



Making a Difference

2015 – 2016

Farm Management Program Focus Team

Utilizing Online Resources and Tools: AgManager.info, Decision Tools and Excel Training for Producers

Grand Challenges

K-State Research and Extension: providing education you can trust to help people, businesses, and communities solve problems, develop skills, and build a better future.

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Situation

The growth of online resources available to producers allows them to make various decisions regarding their operations. K-State Research and Extension provides helpful resources for many decisions they may face, including: determining profitability for various crops or livestock enterprises; the decision to purchase new machinery; and how much to pay for land or for leased cropland or pasture. For these decisions, K-State has created decision tools for use by producers. The university provides education for using these tools through Excel workshops which also acquaint participants with the tools available and how to use them.

What We Did

The AgManager.info website was redesigned to provide more functionality and ease of use. More than 40 tools are available on the website. Located on one easy-to-find page, these tools are mainly Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. In addition, crop and livestock budgets are available in Excel to allow producers to enter values from their operations to evaluate the profitability of various cropping and livestock enterprises. To enhance the use of these resources, eight day-long Excel workshops were conducted at which more than 150 participants were taught to use Excel through a variety of hands-on exercises, allowing them to both create their own customized spreadsheets, as well as use the tools already available to them.

Outcomes

Decision tools on AgManager.info had more than 38,000 downloads through the program year. The most popular tools are the options strategies, and land-purchase- and land-lease spreadsheets, each with more than 2,700 visits each year. The livestock and crop budgets were also frequently used. During the workshops, participants learned to use various Excel functions and formulas and understood how the decision tools worked and how calculations are made in those tools. Several began to use spreadsheets in their own farming operations, and others have adopted the tools for use in making decisions for their operations.

Success Stories

From a manager of a large livestock operation in southeast Kansas and workshop participant: "I can't thank you enough! What I learned at the workshop as well as your follow-up with some of my questions since then has tremendously helped in organizing our operation. The pivot table you helped with saves me so much time and is so much better organized than how I had it before."

A sample of comments from workshop participants:

- I'm going to use it to determine what crops are most likely to be profitable for 2016.
- I hope to help my husband use this to better manage purchases and cost in equipment.
- I will make my own worksheet to use for taxes and our other business.
- Helps me make decisions on selling cows and keeping replacement heifers.
- Have tighter control on costs and have a handier tool to evaluate costs and income.