USDA-CSREES 2006 National Water Quality Conference

The Role of Master Farmer in Arkansas

The Arkansas Master Farmer program is being developed to assist the agriculture producers in the state address the key environmental concerns. The curriculum is being developed using a modular approach focusing on five commodity areas. These are poultry, dairy, swine, beef and agronomic crops. The program will be a collaborative effort that will include many agricultural and environmental agencies in Arkansas. The Master Farmer program will make our water quality education more effective in two major ways. First it will provide us a name recognition program that allows us to market our skills and knowledge on a largely untraditional subject to a largely traditional clientele. While we are not the end all agency on water quality issues, we can provide a producer with a "road map" as to what agency does what. We have made tremendous efforts in water quality education, but we need to be more focused. The Master Farmer program would provide the framework for this focus.

Secondly, it will allow us opportunities to provide producers with a foundation to build experience and skills in addressing water quality issues through comprehensive training. Not only would this assist producers in addressing water quality, it would make future water quality efforts more effective as the producer's knowledge would serve as a foundation and future updates could build on this foundation.

Goals: 1) To develop more effective implement a Master Farmer program in Arkansas that will effectively assist agriculture in addressing water quality concerns and comply with new local, state, and federal legislation while becoming a highly recognized water quality training program. 2) To assess the impact of Extension water quality programs on agricultural producers as a means of developing more effective programming efforts and to aid in the development of the Master Farmer program.

Author: Tom Harrington
Coauthor(s): Mike Dainels