Introduction

California Small Farms

Each Ag Census reports significantly fewer farms in California and the U.S. This isn’t always the case with small farms. In 1904, there were 73,809 small farms in California compared to 67,237 in 2002 and 68,428 in 2007. Approximately 85% of all farms in California are classified as small farms (grossing less than $250,000).

Fresno County Small Farms

* 4,738 farms are classified as small farms
* Almost half are minority operated
  Hispanics make up about 42%
  Asian make up about 30%

Fresno has approximately 1,200 Asian immigrants from Laos/Thailand. One group alone, the Hmong, make up 62% of the Asian farms. They have been immigrating to California since 1975. About 15,000 more Hmong refugees came to the U.S. in 2005 from a Buddhist camp in Thailand.

1. Objectives

3. To evaluate different methods of outreach and determine the advantages and disadvantages for each, with respect to different groups.

4. To evaluate “enhancers” or measures that can make a particular form of outreach more efficient or advantageous.

5. To compare outreach methods for the different ethnic groups and what might work better for certain groups.

2. Methods & Activities

a. One-on-one Farm Visits

- Very good, the most effective
- Not very effective

b. Ethnic Radio - Television

- Very effective, very efficient - especially if there are only 1-2 stations in the community
- Radio is less expensive than television $4,300/yr
- Suggestion: Have a person broadcast in specific language of the listeners who are regular listeners

2. Methods & Activities (con’t)

d. Group Meetings

- If translating, best to have separate meetings for different groups, otherwise the meeting is too long
- If at all possible, conduct the meeting entirely in client’s language without having to translate

e. Written Materials, Handouts

- These work best with CBO supervisors or train-the-trainer programs
- Suggestion: If they are used they should be short, and with pictures
- Know the clientele - education level, reading capabilities

f. Conduct Research Trials on their Farm

- Helps in the information adoption process

3. Results

Many extension outreach techniques are used to disseminate information to small farmers. Which methodology is used may vary from group to group depending on ethnicities, available media in the area, resources available to the communicator, and recipient characteristics (age, gender, education).

Employing a Hmong assistant has contributed immensely to the success of the small farm program for Asains in Fresno County, California. Besides helping to establish trust with the community and being fluent in their languages, he makes numerous trips out to their farms with the farm advisor to assist them with problems.

Radio has been the most efficient method utilized by LC Cooperative Extension for Hmong small farmers. Developing partnerships with USDA-FSA and USDA-RMA for the radio broadcasts has contributed to the diversity in topics and resulted in greater visibility for all of the organizations and additional benefits to farmers.

4. Summary

1. Hiring someone from their community and fluent in their language is a great asset. Highly recommended!!

2. Have consistency of programs and be in it for the long haul. Immigrant and minority farmers see a lot of short-term projects (one year or less) and begin to wonder if the project is more for the sponsor.

3. Gain the trust of the group by doing 1 & 2 above and also getting involved in some of their activities, i.e., Hmong new year booths or displays.

4. Respect their culture and customs. (It is important to know the clan leaders, if there are any.)

5. Make an attempt to learn some words/phrases in their language.

6. Develop partnerships with CBO’s, government agencies, colleges, etc.

5. References
