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Digital Literacy for Small to Mid-Sized Farms

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Abstract

A gap is growing between the technological resources available to agricultural producers and the utilization of these resources. Knowledge of hardware, software, and connectivity is necessary to fully understand the benefits of on-farm technologies. Small to medium sized farms make up a majority of the total farms in Georgia and these producers are typically in an age bracket that has not received formal training on current technology. A survey was developed and administered during the summer and fall of 2022 targeted towards small and medium-sized farmers and farmworkers. This survey was conducted to determine the current state of technology used on these farms and the skills of their workers. After receiving the results of the survey, training modules were developed around the results. The first set of modules developed for phase I are: Introduction to Precision Ag, Introduction to Computers and Mobile Devices, Digital Access and Resources, Organizing Farm Data Fundamentals, Spreadsheet Fundamentals, and Digital Ag Management. These modules are focused on introducing growers to technology topics and providing a basic understanding of how technology can be integrated into their operation. An example dataset and complementary methodology was developed using the Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College's Demonstrating Applied Technology in Agriculture (DATA) Farm. The DATA Farm is a 90-acre row crop and forage operation similar to the type of farming operations targeted in this study. A web site is currently under development to provide access to the training modules and the example data collected from the DATA Farm. Phase II of the project consists of the development of advanced training topics (GPS, Soil Management, Crop Protection and Scouting, Water Management, Yield, and Cost Analysis). Additionally, in-person training events for farm producers will be planned and conducted. These events will reach producers that currently don't have access to technology to view the training site or are more comfortable learning in an in-person environment.

Keywords: Technology, Computers, Applications, Training.