

News Column

Stacy Campbell

K-State Research & Extension

January 26, 2017

Program designed to help producers deal with historic agricultural downturn

Average net farm income down more than 95 percent on some Kansas farms.

Folks that aren't involved in agriculture may or may not be aware that agriculture commodity prices are low and have been for a while now. Farmers are thankful for the abundance of precipitation this summer that helped them to grow in most cases good to even excellent crops. The pastures grew plentiful grass that the cattle could hardly keep up with, and plenty of hay for winter feeding was swathed and baled as well.

However from grain growers to cattlemen, plummeting farm income across the country has agricultural producers searching for ways to survive the current, historic farm-economy downturn.

Farmers and ranchers are currently experiencing one of the biggest downturns in history with many parallels to the 1980's. Commodity outlooks remain pessimistic, indicating tight financial conditions for farmers into the future.

A new, one-day Kansas State University program, Top 10 Considerations to Navigate a Struggling Farm Economy, is planned in eight communities across Kansas. The program was developed by K-State Research and Extension Agricultural Economists to help producers think critically about how their farms might withstand the tough times.

Four of the programs have already been held in the Eastern half of the state. Beginning on Monday, February 6th in Hays, the Western Kansas string of programs will kick-off.

The program will address some of the most critical aspects of farming operations – especially important in this time of low commodity and livestock prices. Kansas Farm Management Association data showed average net farm income, on an accrual basis in 2015, at \$4,568 – down more than 95 percent from \$128,731 in 2014.

Each presentation topic will provide a framework to evaluate options and opportunities. They include: overview of the farm financial situation; maintaining working capital; restructuring debt; managing machinery expenses; family living expenses; safety nets; income tax management and more.

Presenters include nationally renowned K-State agricultural economists including Allen Featherstone, professor and agricultural economics department head, and Art Barnaby, professor and extension agricultural economics state leader. Also featured are Mykel Taylor, assistant

professor and extension farm management specialist, and Gregg Hadley, assistant director of K-State Research and Extension.

Other K-State faculty members and KFMA economists will discuss key topics important to today's producers.

The program in each location starts with sign-in at 8:30 a.m. followed by the program beginning at 9 a.m. Lunch is included. For the Hays program on Monday, February 6th registration and \$15 is requested by Monday, January 30th mail it to Ellis County Extension Office, 601 Main Street, Hays, KS. 67601.

Program dates, locations and telephone numbers to call for registration:

- Feb. 6 – Hays – K-State Agricultural Research Center, 1232 240th Ave. – 785-628-9430
- Feb. 7 – Dodge City – Knights of Columbus Hall, 800 Frontview – 620-227-4542
- Feb. 8 – Colby – City Limits Convention Center, 2227 S. Range – 785-460-4582
- Feb. 15 – El Dorado – Butler County Community (4-H) Building – 316-321-9660

Details about the program are available online at www.agmanager.info/events/top-10-considerations-navigate-struggling-farm-economy