

4-1-2005

## Staying Connected and Proactive Statewide

Mohamed FR Khan

North Dakota State University and University of Minnesota, mkan@ndsuxext.nodak.edu

Duane R. Berglund

North Dakota State University, dberglun@ndsuxext.nodak.edu



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

---

### Recommended Citation

Khan, M. F., & Berglund, D. R. (2005). Staying Connected and Proactive Statewide. *The Journal of Extension*, 43(2), Article 27. <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/joe/vol43/iss2/27>

This Tools of the Trade is brought to you for free and open access by the Conferences at TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Journal of Extension by an authorized editor of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact [kokeefe@clemson.edu](mailto:kokeefe@clemson.edu).



April 2005 // Volume 43 // Number 2 // Tools of the Trade // 2TOT4



PREVIOUS  
ARTICLE



ISSUE  
CONTENTS



NEXT  
ARTICLE



## Staying Connected and Proactive Statewide

### Abstract

Extension educators nationwide are integrally involved in using research-based information to help adults and youths improve their lives and communities. Extension programs are channeled to clients through a network of Extension specialists and county agents or technical advisors. In large, agriculturally diverse states, Extension professionals need to stay connected and proactive to successfully serve their clients. This article describes how Extension educators at different locations use conference calls to facilitate proactive provision of relevant information in a timely manner to clients.

### Mohamed F. R. Khan

Extension Sugarbeet Specialist  
North Dakota State University & University of Minnesota  
Fargo, North Dakota  
[mkhan@ndsuent.nodak.edu](mailto:mkhan@ndsuent.nodak.edu)

### Duane R. Berglund

Extension Agronomist  
North Dakota State University  
Fargo, North Dakota  
[dberglun@ndsuent.nodak.edu](mailto:dberglun@ndsuent.nodak.edu)

## Introduction

The mission of the Cooperative Extension Service is to help people improve their lives through an educational process that uses scientific knowledge focused on issues and needs. Over 100 land-grant colleges and universities in all states and territories of the United States provide solutions to the public using non-credit educational programs.

Extension educators nationwide are involved in improving lives and communities in six major areas, namely:

- 4-H youth development
- Agriculture
- Leadership development
- Natural resources
- Family and consumer sciences, and
- Community and economic development

Extension education is administered through approximately 2,900 county and regional offices, which bring land-grant resources to address human, plant, and animal needs in rural, urban, and suburban areas.

Generally, all states use a similar system to provide information and conduct extension educational programs. Most states have Extension specialists for specific subject matter. Extension specialists may have statewide responsibilities or may be responsible for providing service for particular counties or districts. Extension specialists are usually located on campuses or at Research and Extension Centers. It is generally the county agents located in county offices or technical advisors affiliated with regional offices who provide research-based information to address issues and problems of citizens. Generally, the system used by Extension professionals to obtain and deliver information and programs to clients are similar in principle, regardless of the program areas.

Extension specialists, county agents, and technical advisors responsible for vast areas and/or varied subject matter need to have a forum for meaningful discussions so that they can provide consistent and effective programs. This article discusses how Extension educators responsible for crop production successfully used conference calls to stay connected and proactive in the primarily agricultural state of North Dakota. Extension educators who need to stay connected and informed at the county, regional, or state level could use a similar system.

## **Situation**

North Dakota has over 39 M acres, representing 87% of its landmass, in agricultural production, including rangeland. Commercial crop production takes place in all counties, with the production of over 15 major crops statewide. North Dakota is currently the leading producer of 11 crops. These crops include the following:

- Durum wheat
- Hard red spring wheat
- Barley
- Oats
- Flaxseed
- Navy beans
- Pinto beans
- Dry edible peas
- Oilseed sunflower
- Non-oilseed sunflower
- Canola

Agronomy and plant science Extension specialists with statewide responsibilities are located on campus at North Dakota State University (NDSU) in Fargo. Area Extension specialists with responsibilities for specific districts are stationed at NDSU Research and Extension Centers in Carrington, Dickinson, Williston, and Minot. County agents with agronomy responsibilities are located in county offices statewide.

Extension educators generally provide services throughout the year. However, the demand for information is greatest during the planting and early growing season. Because most growers usually encounter similar problems and pest outbreaks, educators could be answering the same questions numerous times. Extension educators in counties have vast areas to cover to visit growers' fields and long distances to travel to meet regularly with specialists on campus or with area specialists at Research and Extension Centers. Educators in counties are usually well trained with a wealth of experience. However, diversified crop production statewide required that specific information were made easily available to county agents. Specialists on campus and the area specialists were the main source of information for educators in counties.

It was necessary to provide a forum whereby all Extension educators involved in crop production could meet on a regular basis to share information, discuss ideas, and concur on recommendations. The most opportune time for educators providing crop production recommendations to meet was during the growing season, when there was a high demand by clients for production information in a timely manner. This resulted in the establishment of weekly conference calls annually during the early growing season.

## **Staying Connected with Conference Calls**

During April through early July, Extension specialists on campus participate in conference calls, first with area specialists and then with county agents responsible for crop production. Conference calls are conducted on Tuesday mornings for 1 hour each. For years, the conference calls were conducted by telephone. Since 2002, videoconferencing facilities on campus and at Extension Centers have been used. The Extension agronomist organizes the conference calls. Dates, times, locations, facilitators, and telephone numbers to be called are provided to all participants prior to the first conference call.

During the conference call, all specialists and county agents provide a weekly report. Participants are apprised of current field conditions, growing season progress, status of insect, weeds, diseases, nutrients, and potential problems regionally and statewide. Requests are made to specialists on campus to send specific information to area specialists or county agents or for particular information to be made available to growers and other clients via newsletters, websites and list servers. Requests and problems are anticipated, and specialists and county agents proactively provide pertinent information in a timely manner.

## **Impact of Conference Calls**

- Conference calls facilitated communication and discussion among all Extension educators statewide responsible for providing crop production recommendations.
- Conference calls have allowed educators to discuss and concur on recommendations for particular situations.

- Camaraderie has been fostered among all Extension educators during conference calls.
- Conference calls have resulted in the provision of relevant crop production information in a timely manner.
- Producers have successfully used information provided by Extension educators, resulting in growers producing a safe, high quality, inexpensive, and abundant food supply. Recipients and users of information are ardent supporters in counties and the legislature for the Extension Service.
- Conference calls are an inexpensive method to facilitate discussions or provide timely information among Extension educators at different locations.

*Copyright © by Extension Journal, Inc. ISSN 1077-5315. Articles appearing in the Journal become the property of the Journal. Single copies of articles may be reproduced in electronic or print form for use in educational or training activities. Inclusion of articles in other publications, electronic sources, or systematic large-scale distribution may be done only with prior electronic or written permission of the [Journal Editorial Office, joe-ed@joe.org](#).*

If you have difficulties viewing or printing this page, please contact [JOE Technical Support](#)