

# Nat'l Assn of County Agricultural Agents Learn about Perennial Grasses for Biomass (2015)

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CenUSA Bioenergy Outreach and Extension educators presented a program on the potential for growing perennial grasses for biomass at the 2015 National Association of County Agricultural Agents annual meeting in Sioux Falls, SD. More than 200 Extension professionals attended the breakout sessions, representing Extension agents from all over the country who are responsible for educational programs in their state. Participants at the CenUSA session ( $n=46$ ) were surveyed using a paired sample post-test to determine their increase in knowledge regarding the topics after the presentations.

Topics included:

- The potential for growing perennial grasses as bioenergy feedstocks
- Where to find resources on perennial grasses for bioenergy from the CenUSA
- Participants' intentions to use CenUSA resources in bioenergy programs
- Participants' intentions to plan new bioenergy programs using resources available from CenUSA

## Results

By comparing knowledge levels 'Before' and 'After' the presentation, results show that after attending the program:

- Participants' knowledge significantly increased from low-to-moderate to moderate-to-high regarding the potential for growing perennial grasses as bioenergy feedstocks.
- Participants' knowledge significantly increased on where to find resources on perennial grasses for bioenergy from none-to-low to moderate-to-high.
- Participants' intentions to both use CenUSA resources and plan new bioenergy programs significantly increased from none-to-low to moderate.

Participants were also asked the extent to which the information in the CenUSA presentation would encourage them to provide renewable energy content in educational programs for their clientele.

- 8.9% responded the program offered much encouragement.
- 42.2% responded the program offered moderate encouragement.
- 35.6% responded the program offered slight encouragement.
- 13.3% responded they did not think the program offered encouragement.

Comments provided by participants show the reasoning as to why some did not think the information would be useful for their educational programs:

"I don't have lots of time to spend on things that 'might' happen in 10-15 years from now. Land management, grazing, environ control will drive more of my work with grasses & what we learn may have energy uses someplace."

"Will be based on the location of mill, within 30 miles"

"In our region, we do not grow the CenUSA's crops because we do not have a ready market for the feedstuffs. We learned more about seed, no till and cover crops."

In summary, CenUSA provided an effective educational program on biorenewable energy, energy crops and available resources from CenUSA for producers. Participants' knowledge, perceptions and awareness of the potential for growing perennial grasses for biomass had been notably enhanced.

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