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## Fieldmen's Luncheon Program Benefits Agriculture Industry

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## Fieldmen's Luncheon Program Benefits Agriculture Industry

### Abstract

A significant part of the agriculture industry is made up of crop consultants, fieldmen, agronomists, company representatives, and agriculture lenders, all of whom need continual education to stay abreast of new knowledge and information. The Magic Valley Fieldmen's Luncheon program is conducted annually to provide timely education and an information network that benefits the individual and the industry as a whole. Concurrent years of program evaluation data indicate that this Extension program is an effective approach to providing professional development to the target audience and timely information to agriculture professionals and producers via networking.

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## Introduction

Crop consultants, fieldmen, agronomists, and company representatives make up a significant portion of the agriculture industry. This group of agricultural professionals does a great service to the industry by providing producers with expertise and assistance to ensure that the best possible level of production is achieved while maintaining environmental integrity. Continual education and professional development allow these professionals to stay abreast of new knowledge and information, and to broaden their understanding and awareness of sustainable production practices.

These individuals need to be aware of what challenges are occurring or are likely to occur in their area. Dissemination of this information allows time for preventative measures, strategic planning, and treatment so that impacts on crop production can be minimized and natural resources can be protected.

Agriculture lenders are another important group of professionals in the industry. It is imperative for lenders to understand the challenges that their clients must overcome and how those challenges and decisions influence the farm's finances. Furthermore, greater understanding of necessary and alternative practices to ensure successful production will make them a more valuable asset to the producer at times when financial planning decisions are made that influence the farm's profitability.

The Magic Valley Fieldmen's Luncheon program is conducted annually to provide timely education and an information network that benefits the individual and the industry as a whole.

## The Program

The goals of this program are to:

- Provide quality, research-based educational information regarding crop production, natural resources, pest management, and sustainable agriculture to the target audience for professional development.
- Develop and provide a medium for agriculture professionals, university Extension faculty, and agency representatives to network information that will benefit a larger number of individuals,

including colleagues who were unable to attend and, ultimately, the producers.

The Magic Valley Fieldmen's Luncheon program is conducted during the growing season from May through August. Luncheons are held every second and fourth Wednesday of the month, and each session begins at 11:30 a.m. with lunch. At noon, University Extension educators and/or specialists, crop consultants, or agency representatives deliver an educational presentation approximately 30-40 minutes in length with questions and discussion following. Presentation topics include crop production, natural resource management, integrated pest management, nutrient management, and other critical issues that affect the sustainability of agriculture in the Magic Valley (Figure 1). Idaho professional pesticide applicator recertification credits and Certified Crop Adviser credits are offered for appropriate topics.

**Figure 1.**  
2003 Magic Valley Fieldmen's Luncheon Program Agenda

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>
May 14	Water Supply Forecasts The Big Picture Local Irrigation District Reports
May 28	Weed Control What's New? Weed Control for Several Crops Round-Up® Ready Corn Rescue Treatments
June 11	Small Grains Cereal Leaf Beetle & Russian Wheat Aphids Cerone® Application Late Season Irrigation
June 25	Corn Production In-Season Fertility, Including Zinc Deficiency Rescue Weed Control Diseases and Insects
July 9	Mid-Season Fertility Beans Potatoes Foliar Nutrition
July 23	Sugar Beet Pests Insects Powdery Mildew Others
August 13	The Idaho OnePlan Software Software Demonstration

August 27	What Dairy Nutritionists Want Corn Silage Quality Having Triticale in the Rotation
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For the remaining 20-30 minutes of each luncheon, the Extension educator facilitates and moderates an organized group discussion on the current status of crops, pests, water supply, and other timely issues.

In an effort to increase the attendance, mailings (electronic and postal) are sent to the targeted audience just prior to each luncheon. This mailing provides them with a reminder notice and information about the topic and presenter for the coming luncheon. Public service announcements are also distributed to local news media.

Furthermore, a regional agricultural newspaper correspondent is present at each luncheon. This weekly agricultural newspaper prints articles about the topics covered at the luncheons.

## Program Results

The fieldmen's luncheon program was evaluated in 2002 and 2003. A survey was mailed to those who attended the luncheon. The response rates were 67% and 57% in 2002 and 2003, respectively.

- Survey results indicated that the program is valuable (4.2; 5 = very valuable) in helping agriculture professionals increase their knowledge of crop production topics.
- 100% of the respondents signified that they increased their knowledge of the topics covered in the program.
- Respondents indicated that the program is effective (4.2; 5 = very effective) at increasing their awareness of crop production issues and sustainable agriculture practices.

These results suggest that the format of the program is conducive to the education of these professionals and that the topics selected are appropriate and timely. Furthermore, their increased understanding and awareness of sustainable agriculture practices will lead to more recommendations of the sort made to Magic Valley producers. These recommendations will benefit producers, their operations, and the natural resources of south central Idaho.

The fieldmen's luncheon did foster the utilization of an information network among agriculture professionals, university Extension, and producers.

- 100% of the respondents indicated that they shared the information that they had received at the luncheon with others.
- 77% shared this information with both agriculture professional colleagues and producers.
- All in all, there were at least 771 and 1,435 contacts receiving information presented at the fieldmen's luncheon in 2002 and 2003, respectively. The information network is working effectively to educate the agriculture industry in south central Idaho.

The luncheon was also rated as being beneficial (4.3; 5 = very beneficial) to Magic Valley agriculture. Participants believed that the program was an excellent source of information and commented that the luncheon "is very beneficial and valuable to ag professionals," and that "the program needs to continue."

## Conclusions

The fieldmen's luncheon program in both its format and content is an effective technique in providing education and professional development to agriculture professionals. Additionally, the luncheon effectively utilizes an information network that results in numerous secondary contacts that ultimately include the producers. Overall, the Magic Valley Fieldmen's Luncheon is positively affecting the agriculture industry by delivering education to its fieldmen, crop consultants, agronomists, and agriculture lenders. Providing timely information and professional improvement to agriculture professionals is leading to more effective and efficient production, which in turn will lead to a more prolific and sustainable industry in the Magic Valley.

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