversification

- Some of the ethnic crops grown in Delaware include: Bitter melon and garden eggs, tomatillo
  
- Specialty egg plants and sweet potatoes
  
- Calabaza, scotch bonnet pepper, callaloo spinach, sorrel and pigeon peas
Impact of Collaboration

Marketing outlets and channels

- Ethnic and specialty crops are marketed
- hotel establishment restaurants, retail stores, - beach stores
- Direct markets at food festivals-websites,
- urban area – such as Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore and Miami
Impact of Collaboration

Land Preservation programs

• Immigrant producers have expanded production through land preservation programs
• Producer market fresh produce and value added products as well
• These include scotch bonnet hot sauce as well as jerk sauce
Marketing Value Added Products

Marketing Display at the Pepperfest
Summary

• When a cadre of agricultural service provider network around programs instead of event, it facilitates a more continuous flow of information and resources between Cooperative Extension, USDA and food producers.

• The insight into problem, challenges and opportunities allows for Land Grant Universities, USDA and State Department of Agriculture to develop appropriate programs and technologies to better address farmer needs.

• Thanks! Question!!!
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