

Meeting Summary

Agribusiness Incubator Project Mentoring System Work Group

11:00 AM – 1:00 PM
January 3, 2006

1. The group decided that the best dates to travel to Massachusetts to visit the New England Small Farm Institute would be February 14-18, 2006. Cadwallader said he would begin making travel arrangements immediately after the meeting. The farmers who said they would be interested and willing to attend would be Dave and Pam Wilson, Joe and Joe Tomandl, Peter and Suzie Arnold, and Lyle Guralski. Cadwallader and Steve Stevenson, UW-Madison Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, will also be traveling with the group to record the things the group learns on the trip.
2. In preparing for the trip, Cadwallader asked the Working Group; What are some of the things you hope would be learned during the trip to visit the New England Small Farm Institute in regards to mentoring aspiring farmers, new farmers or farmers learning a new way of farming? The responses were organized into three different areas:

The Mentors:

- Are there any husband and wife mentor teams?
- What kind of mentor training has been developed and offered?
- What kind of mentor training have mentors found to be the most useful?
- Who are the mentors? Are they the upper tier of farmers?
- What do mentors see their responsibility as?
- How are mentors screened?
- What has motivated mentors to be involved?

The Mentees:

- What happens with people who have been mentees?
- Housing/accommodations for mentees.
- What are the typical profiles of the mentees?

The Mentor/Mentee Process and Support System:

- How have they developed a commitment for people to be involved?
- How do they match up mentors and mentees?
- What teaching tools have they developed?
- Farms that have been transferred from mentors to mentees.
- Documentation and tracking of results.
- Is monitoring being done by an individual or a committee?
- Some examples of formal arrangements that are set up.
- Where does the leadership and funding come from?
- Is there a mechanism to mediate between mentors and mentees?

- How are people with different interests sorted out? Those who just want some experience versus those who are more serious about starting a farm business.
 - Background checks for liability issues.
 - Relationships between mentors and mentees who have their own farms but are in a transition to a different type of production system.
 - How is a relationship terminated?
 - How do they teach management skills?
 - The Top Ten List of mistakes when you started.
 - The Top Ten List of tips for success.
3. As the mentoring program develops, it is important to create educational tools that are the most appropriate for the group you are working with. Since you, as dairy farmers are also the audience, how do you learn best?
- Visual tools – Such as tapes on how-to or how-not-to do something.
 - Experience – Trial and error.
 - Teach to learn.
 - Meaningful experience.
 - There is a commitment of time and energy.
 - In looking at the educational hierarchy, ranging from reading to hearing, etc, up to the actual doing, the higher up the hierarchy the better.