Farm Bill Decisions: Making an Informed Choice

The Situation

In February 2014, Congress passed and President Obama signed the Agricultural Act of 2014, also known as the Farm Bill. The Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program and the Average Crop Revenue Election program were repealed and two new programs were established: Price Loss Coverage (PLC) and Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC). The new programs require considerable analysis on the part of both farm land owners and operators. In order to make an informed choice on which program to enroll the farm in, substantial time will need to be invested in discovering the implications of various decisions.

Extension Response

In the fall and winter of 2014-2015, the Ward County Extension Service offered seven educational meetings, workshops, and roundtable discussions to assist over 400 area producers in better understanding the new Farm Bill Program. Meetings were held in collaboration with area FSA offices and NDSU Farm Management Specialists. Using analytical decision making tools developed at NDSU, producers were able to better understand the implications of the program enrollment options on their individual farm. Paige Brummund, NDSU Extension Agent in Ward County provided training to meeting attendees on utilizing the NDSU decision aid software. Group workshops along with one on one meetings were held to familiarize producers with the decision aid spreadsheets.

Impacts

98% of attendees stated they increased their overall knowledge of the Farm Bill

85% of attendees surveyed responded that will utilize the NDSU Farm Bill Decision Maker Spreadsheet

92% of attendees surveyed responded that they were more confident in their understanding of the PLC election option

87% of attendees surveyed responded that they were more confident in their understanding of the ARC election option

Feedback

“I have attended 2 of your Farm Bill meetings. There are many details to wrap my head around and I am glad there is someone out there willing to help me learn.”-Ward County Ag Producer

“The spreadsheet is extremely helpful. I don’t know how I would decide what program to enroll in without using the spreadsheet.” -Farm Bill Meeting Attendee

“Having an opportunity to visit with my neighbors, the FSA and Extension staff all at once is helpful. I don’t know how I would have figured it out on my own.” –Farm Bill Meeting Attendee

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