

Extension Farmer Groups

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INTRODUCTION

The Extension component of this project will integrate the exchange of expert and local knowledge among farmers, extension educators, and the project team associated with adaptation and mitigation of variable climate conditions and agricultural management decisions.

Farmer Groups

Capacity building is needed within Extension to learn and transfer science based knowledge of climate change and agriculture to stakeholders. Also, stakeholders need to be aware and motivated to seek information and implement mitigation and adaptive practices. The Extension team will facilitate participatory exchanges and action through establishing farmer-led watershed groups in each of the project states. A network of established watershed groups in Iowa and Ohio will serve as the structure for implementation—from field to watershed level—of the crop management strategies.

These farmer groups currently work with extension professionals and local residents to develop locally appropriate strategies that address water impairments by using field-level agronomic risk assessment tools as performance measures (e.g., soil conditioning index, whole farm P- index, etc.). The groups are experienced in testing new technologies and strategies and using group techniques to determine implementation and adaptation.

Extension educators have been identified in each of the project states and will begin to form farmer watershed groups in December 2011.



I-Farm

Each farmer watershed group member will select two fields for an I-Farm baseline assessment. Following the baseline I-FARM assessment and survey activities, and as new strategies are developed, farmers in each watershed group will participate in yearly assessments of the strategies and provide feedback to inform the design and improve the practices, policies, and programs (including extension) across the project.



Farmer Group Timeline

Year 1

- State Extension Educators will be identified
- Educators will be trained to use I-Farm and to organize farmer groups
- Educators will establish farmer groups
- Educators will work one-on one with farmers and conduct assessments using I-Farm

Years 2-5

- Groups will meet and discuss climate impacts and adaptive and mitigative strategies generated by I-Farm.
- Groups will invite project PIs to present research information
- Groups will use performance-based environmental management tools to collect data on water, carbon, and nitrogen in their watershed and apply experiments similar to Objective 2 field trials
- Key producers will be invited to attend Y5 national conference and participate in policy development and scientific gap white papers

Expected Outcomes

The farmer groups will 1) help the researchers better understand the socio-economic-cultural feasibility of the management practices proposed to mitigate and adapt to climate change and 2) become community partners to promote adoption of effective strategies. The groups will hold structured discussions of the I-FARM and survey research results with the greater watershed groups and other key stakeholders.

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