

Outlook Conference for Agricultural Lenders

The situation

Information to improve understanding between lenders and producers is important because agricultural lending is critical to the operation of farms in North Dakota. For example, in 2007, the average farm enrolled in the North Dakota Farm Business Management Education program borrowed \$341,938 during the year compared to \$195,000 just five years earlier.

It is difficult for agricultural lenders to stay current on the breadth of issues affecting producers such as commodity markets, government policy, farm family living costs, trends in agriculture and value added opportunities. There was a need for an annual educational program to help agricultural lenders better understand the fast changing economic environment in which their customers operate.

Extension response

A day-long conference was developed by NDSU Extension Agricultural Economists to update lenders on crop and livestock market outlook, general economic outlook, and recent farm financial performance and trends. In addition, other topics are selected each year from important current issues affecting producers. Examples are federal farm policy, risk management tools, value-added agricultural opportunities, input costs and land values.

Impacts

It is difficult to quantify the degree to which the conferences have increased the well being of agricultural lenders and producers. However, the conferences have been successful by many measures.

The first conference was held in 1991 at one location, Carrington, with 29 attendees. The

meeting is currently held at four locations: Grand Forks, Fargo, Minot and Bismarck. Attendance was 306 in 2008. Lenders from locally owned, regional, and national banks and from Farm Credit Services, Credit Unions and the Farm Service Agency attended.

Respondents to the 2008 evaluation survey rated the conference 5.9, on a 1 to 7 scale with 7 being highest, for being a good learning experience and being beneficial.

Feedback

“Good topics, timely, and good presenters”

“Useful current information”

“Helps me understand things from the farmers’ perspective”

“Information provided is useful in helping customers with planning”

“I enjoy the updates – get ideas of what to expect for next year. Also enjoy visiting with others and educators.”

“I’m so glad you folks keep up on this and share it with us. Good Job!”

“As an ag lender, I benefit from knowledge gained on all topics covered. Of all the training seminars I attend each year, this is the one I enjoy the most.”

Contact

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