Extension Educators Collecting Industry-specific Stakeholder Input

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Conclusions

Issue Identification Process

In different Michigan regions:

• Education (McDowell) & diffusion of research and innovation (Rogers),

• Industry Needs and Concerns

In 2007, team decided that current, inclusive input was needed.

Issue Identification Process

In different Michigan regions:

• 4 sessions with dairy farm owners, managers, herdspersons, and next generation family employees,

• 3 sessions with allied industry professionals, such as milk cooperative representatives, veterinarians, feed consultants, lenders, and government agency personnel.

• On average, 10.4 participants per session.

Results

Total number of issues rated per session: 103.1

Farmers and industry professionals similar in number of issues: 106.0 (Range: 87-133) and 99.3 (Range: 54-149), respectively

• Production performance: 31.4 per session

• Industry issues: 31.1 per session

• Business management: 21.3 per session

• Environment: 20.3 per session

industry Needs and Concerns

Small group discussion

Photo courtesy of Bill Robb

Group Methods Reviewed

Large group discussion

Photo courtesy of Ted Ferris

Nominal groups (Delbecq & Van De Ven):

• Effective in generating information, describing problem dimensions;

• Participants work on broad question individually in a group setting;

• Participants' time commitment high;

• Result is pooled summary, available immediately after sessions.

Focus groups:

• Effective in need assessment and program development (Bitsch);

• Moderated group discussion with interaction, leads to deeper problem conceptualization;

• Participants' time commitment moderate;

• Results need to be analyzed and summarized by trained expert.

Combined elements of both methods, based on participants' time commitment, breadth and depth of issue generation, timely results.

Need for Stakeholder Input

Extension mission includes:

• Education (McDowell) & diffusion of research and innovation (Rogers),

• Institutional maintenance (McDowell).

Mandated by 1998 Farm Bill for setting research, extension, and education priorities.

Dairy team uses:

• Advisory board,

• Broad-based input last collected 1997.

In 2007, team decided that current, inclusive input was needed.

Examples of

• Issue Identification Process

Session plan

• Introduce meeting format, fill out forms

• Participants record individual lists (5 min)

• Assign subgroups with 3 or more participants

• Subgroups report until each group has discussed issues for each 4 categories (10-15 minutes each):

  ⇒ Business management

  ⇒ Production performance

  ⇒ Environment

  ⇒ Industry issues

• Category facilitator moderates each subgroup and records all contributions on laptop

• Forum to reduce duplications, clarify, and discuss issues (1 hour)

• Each participant rates each issue as high, medium, low, or no importance

• Average ratings calculated for each session and shared with participants

• Differences in abstraction level, specificity of each issue, and number of issues identified preclude formula aggregation of issues across different sessions.

Summarizing across sessions through research team consensus, using qualitative and quantitative information from each session.

Examples of

• Issue Identification Process

Small group discussion

Photo courtesy of Bill Robb

Examples of

• Results

Table: Industry Needs and Concerns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example of Industry Needs</th>
<th>Example of Concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promote availability of career opportunities in agriculture</td>
<td>Consensus: acceptance of dairy products varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase knowledge of agriculture</td>
<td>Consumer: interest in different types of dairy products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase market share of dairy products</td>
<td>Government: concern over animal welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce production costs</td>
<td>Consumers: negative perception of dairy products</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples of

• Individual Needs

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Financial management skills for dairy farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and financing growth and transfer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing wage and benefit packages for employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing and implementing safety training programs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples of

• Individual Needs

Photo courtesy of Bill Robb

Acknowledgments

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Further Information & References

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