

impact

of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences



Society-Ready Graduates

Agricultural Literacy Programs for K-12 Teachers

Issue

The earth's human population topped six billion in the year 2000. All those people depend on agriculture to provide them with food, clothing, and a variety of other products to enhance their lives. As more homes are built on prime farmland across the U.S., a smaller number of farms are providing taking care of the basic needs of many more people. Less than two percent of the U.S. population is engaged in production agriculture. There aren't enough sons and daughters of current farm families available to carry on this essential industry. To interest K-12 students in finding out more about where their food comes from, and how they can pursue various careers in agriculture, agricultural literacy programs have been launched nationwide. Teachers need to understand agriculture themselves before they can integrate concepts about agriculture into their lesson plans.

What has been done?

The University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, with funding from the Arizona Foundation for Agricultural Literacy, has conducted a five-day Summer Agricultural Institute for Teachers every summer for ten years. The Institute educates participants about the Arizona agricultural industry and encourages them to incorporate this knowledge into their classroom activities. The Institute combines hands-on learning about agriculture with practical curriculum development. Participants receive lesson plans, videos, and other take-home materials. Many of the teachers have little or no knowledge of the agricultural industry. They visit agricultural operations, stay with farm families and interact with the owners and managers of these businesses, to better understand the technical aspects of agriculture in Arizona, and the wide range of agricultural operations and career opportunities.

Impact

From 1990-2000 a total of 209 educators have attended the Summer Agricultural Institute. According to follow-up surveys, 58 percent of the teachers incorporated agriculture into a subject, such as science, social studies, earth science, geography, etc. A smaller number incorporated agriculture into all subjects throughout the year; another group used it in a one or two-week theme unit. Twenty-three percent developed their own curriculum based on concepts taught at the Institute. Seventeen percent received graduate level credit through the UA for completing the Institute program.

Funding

Arizona Foundation for Agricultural Literacy

Contact

Monica Pastor, program coordinator, agricultural literacy
Maricopa County Cooperative Extension
The University of Arizona, 4341 E. Broadway, Phoenix, AZ 85040
Tel: (602) 470-8086 ext. 317, FAX: (602) 470-8092
Email: mpastor@ag.arizona.edu