

Agricultural News

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Project Grow promotes better diets for Native Americans

Project Grow is a new program that encourages self-help for Native Americans by using available land to grow fresh fruits and vegetables. And in the process, health and nutrition should improve.

Project Grow was started as a way to combat diabetes, a reckless killer of Native Americans, says **Gil Goetz**, the project coordinator from the American Indian Opportunity Industrial Center (AIOIC).

He says incidence of type II diabetes on reservations can be as high as 50 percent, and up to 85 percent for Indians over the age of 60. Type II diabetes can be controlled by eating fresh fruits and vegetables (type I diabetes requires insulin injections).

"We're dealing with a resource—the land—that Indians already have. Project Grow can help them feel better about using it. It's one step towards improved health," Goetz says.

Jim Sutherland, MES coordinator for Project Grow, explains the four initiatives.

1. Community agriculture programs will encourage Native Americans living on reservations to grow more fresh fruits and vegetables in family gardens or community gardens. This will be the program's main source for supplying fruits and vegetables necessary for improved diets.

2. Youth programs connected with the project will be designed to get Na-



Project Grow will help young Native Americans develop an interest in growing vegetables and fruits. (photo by Don Breneman)

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Current information available from University of Minnesota Extension: <http://www.extension.umn.edu>.

New agricultural business retention and expansion program

by George Morse, Extension Economist,
Community Economic Development

A pilot program will be launched next fall to adapt the highly successful business retention and expansion (BR&E) program to agriculture. The business retention and expansion approach has been successfully applied to manufacturing, retail, and tourism sectors in extension and outreach programs in 26 states.

However, to-date, it has not been used in agriculture. Extension educators who have used the process on Main Street have suggested that it would be valuable in the agricultural industry. This project, which was recently funded by a grant from Jerry Miller's office, will adapt the process to agriculture.

The overall purpose of the BR&E program is to help an area's existing businesses survive and grow, a role that extension has played for a long time with farm producers. This BR&E program adds strategic planning to the attention paid to individual firms and broadens the scope to include input suppliers, food and fiber processors and farmers.

At the local level, the objectives of the program are to:

- Demonstrate to the firms in this industry that the community appreciates their contributions to the local economy.
- Help these firms solve local problems.
- Assist the firms in using state and federal programs.
- Develop strategic plans for the growth of the industry.

The most visible aspect of the program is visits by community leaders to

the county's firms. During each of these visits, which typically last one hour, the community leaders ask the firms about their information needs, bottlenecks to their survival or growth, potential expansion or relocation plans, and the opportunities and threats they see for their industry. Between 30 and 100 of these individual visits are conducted in a county.

After the visits, a task force of community leaders meets to review what steps might be taken immediately to address the most urgent concerns of the firms. Sometimes, the issue is as simple as referring the firm to an educational program or state agency that deals with the problem. In other cases, the task force must work with the firm and a local unit of government to resolve a conflict. The task force is composed of between 20 and 25 local leaders representing the agricultural organizations, Main Street business organizations, local governments and educational institutions.

One of the primary short-run benefits of this program is the development of collaboration between these different groups of local leaders. Even in small communities, there is considerable fragmentation between groups

as each group develops stronger linkages to state and national interest groups. This program provides an opportunity for agricultural leaders to educate other community leaders on the linkages between their sectors.

While the local task force is addressing the urgent issues, the University of Minnesota is developing an overall profile of the responses from firms. This data base is then used by the Task Force to set priorities on longer term projects that will benefit this industry. These projects range from education and research projects to promotional efforts and revolving loan funds.

In Minnesota, the BR&E program has been implemented in eight counties, with agricultural agents active in three of them. Rod Elmstrand in Chisago County, Jack Morris in Pope County and Wayne Hansen in Redwood County have participated directly in the program. The core team on this new project includes: Rod Elmstrand, extension educator in Chisago County; Dick Levins, extension economist-agriculture; George Morse, extension economist-community economic development; and Don Olson, agriculture program leader.

Guidelines for participation in the pilot programs will be available by mid-July. Extension educators interested in applying for one of these pilot efforts can contact any core team member.

Project Grow (continued from page 1)

3. The health nutrition and education program will involve faculty members in Human Ecology, the Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and the Family Nutrition Program (FNP). Also cooperating are the Women, Infants and Children's (WIC) program of USDA and other agencies that work with Native Americans in Bemidji, Duluth and Leech Lake.

4. Economic development initiatives will be designed to bring new industry to reservations. One possi-

ble American youth interested in health and nutrition. "We'll try to develop interest in growing fruits and vegetables at an early age," Sutherland says. Plans include using grow-labs (mini-greenhouses) in schools where students will plant seeds and be able to see them sprout and grow.

bilities is a cranberry project at Red Lake. Another is a project where Mille Lacs reservation residents would grow herbs and other plants for the Aveda Corporation. The latter is being developed through the University's Center for Alternative Plant and Animal Products.

Project Grow started as a pilot program on the Fond du Lac reservation in Carlton County in 1991. In 1992 the program expanded to the Red Lake, White Earth and Leech Lake reservations. The Mille Lacs reservation has been added for 1993.

Cooperation is the key to the program. "Extension educators and state extension faculty will work cooperatively with the Native American community with the goal of improving the quality of life," Sutherland says.

Jack Sperbeck

Agricultural News is a publication of the Agriculture Program Area, produced by Educational Development System, Minnesota Extension Service. Ideas for stories and letters to the editor are encouraged. Contact Jack Sperbeck, 447 Coffey Hall, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN 55108. Tel. 612-625-1794.

Editor: Jack Sperbeck
Design: John Molstad
Desk Top Editor: Phyllis Petersen
Photo Editor: Don Breneman

Wanted: People to 'buy into' sustainable agriculture

Everyone involved in food production should practice sustainable agriculture, says **Philip Larsen**, head of the University of Minnesota's Department of Plant Pathology.

Larsen also coordinates the sustainable agriculture initiative for the Minnesota Extension Service. He'd like to see "broad ownership" develop for sustainable agriculture.

"Farmers can use sustainable practices that pose minimal threats to the environment and continue to make a living from agriculture," he says. He emphasizes the systems approach to sustainable agriculture.

Sustainable agriculture integrates environmental quality with an acceptable standard of living. It includes maintaining agricultural production, water quality, integrated pest management, sound financial management and quality of life issues, he says.

Larsen says the systems approach has led to recent meetings of the people involved in various statewide initiatives and centers. Included were the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA), water quality, integrated pest management, crop residue management, the dairy initiative, the Center for Farm Financial Management and the Center for Alternative

Plant and Animal Products.

"We need to integrate so we're working on common goals for the citizens of Minnesota. We're working at 'fitting together' so we're not out there as independent agents working on the same thing," he says.

Larsen says it's unfortunate that many farmers see sustainable agriculture as taking some inputs away. "That's not necessarily true, but in many cases the research has not yet been done to help farmers make informed decisions about intelligent reduction of inputs," he says.

In fact, much of the current information on systems-oriented farm resource management resides in the heads of farmers who have learned on their own, according to a recent National Sustainable Agriculture Education Council Report.

The group that developed the report was chaired by John Ikerd, state extension director in Missouri, and had broad representation from government, private industry and groups with a wide diversity of stakes in the sustainable agriculture issue.

The report, entitled "Sustainable Agriculture Education: A Search For Common Ground," emphasized that sustainable agriculture educational

programs must be implemented in ways that reflect unique cultural and geographic settings.

"A national sustainable agriculture education program should not be an educational program that is planned, developed and carried out from the national level. Instead, it should be a national strategy for facilitating, supporting, guiding, and assisting with a wide diversity of educational programs that are locally planned, developed and delivered."

However, the report identified important strategic elements for a national sustainable education program. They included:

—Farmers as partners in educational programs. Much of the existing information on farming systems management is in the heads of farmers rather than in experiment station bulletins. Farmers and scientists need to become partners in sustainable agriculture education programs that deal with farm level questions and issues.

—Site-specific programs. For example, water quality risks from chemical residues are not inherent characteristics of specific pesticides or fertilizers. Instead, they depend on site-specific combination of materials applied, rate of application, soil type and watershed location.

—Voluntary buy-in by farmers and information providers. The orientation should always be that of helping farmers and others in doing the things they want to do, rather than coercing them into doing things they do not want or feel are needed.

—Certification of professional information
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New EDS contacts for Agriculture

Reinventing MES means new EDS contacts for agriculture extension faculty. Joyce DeBoe is now your contact person for all agriculture products and services. Pat Roth is Joyce's new assistant.

Your contacts:

Joyce DeBoe, 625-8198

Pat Roth, 625-8147 (Monday through Thursday)

Tracey Benson and Karen Burke, who've worked with many of you in the past few years, have new responsibilities in EDS.



Manure management is part of the systems approach to sustainable agriculture. (photo by Don Breneman)

Precision farming initiative funded

Precision farming—more precise and efficient use of crop inputs—can improve farm profits and environmental quality.

"Precision farming applies to the entire range of management practices," says **Pierre Robert**, soil scientist with the University of Minnesota's Agricultural Experiment. Examples include soil sampling; tillage; use of seed manure, fertilizer and herbicides; and record keeping.

Agriculture programs, Minnesota Extension Service, has funded a precision farming initiative beginning with the 1993 growing season. St. Paul campus faculty, state agencies, crop consultants and county extension educators are collaborating to establish five field demonstrations of precision management technologies and techniques

during the coming crop season:

—Economic and environmental advantages of variable rate fertilizer application.

—A demonstration of planter and drill upgrades to improve crop residue management.

—Precision manure application methods and their effects on nitrogen availability.

—A demonstration of soil-specific seed variety selection to manage iron chlorosis in soybeans.

—Improved nitrogen management for irrigated potato production.

Field days and meetings will be arranged to discuss the demonstrations' economic and environmental advantages, says **Mark Seeley**, extension agricultural climatologist-soils.

Jack Sperbeck



An example of precision farming. Changing anhydrous ammonia applications "on the go" yields economic and environmental benefits. (photo by Don Breneman)

Sustainable (continued from page 3)

mation providers. In some cases, experienced farmers or persons from non-profit farm organizations may be as competent (or more competent) to provide information on sustainable agriculture as extension specialists, agribusiness representatives, or certified crop consultants. However, some procedure should be developed....that will give credibility to those with competency to provide information to farm-

ers on the issue of sustainability.

—Research-based information. Systems research conducted on working farms is not inherently less scientific than plot work conducted on experiment station farms or in greenhouses, assuming that some basic scientific requirements are fulfilled.

—General education on principles of sustainability should be integrated into public schools for grades K-12.

Jack Sperbeck

Big plans for Forage EXPO...

The organizers hope to make it the biggest, best, most unique, well planned forage exposition in Minnesota.

"With your help, the Forage Expo could become an annual event," says **Terry Salmela**, co-chair of Minnesota Alfalfa and Forage Expo. It's scheduled for the Tom and Rita Middendorf dairy farm near Freeport in Stearns County Aug. 17-18, 1993.

"We're hoping that county agents and industry people can help support Expo in three ways," he says.

—Help publicize the event locally.

—Organize van and bus trips from local forage councils on either day (programs are similar each day).

—Order advance meal tickets (\$4.50 each) and give or sell them to farmers as an incentive to attend. Meal tickets can be ordered from Vern Palmberg, 411 Borlaug Hall, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN 55108.

Salmela and Mike Etzel, Pioneer Hi-Bred International at Rochester, are co-chairs. Sponsors include the Minnesota Forage and Grassland Council, in cooperation with the University of Minnesota's Extension Service, a number of agribusiness firms, and Hay and Forage Grower magazine.

"We want to hit a 'home run' so this can become an annual event. Agribusiness sponsorship means there's no cost to farmers, except for food.

"And we have a unique event that's focused on educational plots and demonstrations. Experts from the university and private industry will be available in tents at every demonstrate site," Salmela says.

Jack Sperbeck

IN THE NEWS...

Robert M. Jordan, professor emeritus and retired extension animal scientist, has received a Fellow Award from the Equine Nutrition and Physiology Society.

