

Small Farm Challenges

- Small-scale producers are often socially disadvantaged and may have limited resources and access to technical expertise.
- Socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers are less likely to succeed in a competitive market, compared to their counterparts who have larger farming operations.

AgriLife Extension's Response

Created in 2016, the Rio Grande Valley Small Acreage Program is an educational project that benefits underserved populations in the Rio Grande Valley. The program trains socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, young farmers and military veterans through workshops and field days, using face-to-face and online demonstrations. The program also includes internships and mentoring opportunities.

- Training and outreach activities focus on crop production, irrigation and water management, livestock production, marketing and business planning, value-added creation, and methods for successfully participating in public assistance programs.



- Programs are typically one-day events that combine classroom and hands-on activities. Some of the workshops are available via livestreaming.
- While not a specific outcome of the course, AgriLife Extension specialists have guided some participants in completing a business plan to help plan their farm's success.
- Since 2016, 33 workshops have been conducted with more than 1,200 small farms; 75% of the participants were beginning farmers (farming less than 10 years). Participating farms range in size from 1 acre to 209 acres, with an average farm size of 46.7 acres.
- The project website and social media pages disseminate educational materials relevant to small-scale farmers and ranchers. Through these outlets, the program has reached over 25,000 individuals. Educational videos and other content posted online have been viewed more than 5,700 times.
- Eight professional internships have been created for local young farmers and beginning farmers.

Economic Impacts

- The program's economic benefits were measured in terms of the potential increase in net income resulting from taking part in the program. Based on program evaluation results, 87% of the participants plan to adopt what they learned in the training sessions.
- For all programs delivered since 2016, participants estimated an economic benefit of \$1,270 per farm, or a total of \$1.55 million.