

Training for Off-Season?

The holidays are upon us and short, cold winter days lay ahead. What better time to utilize the off-season more productively than to take or sponsor training programs and classes for the challenges to come?

And they are out there: From planting to hiring labor, to pesticide application to state, federal and local mandates, as well as financial planning. By skimming the internet, you can find some by search words in your area, or call or e-mail your agricultural agencies—network farm periodicals and professional publications. There is something interesting that applies to your special need. Here are just a few types of training available that I found while quick-surfing the internet:

“Are you interested in learning how to use Quickbooks computer software for your farm financial recordkeeping? The University of Wisconsin-Extension Center for Dairy Profitability and UW-River Falls are offering four intermediate workshops using Quickbooks.

“Quickbooks is a financial recordkeeping program and management tool. The program allows you to track and manage income, expenses, bank accounts, receivables, inventory, fixed assets, payables, loans, payroll and equity in your farm business. Quickbooks also provides you with standard and customized detailed reports that are essential to making good decisions.

“The courses are being held January 15 at the UW-River Falls from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Registration is \$20 and includes lunch.

“For more information or to register, call 608-263-5665.”¹

Then there is this from North Carolina State University and their *Perspectives on Line* Publication, put out by the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences:

“In her former life, Gretchen Hurley worked in corporate sales. Retired now, she’s traded in her business suits for work boots and a wide-brimmed sun hat. Thanks to the “PLANT @ Breeze” program, Hurley is taking a crack at market farming, a venture she hopes will reap benefits for her family as well as the community.

“Hurley is one of about 50 people who participated in the inaugural “PLANT @ Breeze” program, offered by Orange County Cooperative Extension and the Orange County Economic Development Commission, at Breeze Farm, given to the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences by Col. William H. Breeze and his family. The acronym stands for “People Learning Agriculture Now for Tomorrow.”

“Given the fact that the cost of food is high, people are interested in buying from local farms,” Hurley says. Having done extensive market research, Hurley sees opportunity in catering to Asian and Hispanic food markets. She’s growing all sorts of Japanese mustards and beans, as well as chiles and other peppers.

“Once you find your niche, you’ll have a loyal following forever,” she says. “I’m also doing this for myself, to share organically raised produce with neighbors as well as my family. I like to know where my food comes from.”²

In addition to courses, there are a multitude of programs and surveys out there to take advantage of. In New York state, there is the survey by apple and pear growers who are interested in hiring visa'ed legal foreign workers. Here is why it is so vitally important—information courtesy of Debby Groom/*The Post Standard*:

"The deadline to complete the survey is Dec. 12.

"The prevailing wage survey is currently focused on the apple and pear industries. The survey forms the basis of the Adverse Effect Wage Rate determination, and is also used in setting the standard for experience levels for workers. Last year, fruit growers either did not complete the survey, or did not answer it accurately, and those survey responses were used to fill positions this past growing season, and caused great difficulties for growers' seeking experienced workers.

"All apple and pear farmers who do not have a copy of the survey should call the state Department of Labor at (518) 457-7520 or e-mail laura.close@labor.state.ny.us."³

Need Pesticide Training in Wisconsin? Here is your chance, with:

"Pesticide Applicator Training Programs Being Offered
Wisconsin Ag Connection - 12/03/2008

"The Chippewa and Eau Claire County UW-Extension Offices have scheduled private pesticide applicator training sessions for 2009. The sessions are designed for those whose pesticide applicator licenses are due to expire this year or for those who plan to apply for a license for the first time.

"Training sessions are required for producers using restricted use pesticides who do their own spraying. The program covers pesticide laws, pesticide labels, safety, integrated pest management, container disposal, equipment calibration and groundwater protection.

"Applicants can register as a private applicator in one of three categories: general, greenhouse and nursery, or fruit crops. Sub-category application exams will also be available for agricultural fumigation, chemigation, and aerial application. If a private applicator chooses certification in either greenhouse and nursery or fruit crop categories, contact your local UW-Extension Office well in advance for specific registration materials.

"The programs are being offered at the following locations:

- ** January 10: Eau Claire County Ag & Resource Center, Altoona
- ** January 29: Peoples State Bank, Bloomer
- ** February 5: Country Kitchen, Cadott
- ** February 19: Peoples State Bank, Augusta
- ** March 19: Chippewa County Courthouse, Chippewa Falls

"All sessions start at 9:30 a.m. and last until approximately 3:00 p.m. Lunch is on your own.

"Participants must pre-register and purchase training materials at least two weeks prior to the session they plan to attend. The cost of the materials is \$30.00. To register, contact the Chippewa County UW-Extension Office at 715-726-7950 or Eau Claire County UW-Extension Office at 715-839-4712."⁴

Like to get up-to date farm labor information and more H-2A Federal Program news?
Florida has it!

"US Department of Labor offers training requirements for farm labor
Special to the News-Sun

"The U.S. Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division will offer three seminars in Florida during December to assist farm labor contractors and agricultural employers in complying with section H-2A of the Immigration Reform and Control Act and the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act.

"Special emphasis will be given to the 2008 State of Florida Migrant Housing Rules, which were instituted to prevent substandard migrant housing.

"The seminars will be held in in Highlands County on Wednesday, Dec. 17 at the Bert J. Harris Agriculture Center, 4509 George Blvd; in Polk County on Monday, Dec. 15 at the Florida Citrus Building, Nora Mayo Hall, 500 3rd St. N.W., Winter Haven; and in DeSoto County on Tuesday, Dec. 16 at the Turner Center-Annex, Exhibition Hall, 2250 N.E. Roan St., Arcadia. Each session will begin at 5:30 p.m.

"There is no costs. Contact Mike Rios at (813) 288-1400, ext. 28 for details.

"Section H-2A of the Immigration Reform and Control Act authorizes the admission of temporary non-immigrant workers to perform agricultural labor or services of a temporary or seasonal nature. Employers participating in the H-A program are required to comply with specified labor standards relating to wages, transportation, housing and records. MSPA provides protection for migrant and seasonal agricultural workers and requires all farm labor contractors to register with the department's Wage and Hour Division.

"Information regarding enforcement of H-2A, MSPA or any of the laws administered by the Wage and Hour Division is available by calling the Department of Labor's toll-free helpline at (866) 4-US-WAGE (487-9243), or visiting the Internet at www.wagehour.dol.gov.

"<http://www.newssun.com/business/1203-Farmlabor>"⁵

¹ Wisconsin Ag News Headlines, (Wisconsin Ag Connection), "*Financial Recordkeeping Training Planned for January*," 12/02/08. Website at: <http://www.wisconsinagconnection.com/story-state.php?id=1447&yr=2008> (accessed 12-8-08)

² Suzanne Stanard, "*Breeze Farm workshop offers start-to-finish training*," on Perspectives on Line, Magazine of the Agricultural and Life Sciences, North Carolina State University. Website at: http://www.cals.ncsu.edu/agcomm/magazine/summer08/g_breeze.html (accessed 12-8-08)

³ Debbie Groom/The Post-Standard, "*Apple and pear growers must fill out survey*," 12-3-08. Website at: http://blog.syracuse.com/farms/2008/12/apple_and_pear_growers_must_fill_out_survey.html (accessed 12-8-08)

⁴ Wisconsin Ag News Headlines, (Wisconsin Ag Connection), "*Pesticide Applicator Training Programs Being Offered*," 12-3-08. Website at: <http://www.wisconsinagconnection.com/story-state.php?id=1453&yr=2008> (accessed 12-8-08)

⁵ From the *News Sun*, republished on *Americans for Legal Immigration* website published: (Friday, December 05, 2008) at: <http://www.alipac.us/ftopic-139934-0-days0-orderasc-.html&sid=c8d535af3aab78a7ad7962408ff0b08b> (accessed 12-8-08)