

Small Business Development Center's (SBDC)

Unique Agribusiness and Food Specialty Program Helps Farmers Succeed in Businesses

Whether you're in the dreaming stages of starting a farm business or you have an established enterprise, The University of Scranton SBDC's Agribusiness and Food Specialty Centers are a resource you don't want to ignore! Offering free consultation to farmers and/or small business owners, the SBDC has created a model program to assist with the specific needs of food growers and other farm-based producers. In its first year, funded in part by the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Agribusiness Program has served 125 farmer clients ranging from new/start up businesses to established enterprises.

With an average of eleven years of experience, three SBDC Agribusiness consultants are poised to help farmers with a comprehensive set of resources. Wherever you are in the process of a business venture, the consultant will guide you through each step and personally connect you to the vast array of resources available. Start up business clients attend a training session which provides information on regulations for business ownership, what to expect in terms of finances, and help with initial paperwork.

The strength of the SBDC's Agribusiness Program is the referral network that has been built, establishing connections to resources. After helping you write or review your business plan, consultants will refer you to all of the appropriate networks. Whether you need labs to do product-testing, banks to secure appropriate loans, insurance providers specific to your needs, resources to design and host a website, or access to a kitchen incubator to develop value-added products, the SBDC will guide you through the process. Their goal is to provide consistent support at each step so the client does not get lost in the process.

In addition to private one-on-one consultation, The University of Scranton SBDC Agribusiness Program offers many in-depth seminars held at different times to accommodate busy schedules. Seminars offer hands-on experience on a range of topics including:

- How to use accounting software for invoicing, inventory, payments and bookkeeping
- ServSafe training, required for all food handlers
- Market development: finding your niche and working with regulatory agencies
- Payroll and tax preparation training
- Food labeling, packaging and pricing
- How to write a business plan

In its inaugural year, the Agribusiness Program has assisted farmers developing CSAs and value-added products, farmers looking to expand their direct-market sales and retail profits, as

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- Serving Bradford, Lackawanna, Susquehanna, Tioga and Wyoming counties with two locations
- One-on-one consulting specific to organic, natural and specialty food issues and industries
- Educational programming geared toward farm and food producers including ServSafe Certification
- Linkage to USDA, PennTAP, testing laboratories, trade associations
- Assistance with product testing, packaging, labeling and access to capital

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well as farmers working in the wholesale sector. Their research services have even benefited farmers interested in incorporating alternative energies such as installing wind turbines, and farmers seeking information on managing migrant employees.

The University of Scranton SBDC has outreach facilities in the following eight counties: Tioga, Bradford, Susquehanna, Wayne, Pike, Lackawanna, Wyoming and Monroe. The Agribusiness Centers serve the five counties of Bradford, Lackawanna, Susquehanna, Tioga and Wyoming. The Center takes referrals and inquiries from other counties as well. Call the main office (570) 941-7588 to request a free consultation in the Agribusiness program today!

For more information on locating an SBDC near you go to www.PASBDC.org.