

3:00 Panel Discussion

Extension Public Policy Education on Agrosecurity

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Agrosecurity

I would like to thank all the speakers from the program earlier today for helping inform us on the topic of agrosecurity. From the time the Planning Committee decided on the topic in December 2001 through today it has been a learning process for the entire committee. Agrosecurity was chosen as the main content topic for this conference because it was timely, the various dimensions of the issue are of interest to a broad spectrum of policy educators, and there is an urgent need for educational programs. However, in our discussions it quickly became clear that we were in great need of information—on the issues, what programs were already underway, the major players involved in the issue, policy options, educational needs and potential speakers. From what we learned during Planning Committee work, and from the program today, we have a much better understanding of the agrosecurity issue.

Lack of Information

Homeland Security is a new issue for our Nation, and programs are being developed at the Federal, State and local levels. ESCOP and ECOP are developing initiatives, CSREES is interviewing for a new National Program Leader position on the issue, the Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) has developed a program focusing on Homeland Security, and conferences are being held at the State level. As public policy educators, this conference is our initial educational activity as a national committee and, to a degree, we are playing "catch up".

In the next few minutes I will make some comments on the agrosecurity issue before discussing results of the EDEN Extension educator national survey on educational needs. I base these comments on my impressions from working with the NPPEC Planning Committee the last 10 months to put this conference together. My experience on the topic is quite limited, and I am sure there are programs underway that I did not uncover in the short time I have been looking for Homeland Security and agrosecurity educational activities. However, at this time, these are my impressions.

Federal Extension

- Little information on Federal Extension involvement in the agrosecurity issue has filtered down to Extension policy specialists at the state level. Interviews for a National Program Leader (NPL) for Homeland Security were being scheduled for late August 2002 by CSREES. That this NPL position did not exist earlier may explain the lack of information coming from Federal Extension regarding agrosecurity/Homeland Security. Yet, because

public policy educators deal with a wide range of policy issues, and having a national network in place, it is surprising that so little information has been available.

- Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN). EDEN is a "collaborative multi-state effort by Extension Services across the country to improve the delivery of services to citizens affected by disasters". It grew out of the 1993 flood disaster in the Midwest. The demand placed on Extension at that time was great and USDA funded the North Central Region to study what needed to be done in the future. It was recommended that a network and database be established. The Extension network that has been created is extensive, numbering nearly 100 individuals nationwide representing most states. The University of Missouri is the coordinating state. Most states are members of EDEN, with two or three representatives--typically an Extension administrator, an Extension communication specialist and an Extension safety specialist. Additional information about EDEN can be found at their Web site:

<http://www.lsuagcenter.com/eden/>

EDEN is a substantial and significant project, however it appears there has been little or no involvement by policy specialists. Nor has there been any information conveyed about EDEN through the policy education network. Furthermore, back in their home states, EDEN representatives may or may not convey information about EDEN to policy educator colleagues within Extension at their universities. In some cases these links may have been developed, but it does not appear there is a formal mechanism for this to happen. Certainly in development of this conference program over the last 10 months, EDEN was never mentioned in discussions of the Planning Committee. It is unfortunate that we have not been aware of each other's existence--EDEN not knowing about the public policy education network and our interest in the issue, and our not being aware of the EDEN network. EDEN is an important undertaking and we, as policy education educators, need to take the initiative to become involved if we want to have a role in the national Homeland Security/agrosecurity education process.

USDA/CSREES

Partnering for Homeland Security is occurring with states to strengthen agriculture homeland security protection. Increased funding of \$43.5m was allocated to states in four spending categories, both at the federal and state levels:

- Animal Disease Surveillance (\$4.5m)
- Animal Disease Response (\$14m)

- Plant Pest & Disease Detection (\$4.3m)
- Rapid Detection & Diagnostics Network (\$20.6m)

I did not find any references to policy or policy education in these efforts, although data showing how state-level funds were allocated within these categories was not available. However, if funds are available for policy education, the message is not getting through to Extension public policy educators because communication links have not been established. State Veterinarians and others involved in state-level programs may have more information on this issue.

Practice the Principles of PIE

Agrosecurity educational programs likely will come under scrutiny and be controversial. In such cases, it is essential that Extension policy educators help citizen stakeholders understand and utilize the policy education process. Programs in which I have been involved the last 10 years use a 4-part process (previous to that time a three-step process was typically used):

- Understand the issues;
- Identify and evaluate policy options;
- Select policy option(s) stakeholders want to support;
- Implement the selected option.

For the agrosecurity issue, understanding the science underlying the issue will be especially important in order to understand risks and uncertainties. As discussed by an earlier speaker, it is important to distinguish between "natural risk" and "induced risk." The physical and biological science of the issues should be brought to the table through establishment of multidisciplinary education teams or by bringing in scientists as outside speakers. Training in facilitation and collaborative problem solving will be important for citizen stakeholder groups and members of the multidisciplinary team. Policy options identified should be ones for which the citizens or a stakeholder group can implement and have an impact. In evaluating agrosecurity policy options, one of the criteria should be feasibility of implementation. Finally, care must be taken to avoid getting caught up in the politics of the issue. It would be easy for the politics of the situation to dictate a secretive approach to agrosecurity—to not discuss security risks and vulnerability, to not openly discuss policy options and alternatives, and to not have educational programs. Yet as policy specialists we see the value in helping citizens become involved and understand the issues, the science and the options.

Diversity of Programs

It is obvious that educational programs implemented across the nation will vary from state to state and region to region because the issues will vary (e.g. crop agriculture vs. animal agriculture, processing vs. production). But we also need to think broadly in terms of the disciplines represented in Extension, and how the focus of educational

programs will vary depending upon the need for multidisciplinary involvement in program development and implementation.

Homeland Security Efforts

In recent weeks I have spent considerable time on the Internet searching for information about the Homeland Security effort underway in Congress and the nation. While I could have missed important aspects of the program, I observe the following based upon what I have found.

- A major focus of Homeland Security is the "Citizen Corps", promoting volunteer efforts in communities nationwide, and emergency preparedness;
- Agriculture and agrosecurity are given limited attention;
- There is virtually no attention given to education concerning agrosecurity;
- Little attention is given to estimating risks of various scenarios, the potential costs and benefits of programs, the impacts of programs, or the costs of doing nothing;
- Efforts to create and implement a Department of Homeland Security will take an extended period of time because it will be a large, complicated organization with functions that, in some cases, are currently conducted by other agencies. A large number of personnel will need to be hired/transferred and programs will need to be developed.

Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN)

EDEN

Let me turn now to the results of a July 2002 survey of county Extension educators by the Extension Disaster Education Network. The survey provides information that should be useful in generating policy education opportunities during our Roundtable discussions that will follow shortly.

Selected Survey Results* (see handout/PowerPoint slides)

Local/county Extension educators were surveyed nationwide using Internet software, with 1,120 responses.

- 73% feel Extension should develop and deliver homeland security educational materials and programs.
- Appropriate audiences include food and agriculture interests (producers, processors, agribusiness) (87%); local government officials (81%); the general public (74%); emergency management community (68%); volunteer organizations active in disasters (63%); youth (48%).
- Urgent topics—drinking water security (78%); food security (64%); individual's role (57%); government's role (55%); animal biosecurity (50%); personal security (48%); farm security (45%); financial security (42%); plant/crop biosecurity (37%).

- Resources that would be useful for training and education/outreach—printed materials (64%); electronic publications on the Web (50%); presentation scripts such as PowerPoint (46%); lesson plans (44%); electronic publications on CD-ROM (41%).
- Beyond materials/training and education, Extension should enhance collaboration/networks, planning and facilitation, form coalitions and task forces, watch for unusual happenings in the county, create public awareness and develop good farm practices (for security).
- Agents responding had programs in agriculture and natural resources (50%); leadership and community development (39%); 4-H and youth (38%); family and consumer sciences (34%); other (12%).
- Extension should develop programs and materials (73%).
- Have been involved in discussions about emergency planning for agricultural or food related bioterrorism threat in their county (11%).

Closing

In conclusion, I believe Cooperative Extension should be involved in conducting educational programs on the topic of agrosecurity. Furthermore, policy educators can and should make a contribution to this effort, but we need to indicate our interest in getting involved. Programs are being developed at the national, state and local levels and a number of educational needs have been identified by local Extension educators, as is shown by the EDEN survey. I believe we will be well received by those already involved in agrosecurity education if we express an interest in becoming involved. However, it is up to us to indicate what we can bring to the table and to come up with suggestions and recommendations for what our role might be.

*The EDEN PowerPoint slides were provided by Steve Cain, Purdue Extension Disaster Communication Specialist and EDEN Homeland Security Project Director. Cain's e-mail is cain@purdue.edu. The EDEN Web site is www.agctr.lsu.edu/eden