

Southwest Marketing Network: Expanding Markets for Small-Scale Alternative and Minority Farmers and Ranchers

Pamela Roy (NM: Research & Education Grant Program)

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Title: Southwest Marketing Network: Expanding Markets for Small-Scale Alternative and Minority Farmers and Ranchers

Principal Investigator: Pamela Roy
Co-Director, Farm to Table
3900 Paseo del Sol
Santa Fe, NM 87507
(505) 473-1004
pamelaroy@aol.com

Major Participants:

Le Adams
Farm to Table

*Gerald Chacon, District Director
NMSU Cooperative Extension*

Jim Dyer, Project Director
Southwest Marketing Network

*Jeanne Gleason, NMSU Professor
Executive Producer of Video Media*

Del Jimenez, Agriculture Specialist
Alcalde Ag Science Center

*Felise Lucero, Farm Services
Program Manager
Pueblo of San Felipe*

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Situation:

A 2003 survey of nearly 100 agencies and organizations serving farmers and ranchers in New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and Colorado found that producers gained the most knowledge from field days, conferences and trainings.

However, many producers are unable to take advantage of these learning opportunities because they cannot afford time away from business and family or the cost of the travel and conference.

The next best thing to being there would be to provide easy-to-use, low-cost distance learning or remote conferencing technologies, such as real-time broadcasting or anytime, anyplace viewing of websites or CDs.



Distance education tools included an instruction DVD on building a cold-frame hoophouse.

Objectives:

1. At least 500 producers and those who assist them with production and marketing will receive training that will add to or improve their marketing and business management skills and increase their access to information.
2. During producer-to-producer or peer-to-peer training, at least half of project participants will learn at least two successful and innovative marketing tools.
3. At least 65% of producers will know how to access new resources.
4. At least 10 groups or leaders representing underserved agricultural producers will become active in the Southwest Marketing Network.



The hoophouse instruction includes options for crops that can be grown in them.

Actions:

The Southwest Marketing Network annual conferences served as a host for the learning sessions and provided content for place-bound producers unable to attend.

New Mexico State University harnessed its communications technologies to create several learning tools for place-bound producers.



A DVD on Lamb & Wool Marketing is now available.

Results:

The following instruction was presented to producers and service providers in Colorado, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico and tribal communities in the Southwest:

- Eight hands-on workshops on building season-extending cold frames were hosted with an average of 23 participants at each. Adding those attending a 2005 conference session on cold-frame building brings to more than 300 the number receiving instruction.
- More than 125 farmers and gardeners participated in the August 2007 Alcalde Field Day at which demonstrations were conducted on cold frame building and drip irrigation.
- Farm to Table conducted a hands-on tour providing training to 25 tribal members from the Navajo Nation and Jemez, Taos and Acoma pueblos.

Results continued:

These distance learning tools have been created and disseminated:

- The "Cold-Frame Building" DVD, filmed in partnership with the Alcalde Agriculture Science Center and New Mexico State University video team, is a step-by-step video of how to build at 20 by 30 foot cold frame. The popular video, available in VHS and DVD, was disseminated to 270 producers in the first year.
- Another 100 DVDs of the cold-frame DVD were made in the Navajo language, and 76 have been distributed, along with 100 more in English.
- In the first year, 250 DVDs, taped at the 2005 Southwest Marketing Network conference showing eight hours on farm marketing and business tools, were distributed. In 2007, a new eight-hour DVD was distributed to 187 conference participants.

A 2007 survey of 675 farmers and more than 800 schools in New Mexico resulted in a directory and handbook listing more than 100 farmers interested in selling to schools.



The educational materials will help producers improve the marketing of their wool.

Potential Benefits:

As a result of the Southwest Marketing Network Conferences in 2005, 2006 and 2007, and the distance learning tools created and disseminated, these impacts and outcomes have been realized:

- All 826 participants, 450 of whom are producers, have actively participated in hands-on training, presentations and conference workshops.
- One hundred and sixty-three participants learned at least two successful and innovative marketing approaches employed by farmers in the region, including plant varieties and sales venues.
- All participants learned how to access at least two new resources in the region to help reinforce and practice what they learned.
- There are 214 service providers – representatives of nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations, cooperative extension and departments of ag – now active in the Southwest Marketing Network (the goal was 10).

These training tools are scheduled for release:

- Farm to Cafeteria: How to Sell to Schools
- Wool and Lamb Marketing
- Wool and Lamb Marketing in Navajo
- Additional Farm to School handbooks and directories