

Resilient Farms Conference Will Help Farmers Explore Ideas for Creating New Revenue

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Faced with lower milk and commodity prices, many Wisconsin farmers are looking to diversify and add new revenue streams. Towards that end, Compeer Financial and University of Wisconsin-Extension have planned to host the Resilient Farms Conference, a one-day conference for farmers interested in exploring new business ideas for their farms.

At the conference, scheduled Tuesday, Dec. 11 at the Wilderness Resort in Wisconsin Dells, farmers will have an opportunity to attend two dozen sessions to gather information, resources and tools that can help them explore potential new revenue streams. About 20 industry experts, including many farmers who have successfully implemented alternative enterprises, also will be available for one-on-one consultations.

The Conference will kick off with a keynote address from Tera Johnson, founder of Tera's Whey, and director of the Food Finance Institute. Tera will describe how she started Tera's Whey, and the importance of connecting the farm to the consumer via the business' brand. Among the number of guest presenters will be, Farm Commons, providing presentations on the legal considerations for business structures, agri-tourism and value-added, insurance and liability, sales and processing contracts, food safety, and farm employment law. "Farms get into farming because they want to do things their own way, and that's great, Farm Commons is here to help farmers understand how the law affects their operation, while providing the legal resources needed to build a stable foundation for their business," says Rachel Armstrong, Founder and Executive Director of Farm Commons.

Rebecca Binsfeld, client education consultant with Compeer Financial, said in addition to helping with "idea generation," attendees will be able to connect with resources and tools to help evaluate shifts in business models and revenue streams. "A wide range of experts will be available for consultations during the day and for post-event follow up," said Binsfeld. "Creating alternate farm revenue streams isn't a one-day process and analyzing the business, financial and market components are a key next step. Creating relationships with these resources and team members will ease the uncertainty that can revolve around business change."

The goal of the conference is to provide ideas and resources to farmers and producers interested in starting something new and diversifying their revenue stream. Session topics will include value-added production ideas, marketing and business strategies, business planning and analysis, and guides to regulatory and licensing processes.

Conference attendees will have a variety of sessions to attend at which various ideas will be discussed.

Possible options include:

- Value-added processing for dairy;

- Adding a Community Supported Agriculture component;
- Raising and direct-marketing beef or chickens, ducks, guinea fowl, etc.;
- Earning income from woodlands (i.e. mushrooms, hazelnuts, maple syrup, etc.);
- Adding a Farm to Institution component;
- Adding specialty crops (Christmas trees, grapes, hops, cut flowers for market or retail)
- Hemp production;
- Exploring energy-production options for the farm;
- Adding an agri-tourism component: (i.e. Air BnB farm stays, barn or farm weddings, U-Pick, family events, petting zoos, pumpkin patches, fall harvest tours), etc.

“These are challenging times for agriculture, and farmers realize that amongst the challenges, there is often opportunity,” said Trisha Wagner, “Farmers are trying new ideas for their business, utilizing resources in a different way, employing the skills of family members that haven’t been realized in the past. The Resilient Farms Conference is an opportunity to hear from farmers from around the state who have learned how to navigate the times, and have created success.”

The December 11 conference is scheduled from 8:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. at the Wilderness Resort. The registration fee is \$20, which includes lunch. To register or for more information, go to: [Resilient Farms Conference](#) or find Resilient Farms Conference on the www.eventbrite.com registration site.

The Green County Extension Office will be livestreaming this conference for those interested in attending but don’t want to drive to Wisconsin Dells. Livestreaming will include the keynote speaker, value-added processing for dairy along with Farm Commons. This will be held at the Green County Justice Building in Monroe. Lunch will be provided courtesy of Compeer Financial. Please RSVP to the Green County Extension Office by December 4th at 328-9440.