

AG IN UNCERTAIN TIMES EN ESPAÑOL

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The number of Spanish speaking farm operators in the Western USA is on the rise. Extension economists of the Western Extension Committee identified a need to target education programs towards this segment of their clientele. *Ag in Uncertain Times in Español*[®], an interactive Spanish language educational webinar series, was developed by a subset of members of the Committee to assist agricultural producers and professionals to better understand the important and changing conditions in today's economy. The series was targeted towards providing farm and risk management information that would help producers and managers, especially those of small operations, make informed business decisions, and improve agricultural professionals' ability to work with their farm and ranch customers and clients.

This educational program was modelled on a similar English language webinar series, using the web conferencing software Adobe[®] Connect[™]. Themes for each of three webinars (March 10, 17, 24, 2010) were selected based on identified needs at the farm level and included: 1. Financial Management and Access to Credit, 2. Business Planning and Market Strategies, and 3. Strategies, Tools, and Resources for Crop or Enterprise Selection and Diversification. For each theme, several speakers presented information on relevant subject matter topics. Speakers were selected based on their academic expertise, professional experience, and work with the Hispanic farming community, as well as their fluency in the Spanish language. The programs were promoted using various media outlets, direct mailings, and personal contacts. Each session was scheduled for 60 to 90 minutes and had opportunities for the participants to interact with the presenters. Polling questions were also used during the programs to determine application and value of the information presented, as well as to identify future webinar topics. All presentations were recorded and made available 'on demand' at <http://www.farmmanagement.org/aginuncertaintimesespanol/>.

Attendance for this first-ever Spanish language Extension webinar series was 31, 40, 29, for each of the three webinars, respectively. All participants reported that the webinars were valuable for their operations, and indicated that they would integrate the information gained in a variety of ways. This includes planting and marketing a greater diversity of crops than in the past, and using 'social media' to promote their products and communicate with customers.

Since offering the webinars and posting recordings online in March of 2010 over 3,000 visitors have accessed the web site (average is 525 per month since March). In addition, nearly 5,000 page visits have been recorded (average is 519 per month since March). This demonstrates that the live webinars, and in particular the recorded materials posted to the web site, offer a unique, and much needed educational resource to Spanish speakers across the U.S.

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