

STARS: Sustainability Training in Agricultural Resources Systems

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A Train-the-Trainer Model for Agriculture and Natural Resources Professionals

Need

Agriculture is Mississippi's leading industry, and a wealth of programs, research, management practices, and technologies is available to support producer activities. However, those tasked with serving farmers are often unprepared to assist producers with incorporating these options.

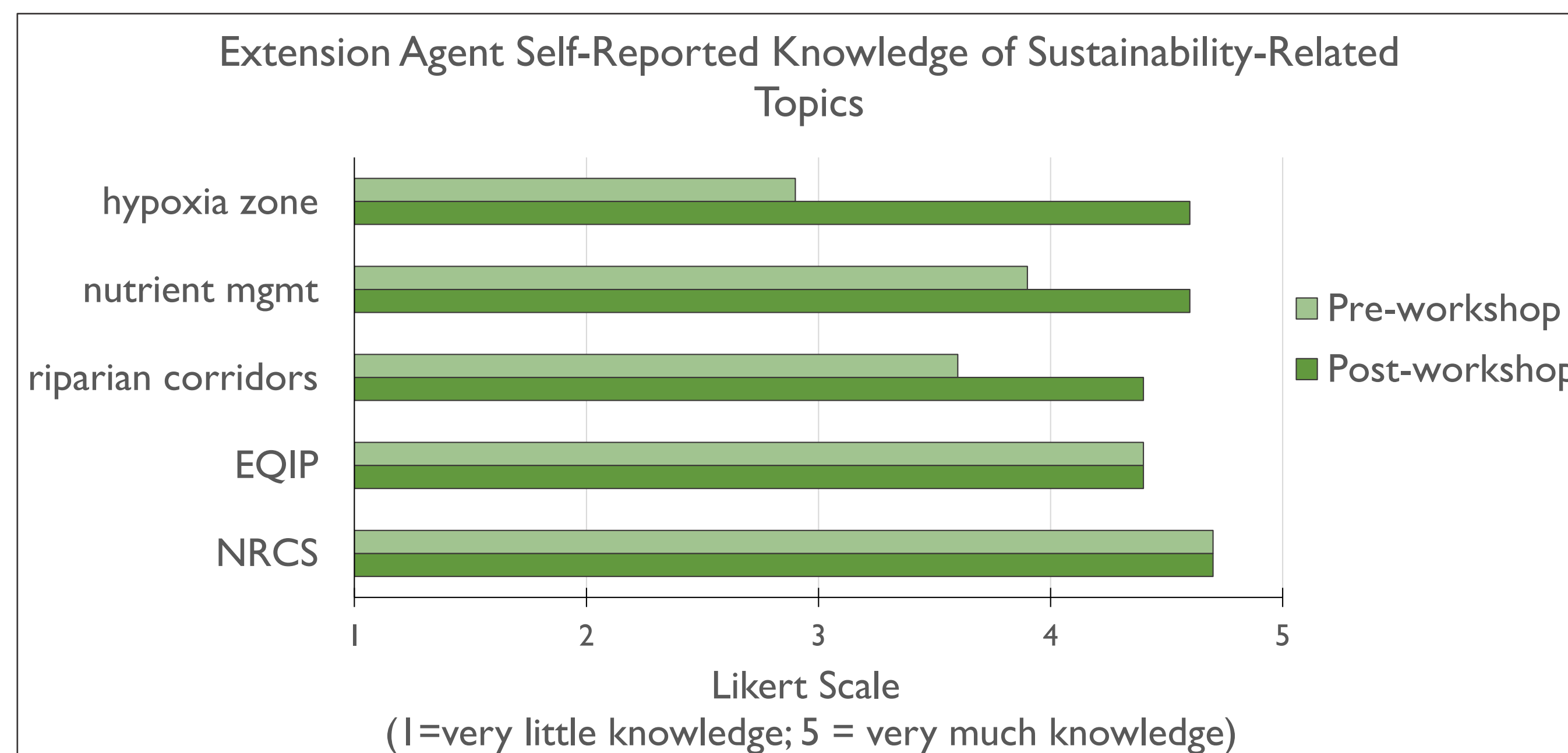
In response to this situation, we developed Sustainability Training in Agricultural Resources Systems (STARS), a multidisciplinary, professional development program for agricultural and natural resources (ANR) educators. The program is designed to equip professionals with relevant training and support resources on sustainable agriculture and natural resources conservation.



Extension agents with responsibilities in agriculture and natural resources outreach education learn about soil health from specialists from the USDA Natural Resources and Conservation Service.

Approach

- Two regional, train-the-trainer workshops were held for ANR personnel from Mississippi State University and Alcorn State University, the two land-grant universities in Mississippi.
- Workshops were held outside the growing season (December and March) when agent availability was likely to be greater.
- Grant funds eliminated financial barriers to agent participation.
- Workshop topics were developed with input from key producers and reflected regional sustainability issues and producer concerns.
- Sixteen agents attended the first workshop and 14 attended the second workshop; five agents attended both.



Outcomes



Landowners learn about sustainability in grazing systems from a STARS-trained Extension agent.

To date, six STARS-trained ANR agents have conducted four sustainability workshops for their local stakeholders with assistance from the SARE grant and STARS project leaders.

A total of 189 individuals have learned more about sustainability of natural resources in agricultural systems as a result of Extension agent training via the STARS program. Additional workshops are planned for the future.

Participant comments



"Thank you for scheduling one of the best, if not the best in-service training I've ever been too. Not only were the accommodations great, the field/classroom portions were great as well." - ANR agent

"Great information! Had a common theme but covered a wide range of applications." - ANR agent

"The cross-section of agencies presenting [workshop] information was a strength." - Landowner

"I appreciated the field tours to see practices at work." - Landowner