

SUCCESS in IOWA



OUTSTANDING
REGIONAL
PROJECT
2025

Cybersecurity for Iowa Farmers and Rural Businesses

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"No matter how good you think you are they are always learning ways to get your information, so you have to make yourself a hard target." – Participant in Annie's Project Cybersecurity Lesson (captured in class)." - Participant

Situation: Agriculture is one of 16 critical infrastructure sectors vital to the U.S. economy and national security. With the rapid digitization of agriculture and the growing number of internet-connected devices on Iowa farms, cybersecurity threats have become an increasing concern. Recent cyberattacks on Iowa's agribusinesses highlighted the urgent need to secure farm business cyber ecosystems.

This project aimed to raise cybersecurity awareness and equip farm managers with practical steps to reduce risks. Through strategic partnerships with cybersecurity experts and industry leaders, the project introduced this critical topic to farm business owners in an accessible way to raise cybersecurity awareness and equip farm managers with the knowledge and tools to reduce risks.

Outcomes: The cybersecurity lessons had a strong impact, increasing awareness and proactive measures among participants:

1. **Farmland Leasing Meetings:** 50% of 215 respondents planned to implement cybersecurity measures, 94% recognized the importance of unique passwords, and 96% acknowledged the need to verify email sources before clicking links;
2. **Annie's Project Follow-Up:** 90% of surveyed women discussed cybersecurity with their families, 60% took action to improve cyber safety, and 50% accessed cybersecurity resources. Key takeaways included secure online interactions and phishing awareness;
3. **Leadership Conference:** 71% of respondents reported gaining significant cybersecurity knowledge.

A multi-generational beef feedlot operator in Iowa joined the program to explore cybersecurity practices that could protect her family and business. She valued learning about multi-factor authentication and how to better identify phishing attempts and scams. She also discovered that ACH payments can be a safer alternative to wire transfers and has since set up ACH transfer accounts. Looking ahead, she is eager for more hands-on guidance,

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particularly on managing cybersecurity in real-time, including securing agronomic data from the seat of her tractor or combine.

Participants emphasized that “Cyber threats are real and can be managed” and expressed interest in more training, including cybersecurity updates and checklists for computers and phones. These results highlight the growing awareness and demand for cybersecurity education in agriculture.

Impacts: The Cybersecurity in Agriculture project united key partners to enhance cybersecurity awareness among farmers. As a result, participants expanded their knowledge and expressed interest in further education on the topic. The ISU Extension and Outreach Farm Management Team plays a crucial role in addressing this increasingly important issue. By raising awareness and promoting proactive risk management, the farming community can strengthen its defenses against cyber threats, ensuring a more resilient agricultural industry and improving food security for all Iowans.

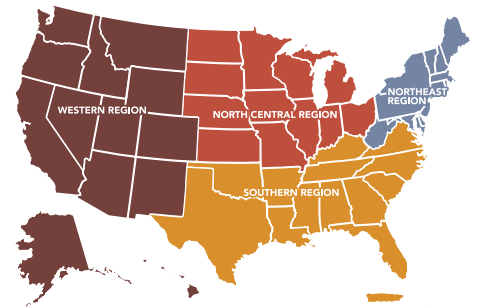
SUCCESS in EVERY STATE

Extension Risk Management Education

Extension Risk Management Education is delivered through four regional centers that provide grant funding and leadership within their regions.

Projects are producer-focused, outcomes-based and encourage public-private partnerships. Funded projects must identify targeted outcomes that will help producers manage risk and then describe how the project will measure those outcomes.

Extension Risk Management Education has funded innovative programs that have generated tangible outcomes for producers in every state. Commitment to funding outcomes, providing transparent accountability, and encouraging collaboration allow you to view the accomplishments of all funded projects on our website: ExtensionRME.org



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