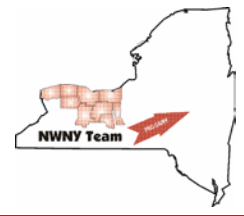


NWNY Dairy, Livestock & Field Crops Team

Cornell Cooperative Extension

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IMPACT STATEMENT

Managing Labor Risks via Improved Human Resources Management and Problem Solving

The Need

NY farm owners face a changing, challenging human resources risk management environment. Greater uncertainty as to whether labor will be available in sufficient quantity and quality such that owners will be able to realize desired results exists. When asked to identify and rank threats to success, NYS's dairy, fruit, and vegetable farm business owners placed the highest importance on labor – its availability, stability, legality, and efficiency among others (New York Farm Viability Institute, <<http://www.nyfarmviability.org/>>).



Extension's Response

Cornell University Cooperative Extension's (CCE) NWNY Dairy, Livestock, and Field Crops Program, Lake Ontario Fruit Program and Cornell Vegetable Program; and the Finger Lakes Resources Conservation and Development Council cooperated to design and deliver a grant funded project. The project sought to enhance participants' capacities to manage human resources risk through better people management and improved problem solving. Four workshops and small study groups supported by project members provided participants with opportunities to improve capacities. Forty - one individuals participated in one or more project activities.

CCE through a Director's Regional Program Grant, and the Northeast Center for Risk Management Education each granted \$20,000 for project work over the period July 1, 2007 through January 31, 2009. CCE County Association regional program partners supported the work of the project through their annual funding efforts.

The Results

Thirty - one participants representing 23 farm businesses identified possible solutions from the set of managing people, production practices and, or capital for labor possibilities. Participants of one study group provide examples of success. The group identified uncertainty with regards to productivity of the workforce, and quality of work as concerns. They focused on performance evaluation practices as reasons underlying concerns. The group studied performance reviews as an area of possible change. In their study of managing employees for peak performance, they realized that coaching and its related management practices presented a viable and perhaps better alternative to formal performance reviews (Blanchard's One Minute Manager was a valuable resource for this group.) Participants from the group decided to adopt human resource management approaches related to coaching to better manage labor risks. One participant commented that the project helped in taking action in the form of "starting coaching versus [formal performance review type] evaluations." Project activities helped the participant learn "how to coach," and learn about "chalking the field" and "positive feedback" as human resource management practices that help manage labor risks.

