



## A Needs Assessment Strategy for Women in Agriculture

### INTRODUCTION

Extension conducts periodic needs assessments among typical historic audiences and among potentially new audiences for the purpose of setting programming priorities and allocating resources. An educational need is considered a discrepancy between an audience's current status and some desired result (Witkin and Altschuld, 1995), the working assumption being that education can bring about the desired result.

A needs assessment can help Extension educators to decide

- whether an extension program should be developed (or improved)
- the focus of the program
- how the program should be delivered

The Women's Agricultural Network (PA-WAgN) is currently conducting a needs assessment in Pennsylvania among women in agriculture including women

- on farms
- in agricultural businesses
- in education

for the purpose of making the three decisions above relative to this target audience. The Pennsylvania Women's Agricultural Network (PA-WAgN) supports women in agriculture by providing a positive learning environment, networking, leadership opportunities and skills, and empowerment. The needs assessment is included below.

### STUDY TEAM

Mary Barbercheck, Kathryn J. Brasier, Jill L. Findeis, Nancy Ellen Kiernan, Linda Moist, Carolyn Sachs, Ann Stone, Amy Trauger

### NEEDS ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

<i>Sampling</i>	At the current time, there is no list of women in agriculture in Pennsylvania and therefore, no way to systematically sample this group. The process used in this study is called purposive sampling. Women at field days, Ag Progress Days, Farm Show, workshops and other events will be asked to complete the needs assessment.
<i>Questions</i>	The assessment has several advantages. It asks both open-ended questions and close-ended questions. The open-ended questions will determine needs that the women identify, and is free of the programmer's bias. The close-ended questions cover a range of needs already identified in the literature and research as important to women in agriculture outside of Pennsylvania. Closed-ended questions allow the women to respond to an array of needs that they might not have remembered to put down in the open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions also allow program planners to calculate the percent of women who identify each need.

### RESOURCES

[Tipsheet #77: Women in Production Agriculture: A Hidden Audience in your County?](#)

Witkin, B. R. and J. W. Altschuld. (1995). *Planning and Conducting Needs Assessments*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

Women's Agricultural Network (WAgN) <http://wagn.cas.psu.edu/> Available November 1, 2005

For further information about the needs assessment, please contact Amy Trauger ([akt122@psu.edu](mailto:akt122@psu.edu)), Carolyn Sachs ([xyl@psu.edu](mailto:xyl@psu.edu)), or Mary Barbercheck ([meb34@psu.edu](mailto:meb34@psu.edu)). This Web site is copyrighted by the Pennsylvania State University. The information may be used for educational purposes but not sold for profit.





**1 Think about the knowledge and skills required to run your farm. What are the 3 most crucial skills or pieces of knowledge you would like to acquire to run your farm?**

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

**2 Below we have listed skills and pieces of knowledge that other farmers have mentioned as important for running their farms. *On the left*, please check the phrase that best represents your current skill level in each area. With this same list, *on the right*, please check whether or not you would attend a workshop, demonstration, or other educational event in the next 2 years concerning each skill or piece of knowledge.**

	CURRENT SKILL LEVEL ( <i>check one</i> )				WOULD YOU ATTEND AN EDUCATIONAL EVENT ON THIS TOPIC?
	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable	
Managing Finances	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Marketing Products	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Planning for Retirement	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Labor Management	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Controlling Pests (weeds, worms, weevils, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Maintaining Environmental Health	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Increasing Productivity/Fertility (both livestock and crops)	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Building Infrastructure (such as irrigation, chicken tractors, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Keeping Workers and Family Safe	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Running Equipment	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Maintaining Equipment	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Using Computers	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Communicating with Domestic Partner	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Communicating with Family Members (especially those involved with the farm)	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Parenting	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Communicating with Farm Workers	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Working with Local Government	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Keeping up with Legislation	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Organizing and Running Meetings	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

**3 Listed below are several options for the type of educational events just discussed. Which of these formats would be best for you within the next 2 years? (Please check all that apply).**

- Seminars/workshops
- On-farm demonstrations at a local farm
- Presentations during regular meetings of organizations to which you belong
- Learn from home 

If you prefer to learn from home, how would you like to receive the information?

- I prefer receiving written materials, such as newsletters, articles, or books
- I prefer getting information through the internet, such as web sites or emails
- Online courses

**4 Which days and times for these events would best fit into your schedule over the next 2 years? (Please check all that apply).**

- |                                               |                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weekdays             | <input type="checkbox"/> Morning (9:00 a.m. — 12:00 Noon)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weekends             | <input type="checkbox"/> Mid-day (11:00 a.m.— 2:00 p.m.)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>NO PREFERENCE</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> Afternoon (1:00 p.m. — 4:00 p.m.) |
|                                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Evening (7:00 p.m. — 9:00 p.m.)   |
|                                               | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>NO PREFERENCE</b>              |

**5 Listed below are several sources of assistance for farmers. In the past 2 years, have you used these sources for making farm decisions? If you have used a source, please indicate how useful you found that contact to be in making your farm decisions. (Check “yes” or “no.” If “yes,” evaluate the usefulness).**

	HAVE YOU HAD CONTACT?		USEFULNESS OF THESE CONTACTS (check one)			
Extension or conservation district agents, government or university sources	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes ⇨	<input type="checkbox"/> Not useful	<input type="checkbox"/> Limited usefulness	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat useful	<input type="checkbox"/> Very useful
Farm & Commodity Organizations (Farm Bureau, Fruit & Vegetable Growers Assoc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes ⇨	<input type="checkbox"/> Not useful	<input type="checkbox"/> Limited usefulness	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat useful	<input type="checkbox"/> Very useful
Sustainable Ag Organizations (PASA, PCO)	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes ⇨	<input type="checkbox"/> Not useful	<input type="checkbox"/> Limited usefulness	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat useful	<input type="checkbox"/> Very useful
Pennsylvania Women’s Agricultural Network (PA-WAgN)	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes ⇨	<input type="checkbox"/> Not useful	<input type="checkbox"/> Limited usefulness	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat useful	<input type="checkbox"/> Very useful

**6 To what extent would you be more comfortable attending educational events designed for women farmers (i.e., women teaching women, hands-on workshops, peer teaching, time for networking)?**

- Somewhat more comfortable       Much more comfortable       Doesn’t matter to me

**7 The Pennsylvania Women’s Agriculture Network (PA-WAgN) supports women in agriculture by providing a positive learning environment, networking, and empowerment. How valuable would an organization of women producers (like PA-WAgN) be in your region?**

- Not at all valuable     A little valuable     Somewhat valuable     Fairly valuable     Greatly valuable

**8 What benefits can you see an organization of women producers (like PA-WAgN) providing for you and other women farmers?**

---



---



---

**9 Here are a few problems that other women said they have faced while trying to run a successful farm business. During the past year, to what extent have these been problems for you in making your farm successful?**

	<b>EXTENT OF PROBLEM (check one)</b>			
Sense of isolation from other women	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable
Sense of isolation from other farmers	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable
Need for child care	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable
Lack of computer knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable
Lack of web/email access	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable
Lack of family support for your role in managing the farm	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable
Lack of farming background	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable
Sense that women are not welcome in many ag groups	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable
Sense that women producers are not taken as seriously as men	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Considerable
Other (please specify):				

**Help us understand who we are reaching by answering the following questions:**

**10 Please indicate your main farm product(s) (check all that apply)**

- Livestock (i.e., meat and fiber)   
  Fruit and Vegetable   
  Row crop (i.e., corn, wheat)   
  Dairy  
 Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**11 How many years have you been farming?** \_\_\_\_\_ years

**12 Which marketing strategies have you used in the last 2 years? (check all that apply)**

- Direct (farmers' market, farm stand)                     
  Subscription (pre-order)  
 Retail (restaurants, grocers)                                     
  CSA (farm share)  
 Wholesale (cooperatives, processors, wholesalers)

**13 How do you identify yourself? (check all that apply)**

- Sole operator                                                             
  Business manager  
 One of main operators                                                     
  Not involved in the operation  
 Farm partner (business or domestic)                                     
  Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Agricultural helper

**14 What is the zip code of your home address?** \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

**15 Please indicate your age group: (check one)**

- Up to 24   
  25-34   
  35-44   
  45-54   
  55-64   
  65-74   
  75 or more

**We greatly appreciate your time and effort and value your thoughts about farming in Pennsylvania! Thank you!**

**PENNSYLVANIA WOMEN'S AGRICULTURAL NETWORK**  
**THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
302 Armsby Building  
University Park, Pennsylvania 16802

---

Official Business

**PENNSYLVANIA WOMEN'S AGRICULTURAL NETWORK**  
**THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
302 Armsby Building  
University Park, Pennsylvania 16802

The Pennsylvania State University is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to programs, facilities, admission, and employment without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. It is the policy of the University to maintain an academic and work environment free of discrimination, including harassment. The Pennsylvania State University prohibits discrimination and harassment against any person because of age, ancestry, color, disability or handicap, national origin, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. Discrimination or harassment against faculty, staff, or students will not be tolerated at The Pennsylvania State University. Direct all inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policy to the Affirmative Action Director, The Pennsylvania State University, 328 Boucke building, University Park, PA 16802-5901, Tel 814-865-4700V, 814-863-1150/TTY.

Upon completion of this questionnaire, please fold, staple and drop in any US mail box. This is a self-addressed, postage paid mailer.



Visit PA-WAGN on the web:  
<http://wagn.cas.psu.edu>