

Meeting Summary

Agribusiness Incubator Project

December 22, 2004

Attendance: Dale Heise, Tom Cadwallader, Mike Braunel, Ron Riehle, Paul Daigle, Paul Nehring, Tom Kriegl, Jackie Gliniecki, Ed Hammer, Alex Crockford, Lyle Guralski, Denise Severt

1. Progress on the Application and Screening Process
 - a. Physical Assessment Tools: Based on initial work by the committee in identifying some things that should be evaluated in selecting farms to be involved in the incubator project, Paul Daigle had pulled together a variety of resource materials. From those resources he was able to put together a draft Ag Producer – Environmental Assessment checklist. There are many questions that still remain as to who should be involved in addressing some of the environmental issues on the checklist. Standard farmstead and field assessments aren't the concern. It is the things that are tougher to assess and may have some things that are more difficult to address, such as wastewater disposal and stray voltage.
 - b. Financial Assessment Tools: Tom Cadwallader reported that there are two farms that have expressed an interest in taking part in the project. After January the farms will have their annual financial information updated and taxes done and Tom will meet with them to do a financial analysis using FINPACK.
2. Financial and Business Planning
 - a. Past and future educational programs: The November 2, 2004 Roundtable Discussion on Tools for Dairy Reinvestment where representatives from Farm Service Agency (FSA), Wisconsin Department of Commerce, Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Agency (WHEDA) and Wisconsin Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection (WDATCP) covered the various programs that are currently available through their agencies, went very well. There were over 50 farmers and agribusiness professionals in attendance. Of the 36 evaluations completed, 36% rated the program as excellent and 64% as good. None rated it as Fair or Poor. There were also some excellent suggestions on future programs to help farmers and those who serve them better understand the resources that are available for reinvesting in dairy farms.
 - b. Development of financial benchmarks: Tom Kriegl, Farm Management Specialist with the University of Wisconsin Center for Dairy Profitability, was in attendance. Tom had met with Tom Cadwallader prior to the meeting to review the data that is available to establish some financial benchmarks that could possibly be used in developing business plans for new grazing farm start-ups. Cadwallader will be using local grazing farm financial information as a base and then adjusting them based on some of the information from other grazing farms around the state. Several grazing based dairy farmers from the area and other parts of the state have expressed an interest in helping develop those financial benchmarks.

3. Mentoring
 - a. Status of mentoring network development grants: Tom Cadwallader reported that he had gotten confirmation that the \$14,000 grant to support the development of a mentoring network had been approved but he had not yet heard about when they would be receiving it. As soon as the money is safely in a segregated account then he will convene a meeting of steering committee to help guide the mentoring network development.
 - b. Report on field trip to Crawford County incubator project: Mike Braunel and Lyle Guralski reported on the field trip that they took with Tom Cadwallader to visit the Crawford County Incubator Farm project. The Crawford County group has tried to get a young farmer established but they admitted that had been a challenge. Finding a good match is not too easy to do.
4. One-Stop-Shopping
 - a. Website development: Jackie Gliniecki reported that the UCANFARM.COM website has been listed and they have begun working on a draft of the site with Digital Dialogue. Paul Nehring has gotten a report of a young grazer put together and dropped it off at web developers. Alex Crockford has begun putting together the sections on getting started. Jackie, Alex and Cadwallader have met and reviewed the draft of a list of categories for developing a directory.
5. Report on Growing Wisconsin Farmers workshop: Cadwallader reported on the Growing Wisconsin Farmers Workshop that the WDATCP and the Wisconsin Beginning Farmer Work Group put on in Thorp on December 11. The workshop was one of five regional workshops being held around the state. Attendance at the one in Thorp was very good with over 100 people attending. Cadwallader handled one of the breakout sessions on "Evaluating Potential Farms". Mike Braunel attended the workshop and Marathon County dairy grazer, Joe Tomandl, was also on the program sharing his experiences in getting started.
6. Wausau Business Incubator Development plans: Cadwallader reported that he had been contacted by the Harry Bourquin, Director of the Wausau Business Incubator (WBI), to write a letter of support for a development project the WBI is exploring. Cadwallader said that partnering with the WBI would be good for both the Agribusiness Incubator and the WBI because it more fully utilizes the resources of the WBI and expands those resources further into the community.
7. Potential incubator farms: Cadwallader reported that there are two farms who have expressed an interest in being involved at some degree with the incubator project.
8. Update Plan of Work for 2005: Not much change in the plan of work from what was set in motion in 2004. The projects and priorities are the same it's just a matter of getting keeping them moving along. The first grant that helped initiate the project was delayed in arriving so the deadline has been moved to later in 2005 and the mentoring network development grant will likely arrive in early 2005. The only part of the project that the group would like to get out in the public is the one-stop-shop for resources through the website.