

Virtual Farm Bill Education for 2021

Abstract

The Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 (The 2018 Farm Bill) gave producers the opportunity to change program election annually, beginning with program year 2021. Crop producers had the option to make amendments to covered commodity elections and enroll in either Price Loss Coverage (PLC) or two versions of the Agricultural Revenue Coverage (ARC) program. These were the same program options that were available to producers during the 2019 and 2020 crop years, but producers had the option to change program elections to better manage the potential risks facing their farms during the 2021 crop year. OSU Extension partnered with the USDA Farm Service agency to provide four statewide virtual meetings to provide training and resources for producers to make informed decisions in program elections for the 2021 program year. Four virtual programs were offered with total registration of 916 and total attendance for live webinars at 754. The recorded webinars have 1,314 views of the recordings to date. 98.3% reported they are more knowledgeable about program election after attending the program and 80.9% reported that attending the webinar would directly influence their program election decision.

Educational Objectives

Ohio State University Extension partnered with the USDA Farm Service Agency in Ohio to provide a series of educational programs to help producers make informed decisions related to enrollment in the commodity programs. The main objectives of these efforts included:

1. Provide Extension educators with tools and training to serve as a resource to clientele seeking information about Farm Bill programs,
2. Deliver statewide educational programs to help producers understand deadlines and program enrollment options,
3. Provide training and resources to enable producers to make informed decisions to minimize risk by using programs available through the Farm Bill, and
4. Encourage action by visiting with local Farm Service Agency or following up for additional economic considerations with OSU Extension.

Program activities

Ohio FSA reached out to OSU Extension to express interest partnering together for a statewide outreach program to assist producers with their decisions for the 2021 program year. This followed a successful year of collaboration between the two groups in 2019/20. A small group of members from both organizations met in early November to map out a plan for the program, and decided to focus efforts on statewide virtual events in light of COVID-19.

Curriculum Development

Curriculum was developed to help producers understand program options, the mechanics of each program, and important deadlines. The curriculum was adapted for 2021 to include information about historical payments including 2019 payments, to highlight the difference in program election considerations in 2021 compared to previous years, and to provide current market conditions influencing potential payments. For the 2021 program year many producers and other stakeholders

were particularly interested in the Supplemental Crop Option (SCO) - the crop insurance offered through the PLC – as a driver for program election decisions. In response to this demand, curriculum focused on SCO and other crop insurance options for covered commodities was also developed.

Training for Extension to Provide Farm Bill Education

A Zoom in-service was offered for educators interested in teaching local programs or just seeking to better understand the material in order to prepare to answer questions from clientele. Over 50 Extension professionals attended the online in-service. A box folder including recorded presentations, PowerPoint slides with notes, and other resource information was available to all Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension professionals.

Delivery of Programming and Resources

Three statewide programs were offered virtually with an additional program focused purely on crop insurance. Each session was recorded and available for others to view in the future. Programs were planned, marketed, and delivered through a collaborative effort between the Ohio Farm Service Agency and the Ohio State University Extension.

Teaching methods

Live sessions were held over Zoom webinar with recordings available to registrants who could not attend live. Poll questions and the chat box features of Zoom webinar were utilized throughout each session to encourage participation and facilitate an interactive webinar environment.

Both the Ohio Farm Service Agency and the Ohio State University Extension had resource people included on each webinar so that questions for both agencies could be addressed in one place.

In addition, Extension professionals in several counties offered one-on-one consultations allowing producers to bring their personal farm records to the Extension office and work through program options and potential outcomes with educator. Several educators also utilized the material to offer their own webinars with a local focus or to teach in-person socially distanced programs.

Results

Four virtual programs were offered to statewide audiences, with total registration of 916 and total attendance for live webinars at 754. The recorded webinars have 1,314 views of the recordings to date. A program evaluation was completed by 288 and indicated that educational objectives were achieved.

When asked if participants felt more knowledgeable about commodity program selection for program year 2021 by attending the webinar, 98.3% reported they are more knowledgeable about FSA commodity program election after attending the program. This directly relates to education objectives 2-3 in educating producers, landowners and agribusinesses about FSA commodity program decisions. Additionally, 80.9% reported that they would take action as a result of attending the webinar, and 80.9% reported that attending the webinar would directly influence their program election decision, which fulfilled education objective number 4.

Another byproduct of the development and delivery of these programs was the continued strengthening of a statewide partnership between the Ohio Farm Service Agency and OSU Extension through close

collaboration. The Farm Service Agency received the 2020 Friend of Extension Award as a direct result of this relationship.

Impact statement

Four statewide Farm Bill Education programs were delivered by OSU Extension utilizing a webinar format. Live webinars were attended by 754 participants, and the recorded sessions have 1,314 views to date. 288 participants completed a voluntary program evaluation. 98% of respondents reported that the information presented will help develop a plan to utilize Farm Bill Programs to mitigate risk on their farms.

Evaluation

A voluntary program evaluation was distributed to participants at the conclusion of each program (see attachment). 288 evaluations were completed and indicated the programs met learning objectives. Evaluation was voluntary and sought to measure knowledge gained, as well as changes in behavior to gauge the impact of the webinars in terms of usefulness to attendees. Additionally, program evaluations gathered information from attendees about which policy topics they would like to learn about at Extension programs in the future.