

Farm Business Management Workshop

Richard Wiswall, author of *The Organic Farmer's Business Handbook*, dislikes record-keeping and budgets as much as the next farmer, but he sees them as critical tools for successful farm management.

"People get into farming for a lot of good reasons, but nobody gets into farming because they love running a business," Wiswall said. "Most farmers are dragged kicking and screaming into the business side of it. But the farmer's number one job is to make sure their business thrives financially as well as ecologically."

What Wiswall calls "the neglected business side of farming" will be the subject of an upcoming workshop entitled "Farming Smarter, Not Harder: Planning for Profit," to be held on Saturday, February 22, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:15 p.m. at Pachamama's Alton Ballroom, 800 New Hampshire, Lawrence. The workshop will focus on the planning and analysis tools needed to run a profitable farm in an easy, step-by-step format, with additional tips for beginning farmers.

Topics will include planning for profit, making a profit, marketing strategies, the efficient farm office, key farm financial statements, financial tips for success, common business mistakes, quick business fixes, effective farm management, employee management, labor efficiencies and goal setting. Participants should bring writing materials, a calculator, and information about their farms such as last year's total farm sales or top five selling items broken down by product or account, last year's expenses broken down into types of expenses (seeds, fuel, labor, insurance, repairs, etc.), and checkbook balances for the last two years ending on Dec. 31, 2013. The information is strictly for the farm owner and will not be disclosed or shared by anyone else.

Registration is \$50 for the first farm representative and \$20 for additional representatives, and includes a CD of farmer-friendly business tools for keeping records and making decisions taken from Wiswall's book, budgets for several farm enterprises, a market analysis for participants' farms and roadmaps of how farmers can achieve their financial goals.

Record-keeping must be approached logically, systematically and, above all, simply, at least at first, Wiswall said. "I just want to put record-keeping in its proper place and to stress the importance of the end result of any data collection: making a good living from the work I do on my farm."

He and his wife, Sally Colman, own and operate Cate Farm in East Montpelier, Vt., where they have farmed for the last 32 years. He also consults with farms to increase profitability and gives workshops on business practices for farmers.

The principles learned in the workshop apply to any farm, whether organic or not, he said.

"Though it's primarily a business workshop for farmers," he said, "the second half will cover business principles applicable to any small business, from retirement planning to effective management. I'm just trying to put profit into the farmer's triple bottom line. You can be the best marketer, you can grow the best crops, you can be the hardest working person on the planet, but if your business doesn't survive, it's all moot."

Registrations can be made online or by mail by following the instructions at

www.kansasfarmersunion.org/kbfc

The workshop is hosted by the Kansas Farmers Union and the Kansas Beginning Farmer Coalition with support from a Farm Aid grant. Additional sponsors include Frontier Farm Credit, Pachamama's, the Douglas County Food Policy Council, Kansas Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Crops, USDA Rural Development, Glacial Hills RC&D, and the Kansas Rural Center. For more information contact Mercedes at 785-840-6202 or kfu.mercedes@gmail.com.