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# THE MISSOURI SMALL FARM FAMILY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

(By Charlotte George, State Family Resource Management Specialist, USDA)

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During 1977, 40 percent of the families participating in the Missouri small farm family development program reported their income was above the previous year. The combined estimated total additional income amounted to \$850,000 for these families.

Over 1,800 families participated in the small farm family program in 1977. Most of the families had little prior contact with the Cooperative Extension Service in Missouri. During the year, 49 education assistants located in 33 counties were assisting 1,835 families in determining family goals, and providing them with suggestions and information for reaching their goals.

## HISTORICAL STATEMENT

Under the second Morrill Act of 1890, Lincoln Institute, founded in 1866, in Jefferson City, Mo., became a land-grant college and, in 1891, added industrial and agricultural courses to its curriculum.

After gaining land grant status, Lincoln University has emphasized agriculture as a part of its curriculum. From 1891 to 1939, the program oscillated between a few course offerings, to a 2-year certificate program, to a short-lived 4-year program leading to the B.S. degree in agriculture. The object of the course of study at that time was to train farmers and teachers of agriculture for the black public schools of Missouri.

In January 1940, a major in agriculture leading to the bachelor of science degree was instituted and has continued uninterrupted to the present.

In 1967, the Department of Agriculture initiated an extension program in animal nutrition supported by a grant of \$18,239 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Department received grants at this level annually until 1972 when major funding was obtained on a continuing basis through Public Law 89-106.

The Department of Agriculture initiated an extension program in December 1971, with the enactment of an amendment of the Smith-Lever Act and the subsequent Federal appropriation for the 1890 land-grant institutions.

In 1976, Lincoln University cooperative extension implemented the small farm family resource management program in 11 program planning areas of Missouri.

## MISSION STATEMENT

The Cooperative Extension Service at Lincoln University endeavors to assist Missouri citizens in the resolution of social, economic, tech-

nical and related problems, and the improvement of the quality of life. The focus of this service is on citizens of Missouri not participating in Cooperative Extension Service programs, or more specifically, low-income and/or minority families. The Cooperative Extension Service is a part of a statewide extension system in which mutual cooperation is fostered between Lincoln University, and the University of Missouri.

#### PROGRAM OBJECTIVE

The objective of the small farm family development program is to assist families living on small farms, not currently participating in extension programs, to use available resources to improve their quality of living.

This objective is to be reached by paraprofessionals helping families improve their economic and social well-being by increasing their knowledge and skills in agriculture technology, the management of family resources, and home gardening.

In August 1976, Federal legislation provided funds for the small farm family resource management program at Lincoln University to begin an effort to help families living on small farms to better manage their resources in order to reach family goals, realize some cost savings and/or increase their income; thereby having a better quality of life and gaining satisfaction for its members.

#### PROGRAM THRUSTS

The majority of Missouri farm families live on small farms. Families living on small farms gross less than \$20,000 a year in farm sales. The 1974 Census of Agriculture reported 115,711 farms in Missouri. Seventy-five percent of these families grossed less than \$20,000 in the sale of farm products. Records kept by farm families show that 70 to 80 percent of the farm sales were spent for farm production expenses. Assuming no other income, many of these families would have a net income of about \$4,000 per year.

In order to assure that the family resource management program has linkage and utility from Lincoln University, data were gathered from 8,527 families to determine their farm and home management practices and aspirations. The survey results indicated the estimated gross income of these families to be \$7,657 annually, or approximately \$1,500 net income to be used for family living expenses. The average age of the homemakers interviewed was 48 years and the average age of the operator was 51 years. Thirty-four percent said the biggest problem they faced was financial. Health was cited by another 23 percent as their biggest problem. When shopping for food, 26 percent said they never shopped from a list and another 19 percent of the homemakers stated they sometimes shopped from a list. Twenty-three percent said they usually paid their farm and home bills by cash or money order rather than by check. The summary of the responses indicated that in 74 percent of the households interviewed, both the husband and wife were involved in making major household decisions.

The data gathered revealed facts about children and the interpersonal relationships within the household. Nine percent of the respondents cited raising children as the biggest problem their family faced. Twenty-six percent of the homemakers stated they received



help from children with household chores; however, only 3 percent of the husbands and wives indicated they involved children in making decisions as it related to the family.

Nearly one-half of the households stated that they did not see future opportunities for their children in the immediate area and 47 percent of the respondents did not recommend farming as a career for their children.

Many of the families expressed a desire to make changes in their house. Among the changes listed were: 600 families would like a new roof; 1,168 households would like to add insulation and/or install some type of storm doors and windows and 1,712 families would like to paint the inside and/or outside of their homes.

One of the important vocational characteristics was that 46 percent of the surveyed families had lived on the farm less than 10 years.

The program centers around 11 area home economics designees teaching practical subject matter information and educational methods to 49 education assistants.

The areas of learning emphasized during 1977 were:

1. Management and decisionmaking skills needed for successful integration of farm and home production skills such as home food production and preservation.

2. Management of realistic recordkeeping skills for families living on small farms to analyze successful and efficient use of human and other available resources.

3. Practical home weatherization skills needed by families to conserve energy, realize a cost savings in fuel bills and improve their near environment.

Because higher prices reduced the purchasing power of families living on small farms, the 11 area home economics designees taught the education assistants and program families how to apply basic skills in order for a cost savings and/or increase in the family's income to be realized.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF PROGRAM FAMILIES

About one-half of the participating heads of households were less than 45 years old. Thirty-nine percent of the heads of households were between 46 and 64 years old. The remaining 11 percent were over 65 years of age. The proportion of homemakers in the three age categories was almost identical with less than 1 percent more in the two younger age categories.

Twenty-six percent of the participating heads of households had not completed high school, while 61.5 percent had a high school education and another 12.5 percent had some schooling beyond high school. Again, as in the age distribution, the homemakers were quite similar to the heads of households. Among the homemakers 26.4 percent had less than a high school education; 60.3 percent had completed high school and 13.3 percent had gone to school beyond high school graduation.

About 32.2 percent of the participating families had less than 5 years of farming experience. Another 34.3 percent had 5 to 10 years of experience and the rest, 33.4 percent, had farmed more than 10 years.

Probably the most interesting characteristic of the participant families is that 25.7 percent are full-time farmers. In 23.7 percent of the households both the head of household and spouse worked off the

farm. In another 36.7 percent of the participant families only the head of household worked off the farm, while the spouse only worked off the farm in the remaining 13.9 percent.

Families who have participated in the program 2 or more years is 11 percent. This figure is low due to the fact that the program in 7 of the 11 areas has been in operation less than 2 years. In the four areas where this program has been in operation since 1972, 27 percent of the families have participated 2 or more years.

For the 11 areas 42.7 percent of the families have been in the program less than a year and 45.3 percent have participated almost 2 years. In the four areas where the program has been in operation since 1972, 37 percent have participated less than a year and another 36 percent 1 to 2 years.

#### FAMILY INCOME CHANGES

The estimated income changes of families participating in the small farm family program reflects both the farm business and off-farm sources of income.

The following data represents estimates of the change in family income in 1977 compared to the year before:

1. Forty percent of all participating families or 717 families had an increase in total gross income averaging \$1,047 per family in 1977. This amounts to \$750,699 more total gross income for these 717 participating families.

2. Thirty-seven percent or 670 families had an average of \$454 more total net income for 1977. This amounts to \$304,180 more net income for these families.

3. One hundred fifty-one or about 9 percent of families had a decrease in total net income averaging \$515 per family.

4. Four hundred forty-three or about one-fourth of all families net worth increased by \$914 per family. Changes in net worth are in addition to income charges reported.

5. Five hundred twenty-two or 28 percent of the families had a total savings averaging \$270 per family over the previous year on family living expense items such as food, clothing, heating, shelter, and transportation.

The income changes these families achieved in 1977 indicates that families living on small farms who have relatively low farm sales and off-farm income can obtain more income by better management.

Forty percent of the families in 1977 increased their net income, net worth and savings by \$850,000. It is expected that more of these families will have increased income next year from additional enterprises.

#### INDICATORS OF PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS BASED ON EXTENSION PUBLICATIONS 202-205

The home food production and preservation component is an integral part of the program. The program emphasized assisting families in acquiring skills to provide their own food and reducing food costs through increased preservation and/or the sale of vegetables.

In reviewing the gardening activities of program families, there was a cost savings realized. There were 113 families gardening for the

first time. The total number of quarts of food produced and preserved by program families was 131,113 quarts or \$52,445 worth of food.

In one of the program units, 56 families produced a total of 22,400 pounds of meat for consumption or \$11,200 worth of food. This did not include the number of families who bagged venison, rabbits, squirrels, other wild meat, or fish.

The success of any business depends on how well its activities and details are planned, organized, and carried out. The business of running a home is just that—a business. When the home is a farm home, the recordkeeping assumes a dual role in carrying out activities for the business of living and for the business of farming. During 1977, 192 families began keeping a written record of farm and family living expenses.

Working with 1,245 families, education assistants encouraged families to inventory their resources and establish future goals in line with their available resources.

In one program unit, 100 percent of the education assistants established a farm and home business center and filing system, including a written record of family living expenses. Ninety-eight percent of the program families discussed future family goals with their education assistant.

In an effort to increase their purchasing power, 489 families applied home weatherization practices which resulted in a cost savings that ranged from \$18 per family to \$310 per family during 1977.

Five families in one area installed wood-burning heating stoves and used wood from their farm at a savings of approximately \$370 per family per year. Records from another area indicate that 40 families who installed wood-burning stoves realized a savings of \$75 per month per family.

In an effort to help families adopt practices to reduce family clothing costs, a sewing clinic was conducted jointly by the textiles and clothing and family economics and management specialists.

Ten families learned the procedures for filing a consumer complaint. As a result of filing the complaint with a sewing machine company, the families realized a cost savings of \$40 each by having the machines made operable by the company at no charge.

Eight hundred and eighty-nine families participating in the program acquired and applied skills for repairing door and window screens, replacing electrical receptacles and/or plugs and repairing leaky faucets. The total cost savings realized by these families was estimated to be \$8,890. Two hundred and fifty-four of the families are FmHA cooperators, and over two-thirds of the families have been participating in the small farm family program less than 2 years.

Though there are tangible, immediate indicators of program effectiveness, there is a sizable group of families living on small farms throughout our country who are outside of the mainstream of society. By increasing their farm and family decisionmaking and management skills, they will have the opportunity to become decision-makers rather than reactors to policies as it relates to the production and marketing of food, conservation, and maintenance of our natural resources, the allocation of our human and economic resources and consequently, be able to function more effectively in the marketplace.