Agricultural Lenders Outlook Conference

The Situation
Agriculture in the Northern Plains is a very dynamic and rapidly changing industry. It can be difficult for agricultural professionals, like lenders, to stay current on the economic forces and public policies that are impacting agriculture. Knowledge and understanding of these changes can have a significant impact on how agricultural lenders evaluate the viability of alternative business plans and loan applications. The agricultural lending community is also experiencing a considerable increase in the number of young professionals due to the expansion of financial institutions and the retirement of experienced loan officers. There is a need to provide annual educational programming to help agricultural lenders understand the implications of the rapidly changing economic environment.

Extension Response
For the past 26 years, the Extension Specialists in the Agribusiness and Applied Economics Department have been conducting an intensive daylong conference specifically for agricultural lenders within the region. In 2016, conferences were held in Grand Forks, Minot, Bismarck and Fargo. Key topics covered during the conference included a review of farm financial performance, an analysis of changing land values and rents, an overview of sugar beet economics, an update on beef farm financial performance, an analysis of crop and livestock market conditions, an outlook for macro-economic conditions and a review of bio-energy and oil/gas economics.

Impacts
Four hundred and twenty two agricultural professionals attended the 2016 conference. Three hundred and thirty one were from North Dakota, eighty eight from Minnesota, one from Montana and two from South Dakota. Attendees represented commercial banks, credit unions, Farm Credit Services, USDA-Farm Service Agency, North Dakota Department of Agriculture, North Dakota and Minnesota Farm Business Management instructors, NDSU Extension Service county agents, crop insurance agents and certified public accountants. Ninety five percent of those attending said they were either likely or very likely to use the crop and livestock market outlook information within their current job. Ninety two percent said they were likely or very likely to use the information on farm financial conditions and ninety three percent said they were likely or very likely to use the information concerning land values.

Feedback
Attendees were asked how the information presented at this conference was different from information available from commercial sources. Responses included:

- “Got good perspective from people that are in tune with the subjects on a day to day basis. Gives attendees a good background on what is going on in these areas.”
Attendees were also asked how they plan to use the information and knowledge gained from the conference. Responses included:

- “Share with producers I work with to expand their knowledge.”
- “As always, all information in packet helps improve my knowledge to have better discussion with clients this next renewal season.”
- “Mitigate our risk and help our borrowers take advantage of various opportunities they may be presented with.”

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Resource Links
https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/farmmanagement/presentations