



## PROGRAM GRANTS Final Report Narrative

**Grantee Name: NW MI Hort Research Foundation/New FARM**  
**Program Name: New Farm program (grant # 1899)**  
**Contact Name: Dr. Nikki Rothwell**  
**Date Submitted: March 2012**

Please answer the following questions and email them to: [info@rotarycharities.org](mailto:info@rotarycharities.org).  
Maximum word limits are listed in parentheses for each question.

1. Please attach the following forms to this report:
  - a. Evaluation Plan Form B (include years 1-3)
  - b. Grantee Final Report Form C (include years 1-3)
  - c. Final Budget and Narrative
  
2. To what degree did the grant make a difference to your program? (300 words)

The grant provided funds to expand the “New FARM” (Farmer Assistance and Resource Management) Program by improving the depth, quantity and scope of the educational programming. With Rotary Charities’ support, we were able to add new participants, elevate instructive sessions by bringing in more in-depth presenters, and engage in travel. Travel funds were used for two overnight trips: 1) to Lansing to meet with legislators and to better understand how to affect agricultural policy change; and 2) to Central Michigan to tour three manufacturing facilities with innovative packing, processing, and marketing strategies. This trip also included a problem-solving and team building exercise on current issues facing the U.S. tart cherry industry. The flexibility of the funds supported an international agricultural tour to New Zealand; this trip was the capstone event and provided members with a look at innovative farming strategies, a global perspective on agribusiness, and an opportunity to build unity among participants.

The Rotary Charities’ funds also leveraged dollars from other sources. The New FARM program began as a small-scale series of courses to address the needs of new members of the Grand Traverse agricultural community. Organizers originally applied for a USDA Grant but did not receive funding in 2009. With no funding but overwhelming interest from emerging farmers, the New FARM Program launched on a limited budget with 30 participants. New FARM coordinators were able to initiate the Program from local organization support and participant fees (\$10,000). In 2009, Rotary Charities’ administrators attended a New FARM *Financial Literacy* session to provide information on grant writing, and as a result, New FARMers collaborated to develop a proposal to advance the Program’s efforts. Once we received Rotary Charities’ funding, we re-submitted a proposal to USDA and leveraged the dollars, as well as demonstrated local support for the program and received \$138,000.

3. As a result of this multiple year grant, is your program more sustainable? How do you know? (300 words)

Because New FARMers were actively involved in expressing their leadership needs, establishing Program goals and priorities, planning educational sessions, and developing proposals and communication strategies to fund the Program, evaluation results re-confirm the importance of sustaining the New FARM Program. Additionally, the New FARM Program broadened and improved skill sets in various leadership capacities that will benefit local communities by providing new leaders that are pro-active, competent, and trained. New FARMers have learned how to target resources, funding sources, and agricultural and non-agricultural community support to improve their farming and business operations. They also are better able to work collaboratively, communicate effectively, and participate actively in community and agricultural efforts. Because of the success of the New FARM Program, the group is currently working to develop an independent, member-driven organization that will sustain new farmers in the agricultural community.

Mid-term (2011) and final evaluation (2012) results for the New FARM Program showed improved networking skills and elevated commitment levels to the Program. In order to sustain this initial program, the group met in March 2012 to brainstorm how to continue the New FARM Program in a new way that is member-directed, topical, flexible, project-based and directed by an elected board of the membership. The goal is to sustain the program through leadership by New FARM participants.

The Program will also be sustained by annually continuing the most successful workshops that showed significant outcomes and impacts. Current grantees, project coordinators, and Program partners remain committed to the long-term goals and success of the New FARM Program. Additionally, community support remains high as media, local stakeholders, elected officials, and the public at-large have expressed an interest in future New FARM efforts. Lastly, new emerging farmers will require a continued mechanism to support their changing needs in the short and long term.

4. Is your organization better positioned to meet community need? How do you know? (300 words)

The New FARM Program focused on building leadership, communication, and problem-solving skills and provided participants with an improved skill set to support leadership positions on community boards, affect agricultural policy, improve and increase communication with media and take a more active role as community members. The Grand Traverse region has a rich agricultural legacy, but the trends have shown a clear shift to older farmers and fewer acres of land in production; these Rotary funds have assisted New FARMers to improve their financial skills to sustain profitable farming operations through economically sustainable practices and business decisions. Members have also learned about the many facets of how to successfully transfer a farm to the next generation, hence helping maintain the region's agricultural heritage, sustain or increase the amount of farmed acreage, and bring a new generation into farming. The efforts of the program have also improved the resiliency of agriculture by addressing labor issues, environmental stewardship,

and innovative business structures and partnerships that help new farmers obtain land to produce safe and affordable food for local and state communities. The impact of the New FARM Program is reinforced through the evaluation process (Forms B and C), and the commitment levels of the New FARMers to the Program, particularly as the majority of the group is dedicated to continuing on-going educational programming that will address future needs of beginning farmers and to expand its reach to include new members of the farming community.

5. Please summarize your evaluation results. (400 words)

The New FARM Program was a 30-month program, and a baseline assessment captured past experiences with farming, education, access to land, crops grown, reasons for farming, experience in farm-based organizational leadership, current marketing practices, and attitudes toward farming, economics, sustainable agriculture, and the future.

Several events took place during 2010 and 2011 (described in Forms B & C) and had process or formative evaluations completed. These evaluations focused on measuring short-term outcomes, such as increased awareness, new knowledge gains, and the introduction to new skills or resources. Below are highlights from these evaluations:

- 100% improved knowledge of farm business resources, components of business planning, and skills necessary to start new/expand farm enterprise.
- 100% increased their confidence to begin a new farm business.
- 100% felt inspired by alternative marketing strategies they were exposed to.
- 100% improved knowledge of how to plan for farm succession, understand farm succession, and find resources.
- 100% felt motivated to plan ahead for farm succession.
- 88% that traveled to Lansing made personal contacts with state legislators.
- 100% gained confidence asking officials about their opinions related to agriculture and were motivated to discuss issues with elected officials.
- 50% expanded their knowledge of environmental stewardship resources in Michigan (e.g., farmland preservation programs).
- 100% made a personal contact with local program representatives.

A formal mid-term evaluation was conducted after 15 months of programming. Result highlights are noted below:

- 100% Changed marketing practices.
- 61% Changed farming/ growing operations or land management practices.
- 43% Developed or revised a farm plan.
- 30% Started farming and 0% stopped farming.
- 26% Changed business practices.

A final evaluation was conducted, including the collection of reflective essays from participants that traveled to New Zealand. The final evaluation focused on the same

questions from the mid-term evaluation, plus longer-term outcomes on amount of food produced, sales, and farm revenue.

- 89% improved their management or leadership roles.
- 89% applied practical knowledge to improve sustainability of farming.
- 57% modified or expanded current marketing practices.
- 57% increased local food sales.
- 50% acted on land stewardship.
- 50% assumed a leadership position. 86% plan to seek a future leadership position.
- 48% reported an increase in the amount of food produced.
- 43% purchased, leased, or took over family farming operations.
- 38% experienced an increase in farm revenue.

6. How can Rotary Charities improve their grantmaking? (200 words)

The New FARM grant experience with Rotary Charities has been positive, particularly as our Program was non-traditional, evolving, and impactful in both the short and long term. We appreciate Rotary's vision to diversify its funds to support northwest Michigan's agricultural community by investing in its future to prepare new farmers with the leadership, business, and communication skills to succeed. We would advocate for continued flexibility in funding to further educational programming to support the on-going and changing needs of new farmers and other emerging agribusiness men and women. We would encourage Rotary to continue to fund alternative projects, particularly those that support agriculture and to be aware of this industry's economic and environmental importance and its legacy in the Grand Traverse Region. We valued the opportunity for our group to meet with members of the Rotary Board, and the Rotary staff's commitment to thorough communication on grant requirements and deadlines. This granting experience has also been a learning and team building tool as members of our Program have collaborated to write, evaluate, and report on this current grant. We intend to seek further funding to support efforts to build on the agricultural tradition of our region.



**FORM B: GRANTEE EVALUTION PLAN FINAL REPORT**

**ORGANIZATION: Grantee Name: NW MI Hort Research Foundation/New FARM**

**Program Name: New Farm program (grant # 1899)**

**DATE: March 2012**

**GRANT CATEGORY: Program**

1) ACTIVITY & OUTCOME OBJECTIVES	2) DATA COLLECTION PLAN	3) DATA UTILIZATION PLAN
<p><b>Objectives from Action Plan columns 2 &amp; 3.</b></p> <p><b>Year One Activities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Classroom study of public speaking, media relations, crisis management, building/owning a business, marketing, estate/tax planning.</li> <li>-Develop professional relationships between program individuals and guest speakers/MSU staff.</li> <li>-Attend international fruit conference.</li> <li>-Meet with local legislators/policymakers in Lansing.</li> <li>-Tour farms, packing houses/processing plants,</li> </ul> <p>New FARM Program will result in increased participant knowledge vis a vis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Estate planning and other strategies to increase successful farm transfer.</li> <li>-Challenges &amp; opportunities for increasing competitiveness &amp; market share through alternative-marketing and other strategies.</li> </ul>	<p>Evaluation of the New FARM program was based on a participatory method and included a series of formative and summative evaluations. During the grant period, there were nine process evaluations captured after each educational event described in the planned activities and listed by date. For each event, a paper or online survey was administered to New FARM participants after the event. Findings showed significant changes in knowledge by participants specific to the program objectives and event content. Finally, an outcome-focused mid-term evaluation was completed in winter 2011; an end-of-program evaluation was completed in winter 2012. Evaluation information was collected by the New FARM coordinators and will be managed and stored by the coordinators for reporting purposes (Rothwell, Serrine, Lizotte, Peters).</p> <p><b>March 2010. IFTA Meeting and Post-Tour</b> International Fruit Tree Association annual meeting. An online survey of the event was administered via email.</p> <p><b>April 2010. Building a Farm Business</b> A pre-post retrospective survey was administered at the event.</p> <p><b>September 2010. Alternative Marketing Strategies Session</b> An online survey of the event was administered via email.</p> <p><b>October 2010. Planning for Farm Succession</b> A pre-post retrospective survey was administered at the event.</p> <p><b>November 2010. Meet Lawmakers &amp; State Policy (Lansing Trip)</b> An online</p>	<p>There are several event reports (nine process evaluations) from the program activities.</p> <p>There is also a mid-term report and final (end-of-program) report that include generous details.</p> <p>These written reports provide a record of achieved outcomes for the New FARM program and serve as a knowledge base to create presentations and brief reports for funders and</p>

1) ACTIVITY & OUTCOME OBJECTIVES		2) DATA COLLECTION PLAN	3) DATA UTILIZATION PLAN
<p>and retail operations to understand whole food chain.</p> <p>-Communicate with veteran farmers/industry leaders about MI's agriculture industries.</p> <p><b>Year Two Activities:</b></p> <p>-Classroom study of labor issues, environmental stewardship, public policy, communication, and agritourism.</p> <p>-Tour Great Lakes region to view value-added agricultural opportunities.</p> <p>-International tour of Ag region to better understand global food systems.</p>	<p>-Farm financial viability through innovative business management strategies.</p> <p>-Land stewardship and farm safety through technical assistance and training.</p> <p>-Leadership, decision-making, facilitation, communication, team-work, and problem-solving skills.</p> <p>-Improved understanding and action strategies to influence local, state, and national agricultural policies.</p>	<p>survey of the event was administered via email.</p> <p><b>December 2010. Business Etiquette</b> An online survey of the event was administered via email.</p> <p><b>January 2011. Agriculture Forum: An Introduction to Northwest Michigan's Elected Officials</b> A pre-post retrospective survey was administered at the event.</p> <p><b>February 2011. Environmental Stewardship</b> An online survey of the event was administered via email.</p> <p><b>March 2011. Agriculture Labor Management</b> Paper evaluation completed at time of event.</p> <p><b>April 2011. Tour to West Central Michigan: Federal Marketing Order Problem Solving Discussion</b> No formal evaluation of this event, it was a team-building and problem-solving exercise.</p> <p><b>Winter 2011 Mid-Term Evaluation</b> In January 2011, twenty-three members of the New Farm Program gathered for an evening of planning and evaluation. Members were half-way through the leadership program and were provided an opportunity to give feedback on the program and to plan events for the upcoming year. Five members were relatively new to the program.</p> <p>The mid-term evaluation was conducted in a group setting with a facilitator leading the group through a series of questions. The key questions were derived from the USDA "outcomes based reporting guide for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program." The group would generate a topic and others that also experienced that change would agree allowing the facilitator to determine the percentage of participants that changed their behavior or practices. Flip charts recorded the information in front of the group and clarification or additional</p>	<p>stakeholders.</p> <p>Specifically, the coordinators plan to share an executive summary with Sen. Stabenow, local legislators, and other elected officials. Executive summary shows program need, Ag stats, New FARM accomplishments, and outcomes.</p> <p>Plan to instate annual local legislators forum for the public, hosted by former New FARM members and coordinators. This will be continued based on the interest and utility expressed in the event evaluation.</p> <p>Regional newspapers</p>

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	<p>information was gathered as a new topic was suggested and recorded.</p> <p>In addition to the behavioral outcomes measured above, New FARM participants were asked whether they planned to continue in the program, why they missed events, and how the program has personally benefited them and/or their growing operations/ farming businesses. Some information gathered at the mid-term evaluation was used to shape the last year of program. For example, during the second year the members took a more active role in planning the program events, including determining the details of the capstone international trip via popular majority.</p> <p><b>Winter 2012 End-of-Program Final Evaluation</b>  In February 2012, a questionnaire was distributed to participants at the end of the New Zealand trip. Most surveys were returned within 24 hours, the additional surveys were returned within two weeks. Total sample was 30 surveys representing 32 traveling participants. Participants indicated on a list of outcomes if the statements were true for them since beginning the New Farm program. New FARM program participants also wrote essays for describing the changes they have experienced because of program activities and the international study trip. An additional document has been sent highlighting quotes from the participant essays.</p> <p>A wrap-up meeting occurred in March 2012, twenty-one participants engaged in a group evaluation facilitated by an evaluator. Longer-term outcomes projected for the project were measured including changes in farm revenue, amount of food produced, and local food sales since the start of the program. Answers were tallied through consensus and discussions. Examples of changed practices and skills were obtained.</p>	<p>picked up several stories about the New FARM program.</p> <p>Scholarly publications of New FARM program content, process, and outcomes will be pursued.</p> <p>Results were shared at the 2012 “North American Tart Cherry Industry Conference” to an audience of 150.</p> <p>MSU Extension colleagues in other regions of the state will adapt educational events used in the New FARM program to meet their stakeholder needs.</p>



**FORM C: GRANTEE FINAL REPORT**

**ORGANIZATION: Grantee Name: NW MI Hort Research Foundation/New FARM**

**Program Name: New Farm program (grant # 1899)**

**DATE: March 2012 REPORTING YEAR: 2011-2012**

**GRANT CATEGORY: Program Grant**

1) ACTIVITY & OUTCOME OBJECTIVES		2) STATUS ON OBJECTIVES	3) LESSONS LEARNED/CHANGES MADE
<p><b>Year One Activities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Classroom study of public speaking, media relations, crisis management, building/ owning a business, marketing, estate/tax planning.</li> <li>-Develop professional relationships between program individuals and guest speakers/MSU staff.</li> <li>-Attend international fruit conference.</li> <li>-Meet with local legislators/policymakers in Lansing.</li> <li>-Tour farms, packing houses/processing plants, and retail operations to understand whole food chain.</li> </ul>	<p>New FARM Program will result in increased participant knowledge vis-a-vis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Estate planning and other strategies to increase successful farm transfer.</li> <li>-Challenges &amp; opportunities for increasing competitiveness &amp; market share through alternative-marketing and other strategies.</li> <li>-Farm financial viability through innovative business management strategies.</li> <li>-Land stewardship and farm safety through technical</li> </ul>	<p><b>March 2010. IFTA Meeting and Post-Tour</b>            75% found the tour very useful. All attendees reported the experience of interacting with international scientists and growers as useful. About 25% reported they joined the IFTA after this event and another 50% were planning to join in the future but were not yet members. One participant shared, <i>"I always find that conversations with farmers from other regions and hearing about problems they deal with and practices that they apply are always useful and informative."</i></p> <p><b>April 2010. Building a Farm Business</b>            Participants reported significant improvement on the following: basic knowledge of farm business resources (<math>t=-6.70, p&lt;.001</math>), understanding key components of business planning (<math>t=-3.70, p&lt;.001</math>), awareness of resources to draw on in starting a new business (<math>t=-6.01, p&lt;.001</math>), skills necessary to start or expand a new farm enterprise (<math>t=-4.74, p&lt;.001</math>), available resources from specific organizations in Michigan (SBTDC, SCORE, MSU Product Center) (<math>t=-6.57, p&lt;.001</math>), and identifying challenges in starting a new farm</p>	<p><u>Lesson:</u> Interactions with nationally and internationally recognized scientists and growers provides an invaluable learning opportunity to the community. There are very limited research and knowledge resources for Michigan specialty crop growers so this event contributed to advancements in cropping systems on local farms.</p> <p><u>Lesson:</u> There are always new resources and regulations to learn about in farm business. Group was introduced to a suite of resources for starting or improving businesses. Relationships were built</p>



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<p>-Communicate with veteran farmers/industry leaders about MI's agriculture industries.</p> <p><b>Year Two Activities:</b></p> <p>-Classroom study of labor issues, environmental stewardship, public policy, communication, and agritourism.</p> <p>-Tour Great Lakes region to view value-added agricultural opportunities.</p> <p>-International tour of Ag region to better understand global food systems.</p>	<p>assistance and training.</p> <p>-Leadership, decision-making, facilitation, communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills.</p> <p>-Improved understanding and action strategies to influence local, state, and national agricultural policies.</p>	<p>business or including a value-added crop (<math>t=-2.36, p&lt;.05</math>). Participants reported the program provided them techniques for communicating with family members about beginning a new farm enterprise (<math>t=-5.22, p&lt;.001</math>) and increased their confidence that they would begin a new farm business in the future (<math>t=-2.75, p&lt;.01</math>).</p> <p><b>September 2010. Alternative Marketing Strategies Session</b></p> <p>Participants felt completely (30%) or somewhat (70%) inspired by taking the tour of Black Star Farms to consider unique and creative partnerships for their personal growing operations. The tour guide wrote that one participant, "<i>spoke about the importance of creating a strong brand for your products. Branding is something that I have spent a good deal of time worrying about already, but its mention as part of the tour might help tomorrow's cherry growers think about directions to steer the industry.</i>" This view shows that while learning on an individual level took place, there is also consideration for how the information can be used by a network of growers in the New FARM leadership program for a unified voice or to support an industry as a whole. A tour of the winemaking facility was seen as valuable by 70% of the participants, and comments referred to a desire to see more of the process. A tour of the farm's lodging was also covered as an option to diversify within an agritourism model. Yet, only 60% found this part of the tour as valuable to managing their own operations because it was seen as impressive, but not something that others readily wanted to try. Some remarked that the Inn showed the power of diversifying an operation, such as allowing visitors to stay on the farm, but others commented that the Inn was not applicable to what most growing operations could do in the area.</p> <p>The cheese-making part of the tour was very relevant and interesting (88%). Comments from this portion of the tour revealed the speaker's story and personal journey of making a high-end artisan cheese was inspirational and educational. Three separate comments highlight the high satisfaction with this session and the take-away lessons from someone sharing their farming story.</p>	<p>through personal introductions ("new contacts") to local and national resources.</p> <p><u>Lesson:</u> The experience of seeing an operation hands-on and talking about the economic and infrastructure details during the tour inspired new ideas or new ways of thinking. This tour inspired collaboration because the focus was on how a creamery, winery, and CSA work together. New FARM members saw how combining resources from separate business provided more options and opportunities. Participants could see an the benefit of collaboration and start to determine how they might work with other farmers in the area.</p>

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	<p><i>“I thought the focus of starting small, focusing on a product done well, and building slowly were all very applicable.”</i></p> <p><i>“Knowing how they followed their passion to learn and be the best at their craft, enduring hardships, never sacrificing quality and working long hours (still!) is just a great, great story.”</i></p> <p><i>“John’s presentation suggested that by offering something unusual that sparks your passion and the interest of your prospective clientele, you can be quite successful in an agritourism venture, even if said venture does not have a demonstrated track record of success in the area.”</i></p> <p>Other parts of the farm tour participants saw as useful were a tour of hoop houses, conversations about community supported agriculture, adding a bakery/oven to the farm, hosting farm dinners, creating cottage law products, and providing seasonal farm tours and activities. One participant appreciated the openness talking about money. <i>“He talked a lot about finances, which is really what growers want to know.”</i> Highlights of the event included sharing advice, seeing the actual operations and ideas at work, and hearing about the hardships of others that have tried diversification.</p> <p><i>“I think it’s important to broadcast the work being done by these creative people. It inspires me to think about ways we can share what we’re doing with the public, or with people considering farming. It also makes me want to diversify even more to make sure our business is always interesting.”</i></p> <p><i>“Even though the location of our farm makes agritourism a sort of non-contender, we constantly look at new directions to go with business....While I have a hard time imagining a regular parade of tour buses coming out to visit our farm, I do feel that knowledge of the small-scale, high intensity, and publicly visible model of ag value-added might be applicable on my farm in some way in the future.”</i></p>	

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	<p><b>October 2010. Planning for Farm Succession</b>  Participants reported significant improvement on the following: basic knowledge of how to plan for farm succession (<math>t=-3.42, p&lt;.05</math>), understanding key components of farm succession (<math>t=-5.61, p&lt;.01</math>), specific knowledge of farm succession (<math>t=-5.00, p&lt;.01</math>), awareness of research on farm succession (<math>t=-4.82, p&lt;.01</math>), recognition of unique methods of succession for Northwest Michigan growers (<math>t=-2.35, p&lt;.05</math>), confidence that planning resources are available (<math>t=-3.04, p&lt;.05</math>), motivation to plan ahead for farm succession (<math>t=-2.50, p&lt;.05</math>), and beliefs that planning ahead for farm succession is key and can help keep MI farmers farming in the future (<math>t=-2.38, p&lt;.05</math>).</p> <p>Participants indicated in comments on the survey that the most valuable aspect of the workshop was hearing the pros and cons of why to plan now and why growers should not put off succession planning given that death can be sudden, and that there are several options with taxation and transferring property, and that informed decisions require time to think about and discuss with others.</p> <p><b>November 2010. Meet Lawmakers &amp; State Policy (Trip to Lansing)</b>  Participants reported that overall the two-day event was completely (44%) and somewhat (56%) inspiring and that the visit raised personal importance of the political process to the agricultural sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Half (50%) of the participants confirmed that the trip helped them personally establish new contacts with industry and/or legislative representatives.</li> <li>• Overall, 88% of the participants identified that one to five new contacts were made and increased their network of</li> </ul>	<p><u>Lesson:</u> Succession planning is a complex topic that may require repeated educational sessions or consultations over several years, perhaps decades, to stay current with information and to be sure that informed decisions are properly documented. This session provided a foundation of knowledge to help communication with others. Families were invited to session and a few three-generation families attended together. This session also provided the opportunity to seek advice with a Farm Management Educator.</p> <p><u>Lesson:</u> It is mutually beneficial for agricultural producers to know their elected representatives. Both sides need to stay informed on similar issues and can work together on shared goals like protecting</p>

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	<p>contacts. Some of the take-away messages from the program at the state capitol included not being afraid to write/talk/email policymakers and that making oneself known to leaders is the best way to get a point across. Visibility seemed to work both ways.</p> <p>As one participant shared, <i>“I felt that even going to Lansing with the New FARM program made an impression with our legislators.”</i></p> <p>Others shared new awareness that lobbying and law-making can be easily influenced by corporations and other organizations that influence new rules that otherwise would have been passed (or failed) based on citizen input. From the survey comments, it was clear that New FARM program members were interested in getting more engaged in the political process after this event and stated that even with some familiarity of the law-making process, it was a nice opportunity to see the Capitol, visit with legislative staff and lobbyists, and brush up on ways to get involved in the political process.</p> <p><b>December 2010. Business Etiquette</b> Most participants felt they already knew much of the material about table manners and the politeness that is needed in business transactions. Others thought it was a good reminder of etiquette and one lesson was that manners were invented to help other people feel comfortable.</p> <p><b>January 2011. Agriculture Forum: An Introduction to Northwest Michigan’s Elected Officials</b> Participants reported significant improvement on the following: personal awareness of the newly elected officials in Northwest Michigan (<math>t=-310.46, p&lt;.001</math>), understanding of elected official’s feelings about agriculture in the region (<math>t=-11.29, p&lt;.001</math>),</p>	<p>Michigan’s Ag industry. Most participants were surprised how open representatives were to being contacted. Personal connections were made with elected officials (i.e., local farmers left with phone numbers for follow-up contact). Collectively the New FARM group realized that they have more influence as a group than as individuals. Members gained a new appreciation for the value an annual visit to Lansing might yield.</p> <p><u>Lesson:</u> This topic is essential to a profitable business and the event was a solid intro to the topic. Yet, the event could be improved with a different delivery method in the future.</p> <p><u>Lesson:</u> A high profile elected official event right after a closely watched Gubernatorial election was an energizing way to kick</p>

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	<p>confidence the newly elected officials will work for agricultural interests (<math>t=-6.14, p&lt;.001</math>), comfort asking officials about their opinions related to agriculture (<math>t=-4.00, p&lt;.01</math>), and motivation to discuss agricultural issues with elected officials in the future (<math>t=-5.45, p&lt;.001</math>).</p> <p>Comments from the survey showed shock how little awareness some elected officials had regarding agriculture. There seemed an equal need and appreciation to hear the opinions of the officials as well as the elected officials to hear the concerns of the growers and farm operators. Overall, the participants were impressed with the evening and the amount of exposure that occurred politically in one night program.</p> <p><b>February 2011. Environmental Stewardship</b>  At this event, a New FARM program member provided an introduction to Ag and the Environment and 50% of attendees reported that the presentation expanded their knowledge base on the topic. Programs and organizations were highlighted during the event including the USDA/NRCS Farm Bill conservation programs, Farmland Preservations options, a tour of the Grand Traverse Conservation District Boardman River Nature Center, and MDA conservation programs (MWSP and MAEAP). Every topic had the majority of participants indicating that they learned; a little bit, more than a few new things, and enough to considerably expand their</p>	<p>off Year 2 and demonstrate the importance of representing an Ag region as a group. This well attended event included community members and was organized and driven by New FARM members. Several New FARM members hosted the event, also acting as MC and moderators for panel discussions. The event helped develop leadership skills. The Ag Forum event prompted a request from Senator Stabenow to stay in continued discussion on the 2012 Farm Bill issues and draft language.</p> <p><u>Lesson</u> This session was presented by a New FARM member that provided leadership on the content and organized the meeting. The session was similar to the farm succession planning workshop that allowed New FARM members to make</p>

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	<p>knowledge. Survey comments revealed that important contacts within programs and agencies were made from the event.</p> <p><b>March 2011. Agriculture Labor Management</b>  This was a day-long program on agency enforcement and education strategies. Topics covered included responding to media events, cises mitigation, regulatory procedures, immigration issues, housing issues, employer/employee rights and responsibilities, youth employment, farm labor, food safety and food security procedures. 91% would recommend this event to others. 95% reported the event met their expectations on the topics. 96% thought the program was beneficial and 100% reported that the handouts and materials were helpful.</p> <p><b>April 2011. Tour to West Central Michigan: Federal Marketing Order Problem Solving Discussion</b>  Two-day (overnight) trip to West Central region of Michigan that involved problem solving discussions among New FARM participants and industry representatives. Included was a tour of Gray and Company (Hart, MI) Peterson Farms (Shelby, MI), and Indian Summer Co-op (Ludington, MI). Event also included speakers from the Cherry Industry.</p>	<p>connections to local people and resource programs for environmental stewardship.</p> <p><u>Lesson:</u> Participants were more aware of the regulations regarding the topic areas covered. This meeting marked the last process or event-based evaluation that was conducted for the New FARM program. After this timeframe, the participants began more actively planning their own sessions including trips to see each other's operations.</p> <p>Lesson: Participants learned to actively listen to others, respect differing opinions, and seek common ground and solutions to issues and conflicts. This was a real stretch as many participants were on opposite sides of the fence. The event helped participants appreciate new perspectives.</p>

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	<p><b>Winter 2011 Mid-Term Evaluation</b>            Since the beginning of the program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>61% Changed farming/ growing operations or land management practices.</b> Eight different topics came up. Examples include three participants trying high density apple production. Two completing MAEAP certification (a comprehensive, voluntary, proactive program designed to reduce farmers' legal and environmental risks). Two made plans or started serious planning conversations related to farm transfers. Two took out new financial loans for land acquisition or leases. One had built a chemical building with NCRS funds. After the tour and program on agritourism and operation diversification, one was trying a farm stand for the upcoming year and another invested in goats.</li> <li>• <b>43% Developed or revised a farm plan.</b> Five reported revising farm plans to include more diversification in crops or business practices. Three had specifically developed an agritourism plan. Two had changed their winery/vineyard plan.</li> <li>• <b>30% Started farming and 0% stopped farming or were no longer farming.</b> Five had started farming. In addition, one person started a new business in addition to farming (a restaurant). And one had expanded their farming operations.</li> <li>• <b>100% Changed marketing practices.</b> This question was met with an overwhelming response. 100% indicated that they had made changes to their marketing plans based on their participation in the program. When probed, participants expressed how the program expanded their networking and therefore awareness of other marketing strategies and outlets in the local area.</li> <li>• <b>26% Changed business practices.</b> Three topics where participants had to use new knowledge: farm transfer plans, finances, and farm land preservation efforts. These were also topics of program activities.</li> </ul>	<p>Well into Year 2, evaluation activities turned to the assessment of the overall program with a Mid-term evaluation in 2011 and a final evaluation in 2012.</p> <p><u>Lesson:</u> Outcomes such a behavioral change and skill use were able to be measured one year into the program. The Mid-term evaluation revealed the trends that were expected in the program's longer-term impacts.</p> <p><u>Lesson:</u> An astounding 100% changed marketing strategies as a result of what was learned in the New FARM program.</p> <p><u>Lesson:</u> Networking can be a difficult concept to measure, but it clearly is a very important outcome to the participants. Networking is one the quickest responses to benefits of the program during interviews or on open-</p>

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	<p>When asked about the benefits of the program – short-term and long-term, this was shared: <b>NETWORKING!!!!</b> Overwhelming response and excitement sensed in sharing this as a benefit already realized half-way through the program. Plus, buying services/goods from others in the program and knowing the networking has created opportunities to recommend products and produce from other New FARM members to others outside of the group.</p> <p><b>Winter 2012 End-of-Program Final Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>89% improved their management or leadership roles</b> on-the-farm because of what they learned being part of the New FARM program.</li> <li>• <b>50% assumed a leadership position</b> in the agricultural industry or NW Michigan community since the beginning of the New FARM program.</li> <li>• <b>86% plan to seek a leadership position</b> in the agricultural industry or NW Michigan community in the future.</li> <li>• <b>57% modified or expanded current marketing practices</b> to begin producing value-added crops since the beginning of the New FARM program.</li> <li>• <b>43% had purchased, leased, or taken over family farming operations</b> since the beginning of the New FARM program.</li> <li>• <b>89% applied practical knowledge to improve the sustainability of their farming operations</b> because of</li> </ul>	<p>ended survey questions. Networking includes sharing business ideas, products, equipment, consumer and marketing outlets, as well as general advice.</p> <p><u>Lesson:</u> There is a large amount of (qualitative data) written narratives from the New FARM participants on what they gained from the program. Each participant has a story of how the program helped start-up, transfer, expand, or modify an agricultural business in Northwest Michigan.</p> <p>The New FARM program extended across several years and had a variety of content-delivery, resource-sharing, hands-on touring, and other experiences. Even with captured formative and outcome based evaluation results, it is likely that a ripple of</p>



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	<p>what they learned in the New FARM program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>50% acted on land stewardship</b> practices through MAEAP or NRCS programs.</li> <li>• <b>57% increased local food sales</b>, since the start of the New FARM program, which they believe was connected to their participation. Examples included gaining new customers, joining local farmer markets (3 members), participating in farm-to-school programs, selling jams and other food products locally, and securing new direct sales to brewers (hops) or fermentation viticulture scientists (grapes). Two members had their pork production increase 300%. Another member described being involved in a local food movement event showcasing farm-to-table ideas hosted by local media.</li> <li>• <b>48% reported an increase in the amount of food produced</b> by the farm or growing operation, since the start of the New FARM program, which they believe was connected to their participation. Examples included noticeable improvements in soil fertility for improved crops (cherries), an expanded fruit stand for direct sales, and adding pork to the current operation. Two industries represented in the program are hops production for breweries and apple growing for cider production. These crops are grown and distributed for creation of a product. New FARM members representing this industry also reported improved production including better IPM (Integrated Pest Management), increase in acres planted, and a 40% increase in cider production.</li> <li>• <b>38% experienced an increase in farm revenue</b>, since the start of the New FARM program, which they believe was connected to their participation. Examples included increasing CSA (community supported agriculture)</li> </ul>	<p>positive effects is to follow in the future.</p>

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	<p>income, increasing pasture-based poultry, adding a hop processor facility, and selling merchandise. Three members (14%) started new agricultural enterprises or started farming altogether.</p> <p><b>Themes from the five open-ended questions were found.</b> Essay questions focused on; how exposure to New Zealand communities helped bring innovative ideas to Michigan, what new knowledge or practices will be tried or shared with others, reflections on how the international trip created a shared experience that tightened the group, and any other observations during the trip that could possibly impact local food movements, farmland preservation, environmental stewardship, or economics. Participants also reflected on how their participation in the New FARM program overall assisted in building the resiliency of agriculture in Northwest Michigan. Below is one member’s experience:</p> <p><i>“Knowing the next generation of farmers in NWMI is an asset to the viability and resiliency of our community. Having a bond with the people who will be shaping the landscape of NWMI Ag is essential for our economic growth if we are to compete in the global marketplace. Personally, knowing these individuals is a great comfort. The vast expertise contained within this group has pushed me to be a better farmer. Adding to this is the quality driven attitude displayed by the New Zealand farming community. Those invaluable skills and relationships built in this program will make it possible for me to assert leadership in arenas once thought to be inappropriate.”</i></p> <p>Additional narratives are enclosed for interest and to support the findings summarized here.</p>	



## New FARM Program Participant Direct Quotes

The New FARM Program is designed to assist in increasing economic viability, maintaining and enhancing environmental stewardship, and ensuring today's emerging farmers are prepared to lead into the future.

Below are quotes from individuals that traveled to New Zealand in February 2012 on the international capstone trip. **Each quote is from a different participant!**

*"I will share the knowledge with anyone willing to listen."*

*"One theme in New Zealand that I picked up was how the people in NZ felt about Agriculture and how they embraced it. The locals seem to think farming was cool or at least important, and they had an understanding where their food came from. In the states most people I feel don't know where their food comes from, and do not understand farming."*

*"I saw new ways to protect sweet cherries from cracking including rain covers, automatic calcium chloride sprinklers, and growing in bags. I also saw an increased awareness in being friendly to the environment. I saw farmers getting good prices for their produce and doing well in spite of high land prices and no government subsidies. I saw a family operation that grows, packs, and exports sweet cherries. This gave me the idea of going more vertical in my own strawberry/cherry/blackberry farm."*

*"Access to water seemed very crucial in virtually all types of agriculture in New Zealand. Stewardship of that resource and the soil is crucial to the farm's success... The fundamentals of reducing pesticide and fertilizer inputs to protect the soil, air, and water quality came through at most of the farms we visited."*

*"I intend to unite the small diversified farm industry I am in using the basic models in New Zealand to collaborate, share technology, equipment, and resources in new farmer education and recruitment. Combining the various approaches from the New Zealand dairy industry, wine industry, and fruit growers will provide a good model for me to start with. The value that I receive by getting outside of my regional box of thinking and observe other farmers' methods to solving the problems we all face is so immense it is incalculable."*

*"The exposure to New Zealand communities was a great experience. Most every kiwi we met seemed to be so helpful and willing to share ideas and methods. Here in the U.S. that doesn't always happen, sometimes it seems as though everyone is out for themselves. I feel if our communities worked together to achieve similar goals our industry could be much stronger, similar to the strength NZ has with their markets."*

*"One big thing I took away from the trip is how flexible the NZ farmers are to their lifestyles to accommodate farming. The willingness to completely change what they farm just to keep up with the demand. Also the innovative actions and farming practices to better value their crop for the end user."*

*"As a grape grower, being exposed to New Zealand's farming practices has further proved that environmentally friendly practices can and are economically viable. This has far reaching implications into my own operations."*

*"the fact that I'm in the group I want to see agriculture thrive and not disappear. No one says farming is easy, it's challenging...but to me it's worth it. If all the farming disappeared from the people in this group it would be terrible for everyone – we (the group) need to stick together, help each other and work together."*

*"I am much closer to people in the group now. I understand better what their operations are, what they do and who they are. It offered many casual moments to have real discussions and conversations. We could not have achieved this level of cohesiveness just by having meetings at home. We had been meeting for two years as a*

*group, but a two week trip overseas really brought us together. And I do think that is a togetherness that will have far reaching impacts on the NW Michigan Agricultural scene!"*

*"Going to New Zealand with our group of 39 new farmers was a once in a lifetime sort of opportunity. While painfully far away, New Zealand was a perfect country to visit, given the need for members of the trip to schedule time away from farms during their less busy seasons. Also, it was great to be able to visit someplace during its growing season. Farmers usually just don't have time to look at other farmer operations during their own busy seasons. We were able to visit a diverse number of agricultural operations in New Zealand--- ranging from cow and sheep dairies, hops, cherries, apples, wine grapes, to several sorts of processing facilities. The first day of the trip, visiting the dairy operation—I thought to myself, what does this have to do with growing cherries or vegetables? But what I discovered through conversation, and being able to visit these operations, in the company of a group of other diverse farmers, was really valuable in terms of being able to compare the overall business system of each type of farm. In reality, there are many similarities between even a cherry farm and a dairy operation. I found I learned a lot, not only from the place we were visiting, but also from the people I was with, making the entire experience even more worthwhile.... Overall, I think the experience of travelling to New Zealand, and comparing our agriculture to theirs, helped shed a more positive light on agriculture in general – for me at least. In New Zealand, agriculture seemed to be well regarded, well respected, profitable – and also more progressive in terms of employing practices that may be more environmentally and socially responsible. New Zealand produce gets paid a premium for its emphasis on quality, food safety, and environmental sustainability. I think that here in our region, there is an opportunity for farmers to differentiate themselves – by incorporating these kinds of ideas, and then, also being able to demand a more premium price for our products."*



*"While traveling to New Zealand we got to learn a lot about other forms of farming and other commodities. Since we are cherry farmers we have known a lot about the cherry industry, since this trip I got to know a lot more about the other industries in our own community such as crapes, wine, and hops as well as others. After being in this group, I have realized that there are things that can be done to help us make it in farming. I believe that we need more young people getting into farming for the love of it. I've seen this love in our group as well as our family and business. We are involved in things like farmland preservation act on our farm, and I plan on continuing to add to that as the years go on. Maybe now that the housing market has settled, more and more land will get back to farming or at least not losing much more."*



*"On the New Zealand trip, I especially enjoyed seeing the variety of flat peaches. I have spoken with another new farm member who supplies fruit trees for the area to try to obtain them for next year and begin to incorporate them into our market/CSA offering. Additionally I was very intrigued by the use of sheep in the hops yard as weed control and low level leave pruners. We will look into starting a flock of sheep that can be rented*

*to hops farmers in the group and/or area. One idea of particular intrigue to me was the almost exclusive use of pasture to raise dairy cattle. While today our farm raises goats, turkeys and pigs on rotating pastures, I feel my knowledge of the practice was strengthened through the tours of the dairy farms we visited.”*

*“New Zealand communities seem to me to have a much more laid back attitude, yet have a stronger focus on priorities of community and health than the US communities. Every NZ farmer I spoke with said “you have to start with your soil health.” It didn’t matter what type of farmer. The culture is much more ecologically based than the “you gotta know what chemicals to pour into your land” focus of the US. There seems to be reluctance in conventional farming of the US to use ecological methods. More chemicals is the solution to every problem. Not so in NZ. The conventional as well as the organic hop farmers use sheep as weed control in their fields. “It works so well, why not use it.” A conventional winery we visited said, “we don’t buy grapes if the farmer has used any herbicide sprays.” I’m excited to use the NZ examples to show other Michigan hop farmers that ecological methods are not only better practices due to their environmental ramifications, but also they can be more economical as well. Also viewing NZ Hops as a co-op organization really helps in the current evolution of the equivalent organization that I am a part of here.”*



*“We were both happy to find that, even though our New Farm learning sessions haven’t always been very interactive (or if they were, not in a terribly positive way), the group really clicked on the study abroad trip. We found many things in common, primarily a love for the land and the possibilities it holds; and beer. Differences in politics, religion and financial background fell away as we got to know each other better. NZ showed us several examples of cooperative business models that could work here. The dairy farmers, breweries and hop processing plant that we toured each found it worthwhile to team up with their counterparts, rather than compete. The new world economy will demand these types of alliances.... It was gratifying to see that being environmentally responsible was not a passing fad for NZ, but a way of life.... The opportunity to look at the different farming practices, many that aren’t practiced heavily here (e.g. rotational grazing), allowed us to compare/contrast. It almost seemed as though NZ is frozen in time in some ways, yet they have adapted eloquently to changing economics, politics and the environment. Where US farmers have taken shortcuts to maximize yield (e.g. Round-Up, GMOs), NZ farmers take a longer view and do little to poison their soil or disrupt the permaculture. They respect the land and the need to let it dictate what it needs. It is almost as if they are more respectful of limited or finite resources, or have a crystal ball that predicts certain failure if this respect isn’t shown.”*