

Social media to help farmers deal with climate change

July 12 2013, by Rebecca Harrison

Whether farmers believe in climate change or not – 66 percent do – their actions show that they are adapting to global warming, according to panelists at a July 8 discussion on campus.

"Farmers are already being affected by the [changing climate](#), and the pace of change is likely to accelerate in the future," said panelist Bill Hohenstein, director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Climate Change Program Office. "Agriculture is an important contributor to [climate change](#) as a source of [greenhouse gases](#), but it is also one of the sectors that is most affected by climate change."

He continued: "It will be important to communicate to [farmers](#) about these risks and opportunities to improve resilience. We're recognizing that farmers are now getting their information from a variety of sources – not simply extension anymore."

Panelist Mike Hoffmann, director of the Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station, believes that one option that would help farmers cope with the [effects of climate change](#) on agriculture is to build an open communication network.

"The idea here is to develop a system – through [social media](#) – where farmers and extension educators can readily and quickly communicate with each other across a large region such as the northeastern United States and eastern Canada" and share observations and other information, Hoffmann said.

In June, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced a new program to increase such network development. Building on existing infrastructure, Hohenstein said, the USDA plans to establish "regional hubs that will provide technical support, assessments and forecasts, and outreach and education" to farmers and educators.

Keith Tidball, senior extension associate in the Department of Natural Resources, discussed the opportunity to reimagine and improve EDEN, the Extension Disaster Education Network, in New York state, which does similar things. EDEN is an online platform that links Cornell Cooperative Extension educators, emergency management agencies (including FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security), community officials and community members to increase agricultural resiliency to disasters.

Tidball noted that after Hurricane Sandy, crops were inundated with saltwater. "Within 24 hours, [Cornell and SUNY experts in the area] put together a solid fact sheet, and we were able to get that out via social media right away. Through the current national network, that [fact sheet] has gone into the national EDEN website, and anyone with a related question can access it. We are hoping to build that network over time."

According to Hoffmann, the goal of the discussion was to start to "build a sense of community across the northeastern United States around climate change – both the challenges and the opportunities – in the agriculture and food systems."

Matt Ryan, Cornell assistant professor of crop and soil sciences, noted the increasing resistance and resilience to climate variability in cropping systems, using specific examples from his lab.

The discussion was part of the Northeast Joint Summer Seminar, July 7-9. More than 60 people, including directors of experiment stations and

state extension systems from land-grant universities in the Northeast attended the event, which included tours of agriculture throughout the Finger Lakes region and of Cornell facilities, in addition to discussions and lectures by agriculturalists.

Provided by Cornell University

Citation: Social media to help farmers deal with climate change (2013, July 12) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-07-social-media-farmers-climate.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.