

# A Train-The-Trainer Program to Train Extension Educators to Teach Business Management Skills To Women Farmers

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*Abstract:* - *Suzanne's Project* is a 28-hour program, which began in the Antalya province of Turkey in 2011 to empower small-scale women farmers to manage their farms as a business by training them in computer literacy, technical production topics, and farm business management. A survey 1.5 years after the workshop ended found that all of the women felt more personally empowered after taking the course and were eager to share what they had learned with other women and with their husbands, and they were interested in taking more courses. Farming is the principal economic activity in most rural areas of the EU where about half of the population lives in rural areas. Women represent a substantial share of the total agricultural labor force. Helping women farmers get started and thrive in their farming enterprises are policy 'musts' if Europe's rural areas are successfully to meet the many challenges that face them. The "Empowering Women Farmers with Agricultural Business Management Training" (EMWOFA) project aims to extend the type of training provided by *Suzanne's Project* to more women in Turkey and Europe. It provides a comprehensive educational program to develop technical, entrepreneurial and managerial knowledge of extension educators in agriculture. These trained extension educators will train women farmers who are not likely to have been trained in the vocational education system about the technical and managerial aspects of farms, but must work on farms. A survey of 13 extension educators who attended the first EMWOFA Seminar in Freising, Germany was conducted at the end of the seminar. Participants had positive impressions about the Educational Program and felt confident about their knowledge in business management and technical production topics. Educating the women farmers can make them realize that farming is a profession to be proud of since people cannot eat unless someone grows the food.

*Key-Words:* - Business management, best management practices, business plan, empowering women, female farmers, train-the-trainer, in-service training

## 1 Introduction

In August 2011, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey collaborated with Akdeniz University in Turkey to develop *Suzanne's Project* in the Antalya province of Turkey. We conducted a needs

assessment and feasibility study to identify priority needs, interests and capacities of women farmers in the Antalya region of Turkey. We interviewed extension educators and female farmers in three villages in the Antalya Province of Turkey and used

the results to develop a pilot 28-hour course to train 40 farmers from Kumluca, Turkey. The course was offered October 24 - November 18, 2011 to small-scale citrus and greenhouse producers, and included three components: 1) computer literacy, 2) technical topics, and 3) business management. Technical topics included greenhouse construction and ventilation, soil productivity and plant nutrition, pesticide safety, plant protection, biological insect and disease control, sustainable production, and protection of soil and water resources. The business management topics were structured around developing a business plan.

We created a Facebook Page for *Suzanne's Project* to post information and for participants to network with each other [1], and we created a *Suzanne's Project* website [2]. By the end of the class, 100% of the women had completed most sections of their business plans using guided worksheets, considered their farms to be businesses, and had the confidence to manage them as such [3, 4]. We repeated *Suzanne's Project* in other Turkish villages. In 2013, we were asked to take *Suzanne's Project* to Georgetown, Guyana where a group of women was trained to start small shade-house businesses to produce vegetables that provide food security and income for themselves and their families [5]. In 2013, a group of Study Abroad students from Rutgers University lived in the village of Boztepe, Turkey where we taught another group of women farmers and guided the students in developing case studies for future classes [6, 7].

A survey of women who participated in *Suzanne's Project* 1.5 years after they took the course indicated that it had lasting, positive effects on them. The investigators conducted face-to-face interviews of participants in the pilot program. Follow-up survey questions explored changes in personal empowerment, program impacts on their business, inter-personal networking, and suggestions for changing/improving the course. All of the women felt more personally empowered after taking the course as exemplified by the statement "before, I was only the woman and wife, but now I am a business woman". One woman commented that she had more respect from her husband after taking the course. The biggest changes in their businesses after the course were an increase in sustainable production practices and beginning to keep records for cost accounting, including knowing what records to keep and why. One hundred percent of participants were eager to share what they had learned with other women and with their husbands. Participants expressed an interest in taking more courses, especially on cost

accounting. They would like similar courses to be offered to their husbands, but they appreciated the "women only" setting for their classes [8].

## 2 The Need

Farming is the principal economic activity in most rural areas of the EU where about half of the population lives in rural areas. Without farming, there would be little to keep many communities alive and hold them together. Women represent a substantial share of the total agricultural labor force, and their contributions are mostly invisible. They are not seen as "productive" since they are generally expected to work without payment. This invisibility at the intersection of markets, state and society has suppressed the whole potential of women farmers worldwide. Helping women farmers get started and thrive in their farming enterprises are policy 'musts' if Europe's rural areas are successfully to meet the many challenges that face them.

Women farmers generally do not have formal vocational education and learn farming informally while working on farms. Therefore, they need vocational training and guidance in their work places, but unfortunately, that is missing. Moreover, women farmers do not have as much access to many agricultural resources including credit, production inputs, and productive assets as their male counterparts do [9]. This is in spite of the fact that they spend roughly the same amount of time doing farm labor as their husbands, but have a much heavier share of the of household tasks such as preparing food, cleaning, and caring for children and elderly members of the household. This restricts their progress in developing professional skills and improving societal status [10, 11]. Additionally, women in the agricultural sector are not equal in terms of economic returns and employment. These women are less literate than men are and they are paid less in agricultural jobs than men are. The women themselves often do not see their jobs as important, and farm without training simply because they feel they have no other options. Thus, women farmers, especially new and smallholder women farmers need training and support.

## 3 Project Aim

According to the EU 2020 strategy, some of the EU goals are to modernize labor markets and empower people by:

- Developing their skills throughout their lifecycle.
- Increasing labor participation.
- Better matching labor supply and demand.
- Improving the business environment, notably for SMEs.
- Support the development of a strong and sustainable industrial base able to compete globally.

## 4 The Program

The "Empowering Women Farmers with Agricultural Business Management Training (EMWOFA)" Project will take the lessons learned from *Suzanne's Project* and reach more women farmers. It will

- Provide a comprehensive training program for women farmers.
- Develop technical, entrepreneurial and managerial skills of women farmers through specialized training.
- Help women farmers realize their full potential to operate and sustain profitable farms as small businesses and gain self-confidence as businesswomen.
- Support networks for women farmers.
- Help women farmers learn to understand and manage their farm businesses and network with other women who are involved in agriculture, both in their geographical area and in the other EU countries.

### 4.1 Project Partners

EMWOFA is partnership of three universities, one public body, one vocational school, one Chamber and one NGO from five countries. Each partner has a specific expertise. As Moser stated, "A successful team is made up of competent individuals trained in different disciplines, abreast of their own field" [12]. The universities and vocational school have academic research and field experience in agricultural economics and vocational education. They prepared the content of the training programs and will train the trainers who will train women farmers. A public body responsible for agriculture and a chamber of agriculture will be responsible for the dissemination of the project. The NGO has expertise in video production and web portal and will be responsible for the production of E-Learning

Videos and Web Portal of the project, which will be used for blended learning. Project partners are Akdeniz University, Turkey; Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, USA; Technical University of Munich, Germany; STUCOM Studies Centre, Spain; VisMedNet Association, Malta; Antalya Directorate of Provincial Food Agriculture and Livestock, Turkey, and Antalya Muratpasa Chamber of Agriculture, Turkey.

### 4.2 Project Activities

The EMWOFA Project developed an Education Program to train trainers, workbooks that the trainers will use to train women farmers, a Web Portal with educational videos, and short, E-learning videos to reinforce the workbook during the workshops and for women farmers who cannot attend the training workshops. The specific educational materials are:

- "Agricultural Business Management" Educational Program in four languages (Turkish, English, German, and Spanish) to "train the trainers".
- "Agricultural Business Management" Workbook in four languages (Turkish, English, German, and Spanish), for 10-day local trainings of women farmers.
- E-Learning Videos in four languages (Turkish, English, German, and Spanish) are a series of videos about "Agricultural Business Management" for women farmers. Less educated and less literate women farmers will especially benefit from these videos, which are easy to follow. The content of the videos follow the "EMWOFA Empowering Women Farmers through Agricultural Business Management" educational program and workbook. These videos will be published on the website of the project. They will also be shared with national extension bodies that can reach women farmers and give similar training workshops in their countries. This will guarantee both dissemination and the sustainability of EMWOFA project.
- Questionnaires and Analyses, with which to survey trainers (extension educators) and women farmers to evaluate the improvement in agricultural business management before and after the training workshops.
- Website: [www.emwofa.eu](http://www.emwofa.eu)<<http://www.emwofa.eu>>.
- Facebook Page: [www.facebook/emwofa/](http://www.facebook/emwofa/).
- Twitter Account: @emwofa2015.

The project activities are:

- “Training of Trainers”: 5-day training sessions in Germany and Spain.
- Training for women farmers: 10-day local training sessions for women farmers in Germany, Spain, and Turkey.
- E-Learning Videos.
- EMWOFA Web portal.

### 4.3 Multiplier Events

The project will have three multiplier events. The first one, “Empowering Women Farmers with Agricultural Business Management Training” was held in Freising, Germany in 2016. The second one will be held in Barcelona, Spain in May 2017. The third and final one will be a conference called “Empowering Women Farmers with Agricultural Business Management Training” National Conference in Turkey in June 2017. The purpose of these multiplier events is to share the knowledge we gained from the EMWOFA project and training curriculum to encourage the establishment of more training sessions for women around the world, further spreading the impact. “Empowering Women Farmers with Agricultural Business Management Training” Seminar in Freising, Germany was organized by the Technical University of Munich (TUM). This seminar was held for extension organizations in agriculture, who can reach women farmers, students studying agriculture, farmers, and related organizations. The event conveyed the importance of women farmers in the agricultural industry and how the EU emphasizes supporting agriculture and women farmers. The Educational Program and Workbook were disseminated during this seminar. The extension educators who attend these short-term trainings will then organize training workshops for women farmers in their home countries (Turkey, Germany, and Spain).

## 5 Materials and Methods

A survey of 13 extension educators who attended the “Empowering Women Farmers with Agricultural Business Management Training” Seminar in Freising, Germany was conducted at the end of the seminar. These questions focused on four specific areas on the impact of the EMWOFA training program. Participants were asked to score three of these areas on a 1 to 5 scale with 1 indicating no knowledge and 5 indicating complete mastery. These were: 1) general information; 2) agricultural business

management; 3) technical knowledge, and 3) their level of understanding and confidence in teaching the program to women farmers. The fourth section included eight open-ended questions designed to elicit responses to help improve the program.

Table 1. Survey responses from 13 extension educators.\*

General Information	
Age	39.3
Gender-Female	46.2%
Agricultural Business Management	
I know the history of EMWOFA Project	4.8
I can tell how to do a risk assessment	4.8
I can do a business plan for a farm	4.9
I know how to develop a mission and vision statement	4.8
I can do a SWOT analysis	4.7
I know about estate planning, health insurance and crop insurance	4.5
I can prepare a production plan	4.6
I can prepare a marketing plan	4.5
I can prepare a management plan	4.6
I can prepare a financial plan	4.5
Technical Knowledge	
I know basic computer skills	4.9
I have information about alternative production systems	4.7
I know IPM in Farms	4.5
I can prepare work calendar and program in farms	4.8
I know about soil productivity and plant nutrition	4.5
I know about sustainable production and protection of soil and water resources	4.5
I know about plant protection, biological and biotechnical methods	4.5
I know about agriculture and environment relationship and waste-pollution management	4.5
I have a good understanding how to plan and deliver EMWOFA training for women farmers	4.6
I can support other extension educators to learn how to use EMWOFA Educational Programme and to use to organise trainings for women farmers	4.6
I have knowledge about how to prepare a learning environment for women farmers as adult learners	4.8

\* After attending the EMWOFA seminar in Freising, Germany participants were asked to answer these questions using a 1 to 5 scale with 1 indicating no knowledge and 5 indicating complete mastery. These are the mean scores.

## 6 Results and Discussion

Forty-six percent of the extension educators who attended the seminar were women. They ranged in age from 32 to 62 with the average age being 39.3. They felt slightly more confident in preparing a business plan than they did in preparing the individual components (Table 1). Their confidence in their technical knowledge was also very high. Basic

computer skills was the area where they had the most confidence (4.9 on a 5.0 scale).

The opened-ended questions indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the Educational Program. Only one respondent noted that anything should be changed, and that was to make the program more dynamic. When asked to describe the program, respondents all used positive words: “good”, “effective”, “important”, “very good”, “interesting”, “fun”, “comprehensive”, and “useful”.

## 7 Conclusion

Farming can be something looked upon as backward and something farmers do not want to pass on to their children. However, educating the farmers can make them realize that farming is a profession to be proud of since people cannot eat unless someone grows the food. Extension educators overwhelmingly had positive impressions about the educational program and felt confident about their knowledge in business management and technical production topics.

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