



Emerging Markets Team

Agriculture Innovation Center

From the individual farmer making goat milk soap for a premium price, to a 500-member ethanol co-op, many Wisconsin producers have been venturing into “value-added agriculture” to increase farm income and diversify their risk. What has been missing is a coordinated statewide effort to support these entrepreneurs.

Response: In 2005, UW-Extension’s Emerging Agricultural Markets (EAM) Team partnered with the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) to form the Agriculture Innovation Center (AIC). This center provides counseling, training and referral services for agricultural entrepreneurs; supports state efforts to achieve a bio-based economy in the 21st century; and promotes sound, strategic investment in Wisconsin agriculture.

Results:

- Extension has trained 26 Agriculture Innovation Counselors* who provide services to agriculture entrepreneurs in eight regions throughout Wisconsin.
- 19 people have completed a ten-week course in business planning, with a focus on agricultural businesses. As part of the course, they complete business plans for their farm enterprises.
- AIC staff members are developing two new course modules. These modules will cover topics such as marketing and market research, insurance, legal structures, regulations, budgets and financing.
- Two counselors and a county-based faculty member helped a group of dairy farmers do a feasibility study for a dairy processing facility.
- Another counselor serves on the technical advisory team of a half million-dollar study commissioned by DATCP to identify Wisconsin's competitive advantage in bio-based manufacturing.
- AIC staff members work with Badger AgVest to provide education about agricultural investments.

Contact: Greg Lawless, Agriculture Innovation Center, 608-265-2903,

glawless@wisc.edu

April 2006+

*Current Ag Innovations counselors are Greg Lawless, Aliesha Crowe, Jane Silberstein, Andrew Dane, Bob Denman, Jim Faust, Tim Rehbein, Rose Skora, Alan Linnebur, Greg Wise, Keith Vandervelde, Don Schuster, Carl Rainey, Steve Bertjens, Bill Rizzo, Paul Dietmann, Mike Bandli, Carol Roth, Jim Cisler, Perry Brown, Kevin Bernhardt, Dave Williams, Jon Zander, Dave Wachter.