

Southern Ohio Farm Show: Extension Education Through Television and Digital Media

County Situation:

Located in the Ohio Valley, nestled between the foothills of Appalachia, the Ohio River, and Cincinnati, Adams, Brown, Clermont, and Highland Counties are rural counties with a heavy focus on agricultural production. Clermont County is influenced by Cincinnati with urban sprawl, but Adams, Brown, and Highland Counties are traditional agricultural counties with diversified livestock and crop production. Tables 1 and 2 provide more detailed information on each county's situation.

	Adams County	Brown County	Clermont County	Highland County
Total acreage	375,040	315,520	294,400	357,120
Farmed acreage	165,947	207,957	97,342	287,973
Agricultural Income (market value of products sold)	\$40,118,000.00	\$71,707,000.00	\$31,786,000.00	\$122,902,000.00
Total Population	27,776	43,432	206,428	43,016
Farm Population (total producers)	2,060	2,029	1,518	2,131

Table 1. County information for Adams, Brown, Clermont, and Highland Counties in Ohio.

With the exception of Clermont County, the largest industry in this region of Ohio is agriculture. Agriculture provides many employment opportunities through farms, feed mills, greenhouse nurseries, animal processing, and other agricultural-based businesses.

While many of the residents in these four counties do not directly with agriculture, they do have familial ties to the agricultural industry or 4-H youth activities. Community attitudes toward agriculture is positive in this area of Ohio. However, there is always room for more public education in agriculture due to the growing divide of individuals actively farming and as more generations move off of family farms. These counties also were also good candidates for increased public relations opportunities due to the availability of local access channels.

	Adams County	Brown County	Clermont County	Highland County
Grains	\$25,082,000.00	\$59,214,000.00	\$24,895,000.00	\$87,545,000.00
Tobacco	\$1,800,000.00	\$891,000.00	NA	\$750,000.00
Vegetables	\$123,000.00	\$644,000.00	\$531,000.00	\$1,423,000.00
Fruits	N/A	\$289,000.00	\$136,000.00	\$194,000.00
Nursery	\$1,060,000.00	\$199,000.00	\$1,819,000.00	\$2,454,000.00
Hay & Other Crops	\$2,774,000.00	\$1,900,000.00	\$984,000.00	\$2,331,000.00
Cattle	\$7,330,000.00	\$5,949,000.00	\$1,705,000.00	\$13,891,000.00
Dairy	\$6,588,000.00	\$2,235,000.00	NA	\$7,274,000.00
Hogs	\$564,000.00	\$68,000.00	NA	\$5,974,000.00
Sheep	\$365,000.00	\$76,000.00	\$155,000.00	\$721,000.00
Horses	\$149,000.00	\$169,000.00	\$490,000.00	\$104,000.00
Poultry	NA	\$56,000.00	\$112,000.00	\$130,000.00

Table 2. Major crops and livestock for Adams, Brown, Clermont, and Highland Counties in Ohio.

Like many communities, Extension education has historically focused on face-to-face education and hands-on demonstration in this region. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, public relations and educational tactics needed to change in March of 2020 to be able to reach clientele remotely. In an effort to continue to assist and educate their clientele, the Extension educators in this region collaboratively formed the Southern Ohio Farm Show (SOFS) as an alternative to traditional education during the pandemic.

Public Relations Objective:

The SOFS is a weekly television-style program that is filmed, produced, and distributed by the team of Extension educators. Content on the program varies each week with topics that are relevant to community member’s interests. A broad spectrum of topics have been included in the program, representing all Ohio State University Extension disciplines. This cross-program collaboration was formed to provide interesting and useful content to all viewers.

The public relation objectives of the SOFS include:

- Provide timely, local information pertinent to agricultural production and agricultural awareness
- Demonstrate and discuss a wide variety of agricultural and natural resource topics
- Include community members for active participation
- Create a new opportunity to reach new Extension programming audiences through local access television programming
- Increase the reach of Extension programming

Topics have included information on aviation, crop production, cooking tips, highlighting youth 4-H projects, community events and updates, livestock production, and a variety of safety tips, among others. Each week, topics that are timely and relative to the viewership’s interests are selected. For example, when the county fairs were occurring, videos were shared from the youth livestock shows so individuals who were unable to attend the fair would still be able to watch.

Each episode is divided into several distinct sections, so there are multiple topics covered in every episode. Each episode is approximately 30 minutes in length.

Program Execution:

In total there have been over 70 collaborators, which include both internal and external partnerships. Each Extension educator is responsible for recording their portion of the show. Community collaboration for the production of the SOFS has included youth members creating videos on their livestock projects, local FFA chapters highlighting test plots, and community members discussing opportunities available to viewers during the pandemic. Typically, an individual segment ranges from five to 15 minutes in length.

All components are uploaded into a Box folder, where Brooke Beam, the SOFS director/editor and Highland County Extension educator, then compiles the various segments into the finished product. The program is broadcasted live through Zoom every Wednesday at 10 am. Following the Zoom broadcast, it is shared through Facebook, YouTube, Vimeo, and the local access channels in Adams, Brown, Clermont, Highland, and Pike Counties.

The SOFS has benefitted the community by providing an opportunity for local, quality, educational programming that is available through multiple outlets. By utilizing the local access channels, the SOFS is reaching new clientele that has not attended programming before. The Extension educators have worked closely with the City of Hillsboro, Greenfield McClain High School, Will Hamman, and Patty Ream, who each coordinate various local access channels in Adams, Brown, Clermont, Highland, and Pike Counties. Additionally, clientele have indicated they enjoy the ability to attend Extension programs when it is convenient for their schedule by being able to view the episodes on-demand through Facebook and YouTube. The variety of programming and number of on-site demonstrations are also frequent points of discussion that viewers appreciate.

Results and Evaluation:

The SOFS has met the objectives that were established for this public relations effort.

- Weekly episodes have been produced for 46 consecutive weeks related to agricultural production and agricultural awareness
- The episodes have demonstrated and discussed a wide variety of agricultural and natural resources, community development, family and consumer sciences, and 4-H youth development
- Multiple community members have participated in the program
- Created a sustaining opportunity to reach new Extension programming audiences through local access television programming
- Increased the reach of Extension programming in this region to multi-state and international audiences

Analytics indicate that the initiative has reached over 85,958 unique viewers through the various methods of distribution. On average, each episode receives over 1,869 views.

However, it is important to note that views online do not count the number of people watching in an individual setting. For example, several local FFA chapters are using the SOFS in

their curriculum. Although the SOFS is reaching 140 students at the Fairfield FFA chapter, it equates to only one view on YouTube. Therefore, it is likely the viewership of the SOFS is understated in the analytics that have been collected.

Viewership has occurred in 40 states and 17 countries. International reach of the SOFS includes viewership in Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, France, Germany, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Netherlands, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom. Facebook analytics indicate that women represent approximately 55 percent of the viewership, while men represent 45 percent.

Extension has benefitted from the SOFS by increasing the reach of programming by over 3000 percent in comparison to previous year's teaching tables. This increased viewership, partnership with community members, and collaboration amongst colleagues has strengthened the reach and abilities of Extension. This program has strengthened the awareness of agriculture in the community, United States, and abroad. Community feedback and online comments indicate that the SOFS is meeting a need in Extension programming to provide educational material through television and social media platforms.