

The Pennsylvania Women's Agricultural Network

2010 Annual Report



Empowering Women in Agriculture

Our Mission:

The Pennsylvania Women's Agricultural Network (PA-WAgN) supports women in agriculture by providing a positive learning environment, networking, and empowerment.

Our Purpose:

The primary purposes of The Pennsylvania Women's Agricultural Network are:

- Encourage and support women in agriculture.
- Provide and strengthen networks for women in agriculture.
- Provide educational and mentoring opportunities for women in agriculture.
- Raise community awareness of agriculture-related issues and concerns.
- Sustain farming livelihoods.

This has been an excellent year for the Pennsylvania Women's Agricultural Network. We continue to work on our major mission of providing educational programming and network connections for women farmers to improve the success of their farm operation and agricultural businesses. Many women and men attended the 18 events we held throughout the state that brought together farmers, agricultural professionals, students, and others to learn and share information about their farm enterprises. Our events covered a range of topics including direct marketing, urban farming, business planning, and many others. We are constantly working hard to improve the quality of our educational events and are proud that about 85% of attendees at our field days reported that they have improved their knowledge of topics covered at our field days. In 2010, we worked closely with our farmer regional representatives and steering committee to hold both formal and informal educational opportunities. The Southwest regional representatives organized a wonderful day-long conference on Harmonious Farming: Balancing Plants, People and Animals. Other regional representations organized informal potlucks and get-togethers that provided wonderful networking contacts for many PA-WAgN members. As part of our effort, we have conducted research on women farmers and provided this information to national and international audiences on the benefits of women's agricultural networks. We received a grant from USDA New and Beginning Farmer Program which has supported many of our activities. With this new grant, we have held a variety of field days specifically geared to new and beginning farmers. Our network model offers enormous opportunities for mentoring and sharing information between "old" and "new" farmers. We are also developing on-line curriculum and resources. If you have not had a chance to attend certain field days, please go to our website and you can vicariously experience the field day and pick up on the important information from each field day. Also, we now stay in touch with our network through social networking avenues including facebook and twitter. Please join us on facebook and twitter to find up-to-the-minute information about our latest and upcoming educational programming. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to everyone who has helped to make PA-WAgN strong with a special thanks to all of the work of our steering committee and regional representatives and Ann Stone and Linda Moist, who keep everything moving forward every day.

Carolyn Sachs
PA-WAgN/Penn State University

PA-WAgN Improves Farm Profitability and Environmental Sustainability

USDA's National Institute of Food & Agriculture Provides Funding

PA-WAgN was awarded a three-year New & Beginning Farmer Grant from the United States Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food & Agriculture. This new effort involves developing new educational efforts to link new & beginning women farmers with experienced women farmers.

The goals are to develop on-farm, hands-on, & participatory educational events for new & beginning farmers; develop interactive on-line curriculum; build the mentoring capacity of regional leaders to strengthen networks between experienced and new and beginning farmers; facilitate the development of local mentoring relationships; and enhance partnerships with non-governmental and governmental organizations to deliver educational programs and provide information access for new and beginning farmers into the future.

PA-WAgN field days grow participants' skills related to the profitability and sustainability of their farm businesses. Events were organized in response to members' requests, and emphasized hands-on, farm-based, interactive learning opportunities, with time set aside for networking and mentoring.

Annual Women in Agriculture Day at the PA Farm Show January 12, 2010, PA Farm Show Complex

Partner: Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture

Participants (80) gathered to discuss the value of networking, mentoring, and collaborating.

The Benefits of Collaborative Marketing & Social Networking: PASA Farming for the Future Conference

February 6, 2010, Penn Stater Conference Center

Partner: Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture

Participants (45) learned about the value of social marketing tools in promoting their farm businesses.

Harmonious Farming: The Balancing Act of Plant, Animal, and People April 10, Mercer County Extension Office

Organized by PA-WAgN Regional Representatives, this symposium offered participants (40) insight into ways to create harmony on the farm and connect with their communities.

Bugs, Wind, and Solar: IPM High Tunnels & Hybrid Renewable Energy System

May 13, Quiet Creek Herb Farm & School of Country Living

Partner: Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture

Participants (39) learned about Integrated Pest Management and incorporating solar and wind energy into their sustainable farm operations.

Transition to Organic Production

June 4, Rodale Institute

Participants (42) were given a wagon tour of Rodale's no-till research fields and composting project to see the organic practices described in Rodale's online course. Farmers who have made the transition to organic and experts in the field shared their experiences and knowledge.

Dog Days of Summer: Incorporating Working Dogs on Your Farm

July 13, Steam Valley Fiber Farm

Partner: Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture

Participants (25) learned about the types of working dogs - herding dogs and guardian dogs – each of whom have very different jobs. Various breeds and combinations of breeds were explored for their specific characteristics and suitability for the job at hand.

Bug Walk: The Good, The Bad, The Innocuous

July 20, Suyandalla Farm

Entomologists led participants (20) on a garden walk to identify beneficial insects, harmful insects, and those that can just be ignored. Participants shared their experiences and pest management methods. Peer-to-peer information sharing was a vital component of this event.

Abundant Benefits from Small Plots: Urban Farm Tour

September 7, Greensgrow Farms, Henry Got Crops!, Urban Girls Produce

Participants (38) learned how Greensgrow farmers juggle community growth, profitability, and sustainability through successful business and non-profit ventures. We learned how an inner-city CSA offers nutritionally dense foods to an urban community while maintaining the integrity of the soil through sustainable farming practices.

Sugar & 'Sang: Maple & Ginseng Husbandry on Your Forestlands

September 11, St. Rose Academy School

Partner: Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture

In a combination of indoor presentations and afternoon wood walks, participants (31) learned about forest stewardship around maple syrup and American ginseng.

Grow Your Business: Business Planning & Marketing Workshop

September 15, Spring Hills Farm

Participants (10) toured Spring Hills Farm and learned how they successfully applied business and marketing strategies to improve the farm's business ventures. Educational and planning sessions aimed at individual farm businesses were offered.

Enhance Direct Marketing with Infrastructure

October 18, Piney Creek Greenhouse & Friends Farm

Participants (10) learned the importance of creating welcoming garden-scapes to attract customers to their farm business. A hands-on construction workshop was offered in the afternoon. A simple pergola structure was constructed with minimal effort but potentially large impact.

Community Supported Agriculture for New & Beginning Farmers

October 27, Plowshare Produce

Farmers Micah and Bethany Spicher-Schonberg explained their successes and challenges in establishing a CSA program. They guided participants (16) through a seeding schedule, establishing a successful work share program, and marketing their CSA.



PA-WAgN Offers Informal Mentoring and Networking Opportunities

Southeast Region Networking Potluck

February 24, Home of Katie College

Participants (40) attended this informal gathering at the home of Katie College. They shared their farming experiences and forged friendships as they made homemade pizza using PA-grown and freshly ground wheat and toppings contributed by attendees.

Central Region Dessert Potluck

March 20, Over The Moon Farm

Participants (12) enjoyed an afternoon of networking and sharing goals and ideas for the upcoming growing season at an informal potluck gathering at Over the Moon Farm.

Southeast Region Networking Dinner:

April 17, Home of Tianna Dupont

Participants (12) gathered at the home of Tianna Dupont, PA-WAgN Steering Committee member & Sustainable Agriculture Extension Educator, for an evening of inspiration as they shared stories of their successes, challenges, and ideas to kick-off Spring!

Central Region Book Club Gathering

November 10, Home of Audrey Gay Rodgers

A small group gathered to discuss challenges women in agriculture face as they reviewed *"The Widow Clicquot: The Story of a Champaign Empire and the Woman Who Ruled It,"* by Tilar J. Mazze.

Southeast Region Fruit Tree Pruning & Networking Lunch

November 15, Home of Ann Stone

Participants gathered at the home of Ann Stone for a hands-on fruit-tree pruning workshop by landscape architect Petra Garcia-Chubb and a potluck networking lunch.

Intern/Farmer Mixer

December 1, Penn Stater Hotel & Conference Center

Farmers were provided an opportunity to discuss job requirements with potential student interns at an informal gathering. Approximately 15 farms were represented at this year's mixer, offering students insight into a variety of available opportunities.

PA-WAgN research has found that women farmers desire opportunities for locally-based, informal interaction and learning. Potlucks have become a main form of these opportunities, and allow participants to form mentoring and support networks that can lead to enhanced sustainability and viability of their farms.



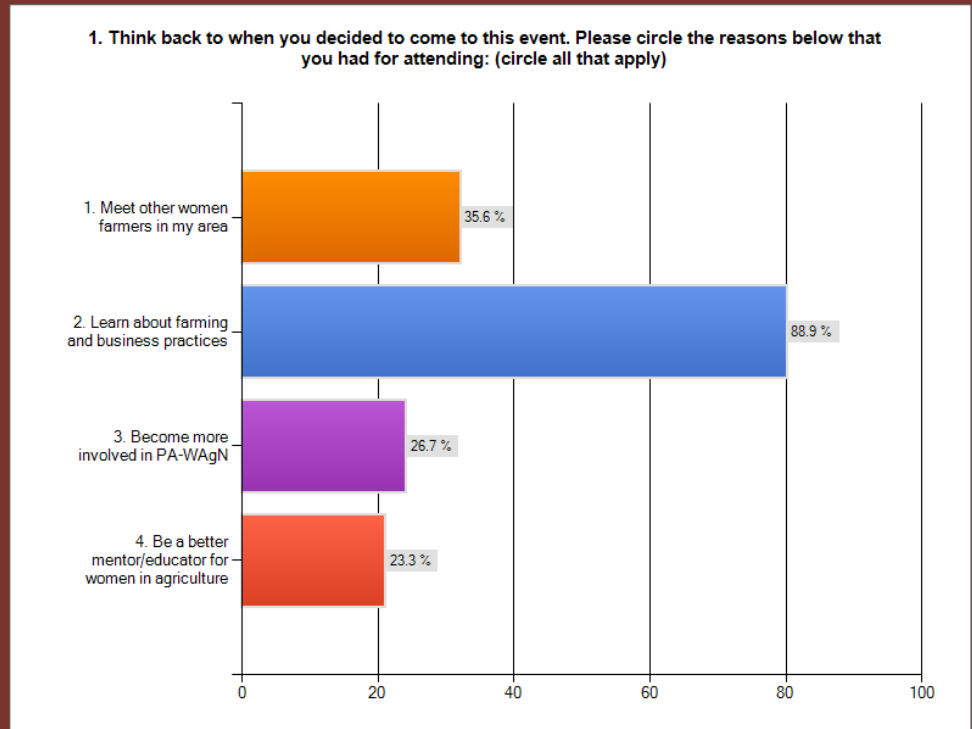
Impact on Women Farmers

PA-WAgN evaluates nearly all of the events we offer and uses the information for future program planning. Here we report evaluation results for 2010.

Why did participants come to PA-WAgN events in 2010?

Attendees came to WAgN events for multiple reasons; the most prominent was to learn about farming and business practices (89%), followed by meeting other women farmers in their area (36%), become more involved in PA-WAgN (27%), and be a better mentor/educator for women in agriculture (23%).

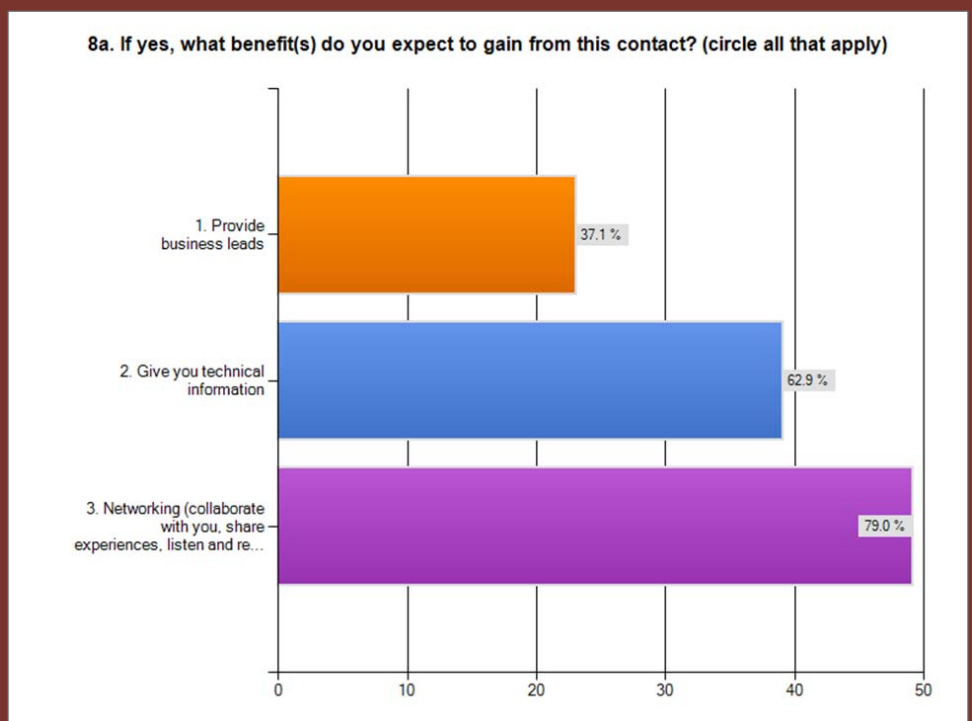
(N=90)



What did participants take from these events?

Network development: About three-quarters of the participants (73%) reported that they met someone at the event with whom they will stay in contact over the next year. These contacts provide multiple benefits, most prominently networking (collaboration, sharing experiences, listening and reacting to ideas), technical information, and business leads.

(N=62)



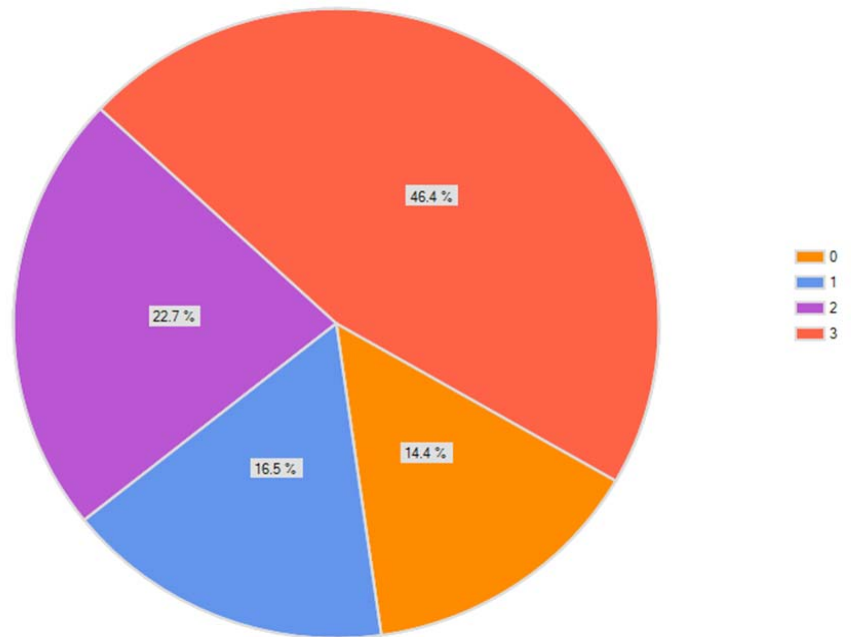
What did participants take from these events?

New knowledge: The vast majority of participants (84%) reported that their knowledge of topics covered increased by attending the field day. Each field day covers 3-4 topics. More than half (52%) report increasing their knowledge of three topics covered, 21% increased knowledge of two topics, and 10% increased knowledge of one topic.

Participants were asked how important certain topics were before and after the event. Over half (53%) reported that they thought at least one of the topics covered was more important than they originally thought before they attended the event.

(N=97)

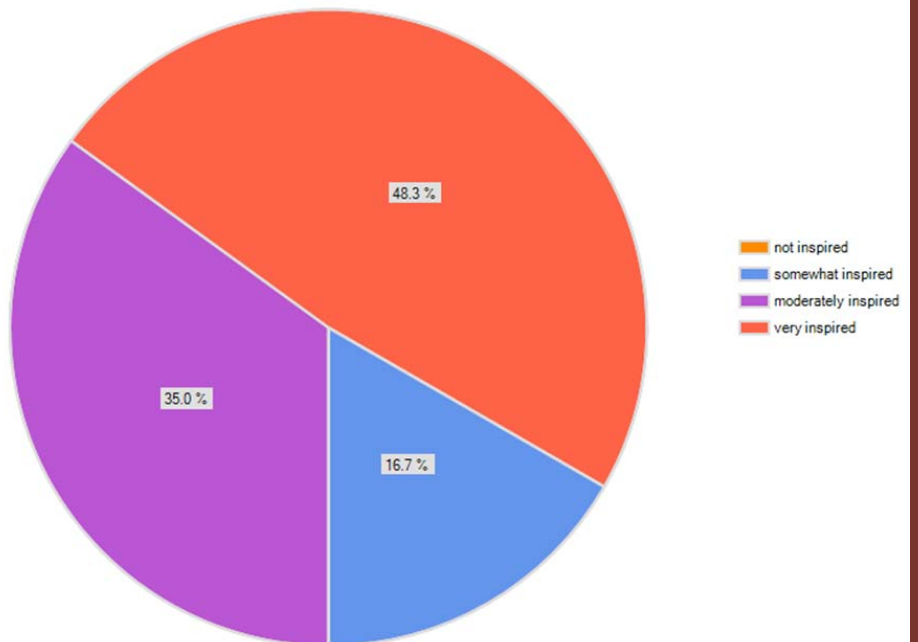
3A. How many knowledge topics were improved upon after the event?



Farm Change Intentions: Participants were also asked how likely they were to implement changes to their farming operation after attending the field day. 71% said they planned to implement at least one idea from the field day. Fully 100% of participants indicated that they were inspired to modify their operation, and almost half (48%) of those participants indicated they were very inspired.

(N=60)

7a. If yes, to what extent has this event inspired you to modify your farm operation? (circle answer)



Self-Confidence: The vast majority of participants (84%) reported that they gained confidence in at least 1 topic area at the field day. In addition, 53% indicated that they increased their confidence in all three topics presented at the event.

PA-WAgN Enhances Leadership of Women Farmers

Steering Committee meetings

The PA-WAgN Steering Committee met quarterly to discuss topics affecting women in agriculture across Pennsylvania and to launch a mentoring program. In March, a two-day plenary retreat enhanced the leadership qualities of committee members and strengthened the program with a visioning session.

Regional Field Days, Workshops, and Informal Gatherings

PA-WAgN Regional Representatives planned events to provide education and networking opportunities for women farmers in their regions. These events featured PA-WAgN's member benefits and, more importantly, asked women farmers what they want from PA-WAgN. Workshop topics identified in these events are being used to plan field days for 2011.

Volunteer Commitment

We estimate that approximately 1200 hours of volunteer time have been given to PA-WAgN activities during 2010. This generous donation of time includes: farmers who host field days, regional representatives who plan and coordinate activities, steering committee members who attend quarterly meetings, and women farmers who have contributed to mentoring and strengthening networks.

PA-WAgN Researches the Needs and Opinions of Women Farmers

Grants that combine research and extension efforts are the main source of support for PA-WAgN activities.

We conduct research that will benefit members and contribute to the development of the network.

Publications and Presentations by PA-WAgN

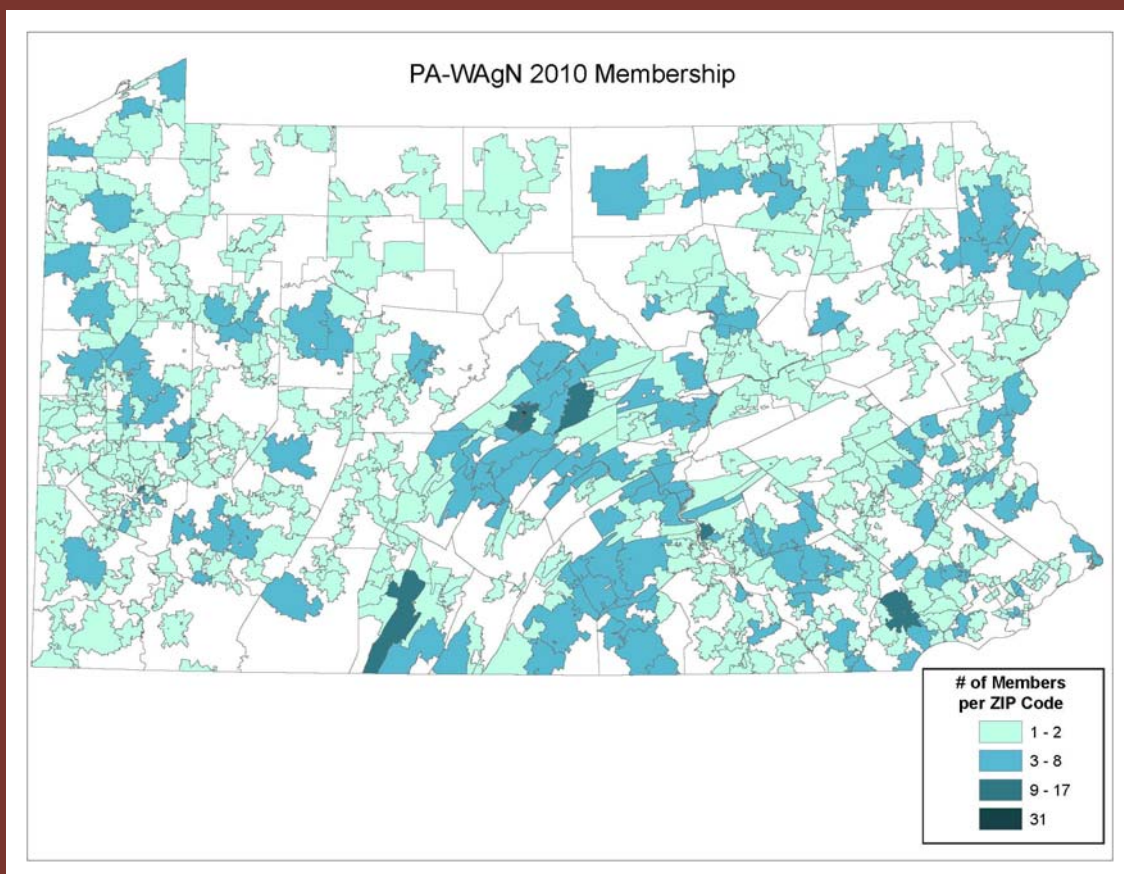
Trauger, A., C. Sachs, M. Barbercheck, N.E. Kiernan, K. Brasier, and A. Schwartzberg. 2010. "The Object of Extension: Agricultural Education and Authentic Farmers in Pennsylvania." *Sociologia Ruralis* 50(2):85-103.
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-9523.2010.00507.x/abstract>

Trauger, A., C. Sachs, M. Barbercheck, K. Brasier, and N.E. Kiernan. 2010. "'Our Market is Our Community': Women Farmers and Civic Agriculture in Pennsylvania, USA." *Agriculture and Human Values* 27(1):43-55.
<http://www.springerlink.com/content/4v1726488353761q/>

PA-WAgN Connects Women Farmers for Success & Support

PA-WAgN Membership

The network has grown to include more than 1,300 members with new members joining daily. Members are diverse, including women farmers, agricultural professionals, educators, food service representatives, homesteaders, and consumers.



Information Sharing

Members share information through many channels:

- **WEBSITE:** PA-WAgN website (<http://agsci.psu.edu/wagn>) provides information about and online registrations for field days, workshops, and special events. The website hosts an online membership application and resources for women in agriculture.
- **BLOG:** PA-WAgN's Farmer-to-farmer Information Sharing blog incorporates case studies, audio visual components, summaries, and resources pertaining to PA-WAgN events and enhances the farmer-to-farmer networking by allowing members to post comments .
- **FACEBOOK:** With a Facebook presence, PA-WAgN offers members additional networking opportunities and up-to-date information about issues affecting women in agriculture.
- **TWITTER:** Twitter allows PA-WAgN to interact with members and offers details regarding events, opportunities, and news features concerning women farmers.
- **EMAIL:** While PA-WAgN has launched several social networking opportunities for information sharing/gathering, the program continues to use email as a regular means of communication with members and persons or organizations interested in the network.

PA-WAgN Events Planned for 2011

PA-WAgN has an exciting line-up of field days, workshops, and networking opportunities in 2011. Visit the website's event page for registration information and additional events. (<http://agsci.psu.edu/wagn/events>).

February 2 PASA Pre-Conference Track: Tractor Operation & Maintenance for New & Beginning Farmers, PSU Ag Arena (Centre County)

February 15 Websites for Farmers, PSU Lehigh Valley Campus (Lehigh County)

February 26 Western Region Networking Symposium: Living the Good Life, Eden Hall Campus, Chatham College (Allegheny County)

April 21 Goatmilk Soapmaking, Cherry Hill Farm (Blair County)

May 23 Preserving Clover Creek: Sustaining Water Quality and Farm Profitability, Mill Hill Dairy and Ojala Farm (Blair County)

May 23-25 Mob Grazing with Ian Mitchell-Innes: A Three Day, Hands-on Intensive, Kananga Farm (Westmoreland County)

June 3 Rodale Institute Workshop & Tour, Rodale Institute (Berks County)

June 16 Farmers Starting a Marketing Cooperative: Northwest Pennsylvania Growers Association. Silver Wheel Farm (Butler County)

July 28 Exotic Mushrooms from Pennsylvania Fields and Forests, Quiet Creek Herb Farm (Jefferson County)

August 2 Hands-on Shearing to Spinning, Bookamer Family Farm (Crawford County)

August 24 Urban Farming: A Safe Place to Grow in Pennsylvania's Capital, Joshua Farm (Dauphin County)

September 15 Field to Loaf: Selling Home Baked Loaves from Home-Grown Flour, Yeehaw Farm (Perry County)

November 10 Growing Highbush Blueberries, Prospect Meadow Berry Farm (Butler County)



PA-WAgN Leadership

2010/2011 Steering Committee

The PA-WAgN Steering Committee is comprised of Regional Representatives serving to plan events in their regions and offer mentoring opportunities to other farmers and Organizational Liaisons who interact primarily with their respective organizations and build connections with members and representatives of other agriculture-related organizations.

Executive Committee

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Jennifer Montgomery, Vice-Chairperson
Ann Stone, Secretary

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PA-WAgN Working Group

The PA-WAgN Working Group comprises staff and faculty of the Pennsylvania State University who assist in program develop, research, and overall support for the continuation of PA-WAgN.

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Join PA-WAgN

Membership is free. Simply complete a brief online membership application to join the growing number of farmers, agricultural educators, agricultural service representatives, and informed consumers that take advantage of the educational and networking opportunities offered by PA-WAgN.

[MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION](#)

Partner Organizations

[The Pennsylvania State University and Penn State Cooperative Extension](#)

[Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture](#)

[Natural Resources Conservation Service](#)

[Pennsylvania Certified Organic](#)

[Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture](#)

[Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection](#)

[The Rodale Institute](#)

[Chesapeake Bay Foundation](#)

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