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WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE TRAINING PROGRAMS: THE USA-STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA "SASSY" PROJECT

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Abstract. Women's involvement in agriculture and agribusiness is increasingly recognized as an important component of success in farm and ranch production and management. Women have unique information needs to help them more fully participate in agricultural decision-making. This has resulted in the development and implementation of agricultural training projects and programs specifically targeting rural women. Although there has been anecdotal evidence that these programs have benefitted women in agriculture, there had been no formal evaluation of the efficacy of agricultural training programs in South Dakota. The purpose of this paper is to report the findings of an assessment and evaluation study of the agricultural training program Sustainable Annie's Systems in South Dakota for Years to Come (SASSY). The research was conducted to provide empirical evidence as to the degree that this program had a positive impact on the participants. This article shares those results.

Key words: rural women, women in agriculture, agriculture training programs, evaluation of agriculture training programs

INTRODUCTION

Women's involvement in agriculture and agribusiness is increasingly recognized as an important component of success in farm and ranch production and management. The South Dakota State University Cooperative Extension Service (SDSU-CES) has implemented projects and programs targeted for women in agriculture. The primary objectives are to empower farm and ranch women in the state and help prepare them for increased participation in agricultural decision-making and management. According to SDSU-CES, more than 200 women have participated in Annie's Project and its successor, Sustainable Annie's Systems in South Dakota for Years to Come (SASSY)

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training programs. Although there has been anecdotal evidence that these programs have benefitted women in agriculture, a recent assessment and evaluation study of SASSY was conducted to provide empirical evidence as to the degree that this program had a positive impact. This article shares those results.

CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

The extent of women's role in the agricultural industry has been increasingly documented in recent years. According to the Women's Agricultural Community Web Resource[1], women across the world are involved in agriculture either directly or indirectly as farmers, ranchers, innovators or subsistence farmers. Hoppe et al. [2007] reported that past surveys did not adequately provide for the exact number and role of women in agriculture since the data collection tended to focus on one primary operator, even when the women operated the farm or ranch business with their husbands. Women are involved in livestock and crop farming as owners, co-owners with their spouses and children, and as partners in leasehold and corporate operations.

The number of women in agriculture in the United States has increased and reflects the changing diversity in farm characteristics [U.S. Department of Agriculture 2009]. According to the USDA Report "2007 Census of Agriculture", the number of women operators in the U.S. increased by 19 percent from 847,832 in 2002 to 1,008,943 in 2007; during the same period the number of women operators in South Dakota increased by 9.58 percent from 10,494 to 11,499. The number of women principal operators in U.S. increased from 237,819 in 2002 to 306,209 in 2007 (28.8 percent), and in South Dakota from 2,184 in 2002 to 2,394 in 2007 (9.62% increase) [U.S. Department of Agriculture 2009]. The term "woman operator" refers to all women involved in agricultural operations. The census statistics also shows an increase in the hectares[2] operated by women in the U.S. by 8.2 percent from 24,031,672 hec in 2002 to 26,006,947 hec in 2007, and in South Dakota from 738,876 hec in 2002 to 768,075 hec in 2007 (3.95% increase).

The average age of women operators increased from 53.6 to 55.3 years (three percent), and 55.7 to 57.1 (five percent) years in South Dakota and the U.S. respectively. The average years on the farm increased by eight percent in South Dakota from 23.8 to 25.7 years and four percent from 20.7 to 21.6 years in the U.S. [U.S. Department of Agriculture 2009].

The 2007 Census was the first census to report separately the number of farms and hectares with a woman operator or with a woman principal operator. In South Dakota, 11,144 women operated 5,679,793 hectares of land on 10,823 farms. In the U.S. there were 985,192 women at 942,035 farms operating 120,600,343 hectares of land [U.S. Department of Agriculture 2009].

[1] "Who are Women in Agriculture?" (Accessed 06/23/2009, http://www.safs.msu.edu/womenag/index.htm).

[2] Although the U.S. Census of Agriculture reports land holdings in acres, for the purposes of this manuscript, acres have been converted to hectares.

A study by Laffery [1991] surveyed 1000 farm women to understand their participation in farm activities in South Dakota. The findings indicated that apart from spending most of their time in meeting household responsibilities, women participated more in livestock--related tasks than in crop-related tasks. In decision-making, Laffery found that women were involved in joint decision-making in future farm planning, family spending, retirement planning, and in important decisions such as buying, selling, renting or leasing land.

In a study of farm families and changes in farm organization and structure, Janssen, Stover, and Clark [1993] concluded that interrelationships between farm business and farm household decisions and activities is an important element of farm structure. The study explored the work roles of farm couples, decision-making roles of farm couples, farm management and farm financial position, family functioning (satisfaction, coherence, stress and agreement) in relation to farm financial position, and the farm couple's goals concerning continuation of the farm operation and farming lifestyle. The research findings indicated that an intermix of technology, economic and gender roles changes in American society has influenced work roles of farm couples. Farm families increasingly rely on off-farm employment and greater participation of farm women in the farm operation. Family life research findings indicate that successful families are much more likely to use shared decision-making (group collaborative) styles than other family decision-making styles [Janssen et al. 1993].

UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

As farm and ranch operations become more complex, agricultural women face a more challenging environment. Samanta [1995] concludes that women farmers have unique financial, marketing, risk, production and family needs as self-employees, owners or partners in their farms. Women in agriculture make important decisions on a daily basis including household, family, and the farm/ranch operation [Samanta 1995]. Women are involved in the decision-making process both as a responsibility and as a management practice in choosing a course of action among several alternatives. According to Wasnik's [2006] study of women in agriculture's strategy for socio-economic empowerment, women face economic vulnerability due to market, operation and natural risks related to agricultural production which is beyond their control. Another challenge is that the improved agricultural technology accompanied by partial mechanization affects women from all socio-economic backgrounds; women in farm and/or ranch businesses need to adapt to embrace better operation practices [Wasnik 2006].

Anderson [2004] documented fourteen experiences and stories by women involved in sustainable agriculture. Anderson arranged the stories into four parts: spring beginnings (traditional agriculture), summer abundance (pioneering agriculture), autumn reaping (industrial agriculture) and winter's return (sustainable agriculture). In all four parts of the interview, each interviewee shared their roles on the farm and their contribution to it. Anderson's main objective was to speak with women and understand how women have been adapting to changes in agriculture in the recent past. The participants were drawn not only from farms and ranches, but also from agricultural professions that included agribusiness and research and public policy. Anderson found that women worked

to educate others about what is really happening on the land through sharing their experiences and challenges. Apart from sustainability, the participants also focused on social justice and economic viability of women farmers. Anderson concluded that women in agriculture understood the challenges in the agricultural industry and positioned themselves through adaption of new techniques, skills and practices in order to meet these challenges [Anderson 2004].

ENTREPRENEURIAL NATURE OF WOMEN

According to Tanner [1999], self-employment has offered greater job flexibility by accommodating flexible working hours, which allowed women to continue to meet their family responsibilities.

Cuervo, Ribeiro and Roig [2007] define entrepreneurship as discovery and exploitation of opportunities. In search of theoretical approaches to the study of entrepreneurship, Cuervo et al. stated that there is no one theory of entrepreneurship but rather many. The authors outlined three levels of analysis as approaches to understanding entrepreneurship. They include: a) individual and corporate entrepreneurship; b) small and medium size entrepreneurship; and c) family business.

Social-cultural or institutional approaches towards entrepreneurship are built on network theory which is based on the idea that the entrepreneurial function exists and develops in a network of social relations as outlined by Cuervo et al. [2007]. The creation of new enterprise needs is favored or constrained by a complex span of relationships between the future entrepreneur, resources and opportunities. They linked entrepreneurship to the interaction within networks identified as communication content (the passing of information), exchange content (the exchange of goods and services), and/or normative content (the generation of expectations which people have of one another because of special characteristics or attributes).

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

In the context of gender and development, Rowlands [1997] defines empowerment as a process or processes rather than an end product that brings people outside the decision--making process into it. In an economic context, it is the ability to maximize the opportunities available by participating in economic decision-making. Empowerment has also been defined as the process of enhancing an individual's or group's capacity to make purposive choices, and to transform the same choices into desired actions [Alsop, Bertelsen and Holland 2006].

Empowerment is dynamic, changing, and varies widely according to circumstances. Rowlands [1997] focused particularly on implied power that empowerment has to be generative and productive. Generative empowerment is concerned with the processes by which people become aware of their interests and how those relate to the interests of others in order for both to participate from a position of greater strength in decision-making and actually influence such decisions.

While discussing a feminist perspective, Rowlands [1997] views empowerment to be more than participation in decision-making and must include the processes that lead people to perceive themselves as able and entitled to make decisions. Accordly, empowerment operates within three dimensions: personal, relational, and collective (refer to Figure 1).

- Personal: developing a sense of self and individual confidence and capacity, and undoing the effect of internalized oppression.
- Relational: developing the ability to negotiate and influence the nature of a relationship and decisions made within it.
- Collective: where individuals work together to achieve a more extensive impact than each could have done alone.

Rowlands contends that empowerment is organizing and planning development interventions in a way that ensures that the needs of women are met. Empowerment has to recognize the efforts of organizing and increasing self-reliance and independence to make choices and control resources.

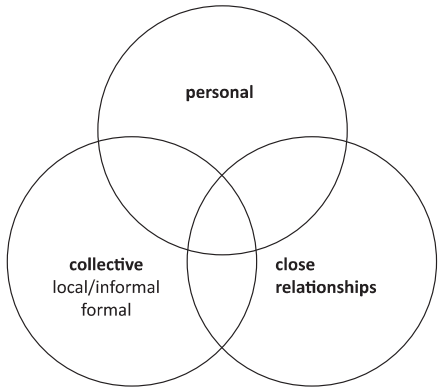

Fig. 1. The Three Dimensions of Empowerment
Rys. 1. Trzy wymiary umocowania

Source: Rowlands, 2007
Źródło: Rowlands, 2007

MEASURING EMPOWERMENT

Understanding and measuring empowerment presents challenges due to an individual's own varying assets that enable interaction [Alsop and Heinsohn 2005]. According to Alsop and Heinsohn [2005] individuals and group "endowment of a single asset, such as ownership of land, can affect a person's ability to make meaningful choices" (p. 8). While measuring empowerment, the indicators of empowerment will vary among individuals and can affect the endowment of another asset. Alsop et al. [2006] provides an example of education (asset) which often gives an individual or group of individuals greater access to information (asset) and at times improves an individual's capacity to envision alternative options (a psychological asset).

EVALUATION OF TRAINING PROGRAMS

In both public and private sectors, evaluation of training programs is important for stakeholders to know if the funded and/or implemented programs achieved the intended objectives. According to Chen [2005], program evaluation is the "application of evaluation approaches, techniques, and knowledge to systematically assess and improve the planning, implementation and effectiveness of programs" (p. 3). Chen suggests that for a program to be effective, it must ensure smooth transformation of inputs into desirable outputs, and continuously interact with its environment in order to obtain the necessary resources and support.

The effectiveness of a training program depends on its successful implementation. Evaluation can be carried out at the initial implementation stage of a program, or at the end of the program. Chen [2005] uses "process evaluation" for evaluation carried out at the end of a training program. Assessment-oriented process evaluation is used by evaluators to assess how well the program was implemented. Stakeholders, funding agencies, decision-makers, program managers, implementers, and the general public rely on outcome evaluation to determine the impact of a program. Outcome evaluation can be divided into efficacy and effectiveness evaluation. Efficacy evaluation is used to assess the effect of a program under controlled and standardized conditions, whereas effectiveness evaluation assesses the effect of a program in practical conditions [Chen 2005].

Kirkpatrick [1998] agrees that evaluation is important in order to determine the effectiveness of a training program, and identifies evaluation as the last step when planning and implementing effective training programs. Two specific reasons for evaluating training programs are to decide whether to continue or discontinue the training programs, or to acquire information on how to improve future programs.

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION TRAINING PROGRAMS

Agricultural training is classified as either universal or subset education. Universal education is provided to the agricultural community in general in order to increase productivity of a large population. Ugbomeh [2001] defined subset agricultural education as concerned with teaching better practices and adopting improved agricultural practices, as well as changing the outlook of target farmers to increase their informed judgment as a way of improving their agricultural business operation. Based on the above classifications, the SASSY training program can be categorized as subset agricultural education, with the interest of improving women participation in agricultural operations in South Dakota.

In the past, agricultural extension services were biased regarding working with women. According to Young [1993] women had access to home economics extension services and selective training as agricultural advisors and extension service workers. Lack of access to extension services on agricultural business management limited women's access to resources and information on farm management.

Lack of training in the past was based on the perception that work done by women on the farm or ranch did not require formal training; on-the-job training would contribute

to learning while women carried out operations [Young 1993]. Young recognizes the assumption that young women farmers are perceived to be already equipped to handle farm or ranch operation through some training or socialization into womanhood. Most women have therefore learned farm or ranch operations by observing their spouses or male family members.

Agricultural extension services have been a critical agent for providing information to women. There are new approaches and strategies being developed to increase women's access to information. However, according to Trauger et al. [2008], women's agricultural educational needs are often not adequately met by current agricultural extension efforts in the United States. Agricultural training organizations have allowed unequal access to agricultural education for men and women. Women's educational needs vary based on the agricultural topics and it is therefore difficult to identify a specific curriculum to ensure efficiency [Trauger et al. 2008]. Women were assumed to prefer traditionally gendered farm tasks such as book-keeping or domestic work on the farm, with a tendency to trust other women farmers. The goal of gender agricultural training is to empower women to be part of an agency through knowledge acquisition. Trauger et al. [2008] suggests networking for women farmers and ranchers as a means of providing continuous opportunity to build trust, share information, and build agency.

Wisner [2008] recognized the important role played by the Cooperative Extension Service of land-grant universities and by commodity exchange markets. With different producer characteristics, Wisner [2008] emphasized that not every producer subscribes to market advisory services. Educational materials, programs, and workshops organized and conducted by the Cooperative Extension Service provide avenues for farmers and ranchers to upgrade their marketing skills.

Annie's Project

Annie's Project is an agricultural business course program for women based on the life of Annette Fleck, a farm woman from the state of Illinois. The project objective is to empower farm women to become better partners through networking, learning management, and organization of important information related to farm business and operation [Annie's Project 2008]. While working on farm business management and marketing education at the University of Illinois, Ruth Hambleton developed Annie's Project based on the life story of her mother Annette Fleck [Annie's Project 2008]. Through observation of the challenges faced by Annie as a farm woman, and through experience, Hambleton identified the need to develop a program to meet women's diverse needs, resulting in increased quality of their participation in farm and ranch operations. Hambleton [2006] recognized that just like any other farm wife, her mother raised a family, supported her husband in running the farm business, and faced the challenges of low profitability in the farm enterprise.

From its inception in Illinois with a class of ten women in February of 2003, Annie's Project has grown to reach more than 2,000 women and has expanded into more than twenty states. The demographic characteristics vary from women married to farmers, to women who inherit their farm from their spouses without prior direct knowledge of the farm operation.

Annie's Project brings together women from different backgrounds, such as varying marital status, educational level, business and management skills, occupation, and type of farming operation [Annie's Project 2008]. According to Hambleton [2006], mentorship and sharing opportunities among women are possible with older women who have farm experience and younger women with computer and technology skills, resulting in a common ground to exchange and learn from each other. The training sessions encourage interaction and networking by maintaining a small class size of between ten and twelve women.

Each Annie's Project training is organized into six sessions, with topics of discussion varying across states depending on the women's unique and diverse information needs. The session topics include: financial skills on how to handle money and understanding financial tools such as the balance sheet, cash flow, and income statement; risk management information on crop or animal insurance; marketing information on understanding crop or livestock marketing; business organization information to understand lease agreements, the importance of financial record-keeping, planning and goal-setting, and estate planning; and human resource training on managing human resources in the farm/ranch business.

South Dakota Annie's Project

Annie's Project training was introduced to South Dakota in 2006 in Dewey and Harding Counties with collaboration between North Dakota State University's Cooperative Extension Service (NDSU-CES), and South Dakota State University's Cooperative Extension Service (SDSU-CES), and Annie's Project coordinator [Stacy Hadrick, personal communication 2008].

South Dakota women farmers and ranchers received training in tracking expenses and income for business and family operations, land rental agreements, retirement planning, farm transfer and estate planning, grain and livestock marketing, crop and livestock insurance, human resource management, with a last session open to address the participants' topic of choice.

Sustainable Annie's Systems in South Dakota for Years to Come (SASSY)

According to SDSU-CES's Annie's Project Summary[3], the training enabled women to be more effective business partners, create sustainability in their operation, and realized the importance of empowering women involved in farming and ranching. Upon completion of Annie's Project, the participants expressed the desire for more in-depth information on risk management, how to be more effective business partners and how to create sustainability in their operation. In response to this request, in fall 2008, SDSU-CES developed a follow-up SASSY training program unique to South Dakota[4]. This training

[3] The Ag Risk Education Library (Accessed 11/06/2010, http://www.agrisk.umn.edu/verification/vrregister.dll/publicresults?ProjectNumber=RME-D4K02431).

[4] SASSY Project Summary (Accessed 11/06/2010, http://www.agrisk.umn.edu/VerificationSearch/DisplayProposal.aspx?PN=RME-DF202638).

was offered fall 2009 and spring 2010 with the primary goals of sustaining learning and promoting the best identified practices learned through Annie's Project. SASSY training was offered over six sessions in ten counties in South Dakota.

SASSY training participants were required to pay a registration fee of $50 US, and this amount included the cost of meals for each class. Appendix A includes an example of a SASSY training agenda for Brookings County. The six session topics were: finding balance for you and the farm or ranch; planning for the future; sustainability; marketing mechanics; 'cuz it's about the money; and celebrating women in agriculture/planning for the future.

SASSY training occurred in the same counties as the Annie's Project. "Initial training locations were chosen because of interest by the educators in that region to have (continued) programming focused on women. After our initial Annie's sessions, there was a strong interest to offer SASSY at the original locations" [Robin Salverson, personal communication 2010]. SASSY training targeted 160 women farmers and ranchers in ten counties.

Assessment and Evaluation of SASSY

Prior to the formal assessment of the SASSY program, evaluation of women in agriculture training programs in South Dakota were limited to feedback notes and informal comments from end-of-class assignments and home assignments. A formal post-training survey was developed and distributed in order to better understand what is important when designing and implementing training programs; identifying short term and long term program relevance, effectiveness, and compatibility; and providing feedback information to improve future training programs and increase participation of women in agriculture. The survey, developed by South Dakota State University Economics Department researchers, was distributed to SASSY participants during the last session of training. Of 120 total participants, 60 returned surveys, resulting in a 50 percent response rate.

SURVEY RESULTS

High interest in SASSY training was demonstrated in that eighty-one percent of the participants attended four or more of the six sessions. Over half of the participants were 45 years or older, and 88 percent were married. The participants consisted of 37 percent college graduates, 29 percent with some college level education, and 14 percent with post graduate education. Forty-six percent of the participants had been involved in agricultural operations for over 30 years, and 16 percent 20–29 years. Seventy-one percent of participants were able to attend a training center within 64 kilometers of their home.

The most common form of farm/ranch ownership was sole proprietorship (56%), followed by partnership (24%). Fifty-six percent of the participants were involved in both livestock and crop production, with 30 percent involving 405–2023 hectares, and 37 percent 2024–4047 hectares. Annual farm gross income for 43 percent of the participants was below $100,000 US; followed by 26 percent between $100,000 and $200,000 US.

Table 1. Importance of Topics Covered by SASSY Training (%)
Tabela 1. Ważność tematów podejmowanych przez szkolenia SASSY (%)

Importance of topics covered by SASSY Training	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Least important	Not important	Didn't receive information	Mean average
	5	4	3	2	1	0	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Financial records	66.7	19.3	10.5	1.7	–	1.7	4.46
Marketing strategies and plans	59.7	26.3	10.5	3.5	–	–	4.42
Production records	54.4	31.6	10.5	1.7	–	1.7	4.33
Other	66.7	–	33.3	–	–		4.33
Livestock production	58.9	25.0	3.6	5.3	5.3	1.8	4.21
Goal-setting	46.6	31.0	15.5	5.2	1.7	–	4.16
Communication skills	52.6	21.1	19.3	3.5	–	3.5	4.12
Health and well-being	41.4	32.7	19.0	5.2	–	1.7	4.05
Relationships	48.3	25.6	17.2	3.5	–	5.2	4.03
Natural resources	25.0	37.5	25.0	10.7	–	1.8	3.71
Crop insurance	26.8	32.1	19.6	12.5	–	8.9	3.46
Niche marketing	26.4	28.3	26.4	9.4	1.9	7.6	3.45
Crop production	26.8	26.8	26.8	5.4	7.1	7.1	3.39
Animal insurance	25.0	26.8	17.9	5.4	8.9	16.0	3.05

Source: SASSY Training Survey, 2010
Źródło: ankieta szkolenia SASSY, 2010

SASSY participants were asked to respond to questions based upon their experiences in the SASSY training program. Nine out of fourteen SASSY training topics (see Table 1) had a mean average of four and above (somewhat to very important), and the remaining five topics had a mean average of at least three (somewhat important).

Learning how to balance farm and ranch life was a central subset of SASSY training. Table 2 indicates that getting organized, focusing on priorities, being flexible, living simply, and building networks and focusing on personal time all had high mean averages, indicating their importance to the survey respondents.

In relation to goal-setting, the highest percentage of goal-setting occurred in relation to family/personal and financial goals, with the lowest percentage in relation to their communities (refer to Table 3). Nearly all the survey respondents (95%) said they will share their goals with their spouse and/or other and family members.

The survey also asked farm and ranch women to indicate what barriers they faced in relation to accomplishing their goals (refer to Table 4). Interestingly, although nearly all

Table 2. Ways of Finding Balance in Farm and Ranch Life (%)
Tabela 2. Sposoby osiągnięcia równowagi w życiu w gospodarstwie (%)

Specification	Very important 5	Important 4	Somewhat important 3	Least important 2	Not important 1	Mean Average
	%	%	%	%	%	
Getting organized	62.0	25.4	8.5	3.4	–	4.47
Focusing on priorities	50.9	28.1	15.8	5.2	–	4.25
Being flexibility	37.9	41.4	17.2	3.5	–	4.14
Simplifying life	40.4	31.6	26.3	1.7	–	4.11
Building networks	43.9	21.0	26.3	8.8	–	4.00
Personal time	39.0	27.1	25.4	5.1	3.4	3.93

Source: SASSY Training Survey, 2010
Źródło: ankieta szkolenia SASSY, 2010

Table 3. Goals and Time Frame (%)
Tabela 3. Cele i ich rozkład w czasie (%)

Specification	Goals		Time Frame		
	Yes	No	Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term
	%	%	%	%	%
Family/Personal	83	17	40	23	37
Finance	81	19	29	33	38
Operation	79	21	32	37	31
Production	77	23	41	40	19
Marketing	64	36	67	22	11
Community	48	52	53	30	17

Source: SASSY Training Survey, 2010
Źródło: ankieta szkolenia SASSY, 2010

Table 4. Barriers to Goal Accomplishment
Tabela 4. Bariery ograniczające osiągnięcie celów

Barrier	No. of responses	% of total responses
Complicated family situation	36	33.0
Lack of funds to support plan	30	27.5
Too busy	22	20.2
Other	12	11.1
Hard to put ideas into words	9	8.2
Total	109	100

Source: SASSY Training Survey, 2010
Źródło: ankieta szkolenia SASSY, 2010

the respondents had indicated that they would share their goals with their spouse and/or other family members, the most frequently identified barrier to goal accomplishment was a complicated family situation.

SASSY participants received training in record-keeping and financial planning. Record-keeping in relation to tax returns and financial statement preparation, monitoring agricultural production and business progress, tracking deductibles, identifying receipts, and a decision-making tool for making production decisions were all discussed, with the respondents identifying all these areas as important to very important. Forty-two percent of the participants still had difficulty in calculating commodity prices and evaluating financial ratios post-training.

Finally, survey respondents were asked how quickly they would apply what they had learned from the SASSY sessions. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents indicated that they would try it out right away, with the remainder concluding that they would wait until an approach was proven or used by other famers/ranchers first.

CONCLUSION

The SASSY training program was agricultural training program based on needs identified by in which the farm and ranch women who had participated in the initial Annie's Project. The primary objective of this research was to assess whether the SASSY program met the needs of those farm and ranch women. SASSY participants were satisfied with the training program as seen from both the high level of interest in the topics and the high level of importance assigned to those topics. Impact on personal development and knowledge transfer was also evident from the participants' responses. SASSY training improved the role of women in agriculture, planning, decision-making, communication, and organization.

SASSY participants who responded to the survey agreed with the trainers regarding the importance of the topics covered. Focusing on priorities and being organized ranked as very important ways of finding balance. SASSY participants valued more family/personal, financial, and operation goals and most women would share their goals with their spouse and family members. Marketing goals represented the least important area of goal setting and more women set short-term rather than mid- or long-term marketing goals. Despite sharing goals with their spouses and family members, a complicated family situation was the leading barrier to goal accomplishment. Lack of funds and busy schedules were other common barriers to accomplishing goals.

Survey results indicated an increased understanding of the importance of record-keeping in production, monitoring production and monitoring business progress. These three areas of record-keeping are associated with the decision-making process. This suggests that, post-training, women felt more knowledgeable and empowered to participate in the decision-making processes on their farm/ranch.

This study had some limitations. The first challenge was lack of researcher control over the original training process, training objectives, and personal contact with the participants. The planning of SASSY evaluation was carried out after the SASSY training goals, objectives, choice of training location, and training program schedule were in place.

Ideally, the evaluation would have been developed in conjunction with the objectives and expected outcomes. Nonetheless, the survey instruments were successfully constructed to assess the outcomes of the major goals and objectives of SASSY training.

The selection of the SASSY training program participants was based on informed knowledge of farm/ranch women who wanted more information and were willing to attend the training sessions, which may have resulted in a non-representational sample. This selection process did not allow for random selection of women in agriculture.

The primary goal of the SASSY training program was to identify the best learning systems and practices to be sustained to assist in increased empowerment of farm and ranch women in South Dakota. The training program, however, did not clearly define goals of sustainability, monitor and measure empowerment, or indicate how to identify empowered farm and ranch women. To overcome this study limitation, the researchers identified the areas related to decision-making. These areas included goal setting, use of records to assist in production decisions, monitor production, and monitor agricultural business progress. In regards to empowerment, the study identified some management areas and evaluated the level of women's participation in these areas. These areas included planning, record-keeping and financial analysis, marketing tools and techniques used, and goals and goals prioritization. Although the findings contribute to understanding empowerment as related to this study, there is not sufficient information to generalize the empowerment impact of training programs beyond SASSY.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Further research is recommended to expand on the findings of this study. For example, an empowerment model, such as Rowlands' Three Dimensions of Empowerment [1997] could be developed that monitors empowerment progress in the short-term and long-term. To facilitate impact analysis of future training programs, future research could develop more elaborate training need analysis to better understand women in agriculture training needs. Participation of more farm and ranch women in training programs should be encouraged so as to have greater representation of women in agriculture. Women indicated interest in learning new technology, so further research could be carried out on the effect of new technology and learning systems.

While designing future training programs, the stakeholder and project coordinators should understand the barriers and challenges facing women in accomplishing the new acquired skills and knowledge. Because complicated family situations was identified as the primary barrier to goal success, further research on the role farm/ranch spouses and other family members could be informative.

Based on this study, the authors conclude that the SASSY training program achieved many positive results. The high response rate of 50 percent for the survey, and 81 percent attendance of four or more training sessions indicated the interest in the program. That nine out of fourteen SASSY training topics had a mean average of four and above (somewhat to very important), and the remaining five topics had a mean average of at least three (somewhat important) supports the assertion that farm and ranch women find SASSY training to be of value.

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Annie's Project: http://www.extension.iastate.edu/annie

North Central Risk Management Education Center: http://www.ncrme.org/Grants/documents/SouthDakota_000.pdf

The Ag Risk Education Library. Annie's Project Summary: http://www.agrisk.umn.edu/verification/vrregister.dll/publicresults?ProjectNumber=RME-D4K02431

The Ag Risk Education Library. SASSY Project Summary: http://www.agrisk.umn.edu/VerificationSearch/DisplayProposal.aspx?PN=RME-DF202638

PROGRAMY SZKOLENIOWE DLA KOBIET W ROLNICTWIE: STANOWY PROJEKT „SASSY" W POŁUDNIOWEJ DAKOCIE, USA

Streszczenie. Zaangażowanie kobiet w rolnictwie i agrobiznesie jest coraz częściej postrzegane jako składnik sukcesu w produkcji i zarządzaniu w gospodarstwie. Kobiety mają unikalne potrzeby informacyjne, które mają pozwolić im na pełne uczestnictwo w procesie podejmowania decyzji. Efektem tego jest rozwój i wdrożenie rolniczych projektów szkoleniowych skierowanych do kobiet wiejskich. Pomimo tego, iż można znaleźć przykłady tego, iż z niniejszych programów korzystały kobiety związane z rolnictwem, to jednak brak jest formalnej ewaluacji rolniczych programów szkoleniowych w Południowej Dakocie. Celem niniejszej pracy jest zaprezentowanie wniosków z przeprowadzonej oceny i studium ewaluacyjnego rolniczych programu szkoleniowego: Sustainable Annie's Systems in South Dakota for Years to Come (SASSY). Celem prowadzonych badań było dostarczenie przykładów empirycznych, które potwierdziłyby pozytywny wpływ niniejszego programu na jego uczestników. Niniejszy artykuł prezentuje te wyniki.

Słowa kluczowe: kobiety wiejskie, kobiety w rolnictwie, rolnicze programy szkoleniowe, ewaluacja rolniczych programów szkoleniowych

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APPENDIX A

Sassy Training Agenda, Brookings County
(Participants Agenda)

First Session – **Finding balance for you and the farm/ranch**
Goal – Use these tools to take care of yourself and build your business
- Picture Icebreaker
- Balance Wheel
- Setting Goals for Personal and Business
- Expectations for SASSY and Community of Learning
- Families Eating Smart & Moving More

Second Session – **Planning for the future**
Goal – Look to the future to plan for ways to make your business successful
- Record Keeping for Production Records
- Goals Review
- Sustaining SASSY

Third Session – **Sustainability**
Goal – Learn more about how marketing can help you be sustainable
- Marketing Plans

Fourth Session – **Marketing Mechanics**
Goal – Utilize these new tools to change the way you look at your business
- Building Marketing Plans
- Optional Section
- Building Budgets
- Using Technology for Your Business

Fifth Session – **'Cuz it's about the money**
Goal – Finding balance with money for the business and family
- Balance Sheet Challenge
- Families Easting Smart/Moving More

Sixth Session – **Celebrating Women in Agriculture/Planning for the Future**
Goal – Creating ideas for how to make changes
- Record Keeping Report
- Sustainable SASSY
- Optional Section
- Marketing Experts Round Table