



eOrganic Dairy: Developing National On-line Training and Support Networks for Certified Organic Dairy Production Systems



Heather Darby¹, Debra Heleba¹, Sarah Flack¹, and Cynthia Daley²

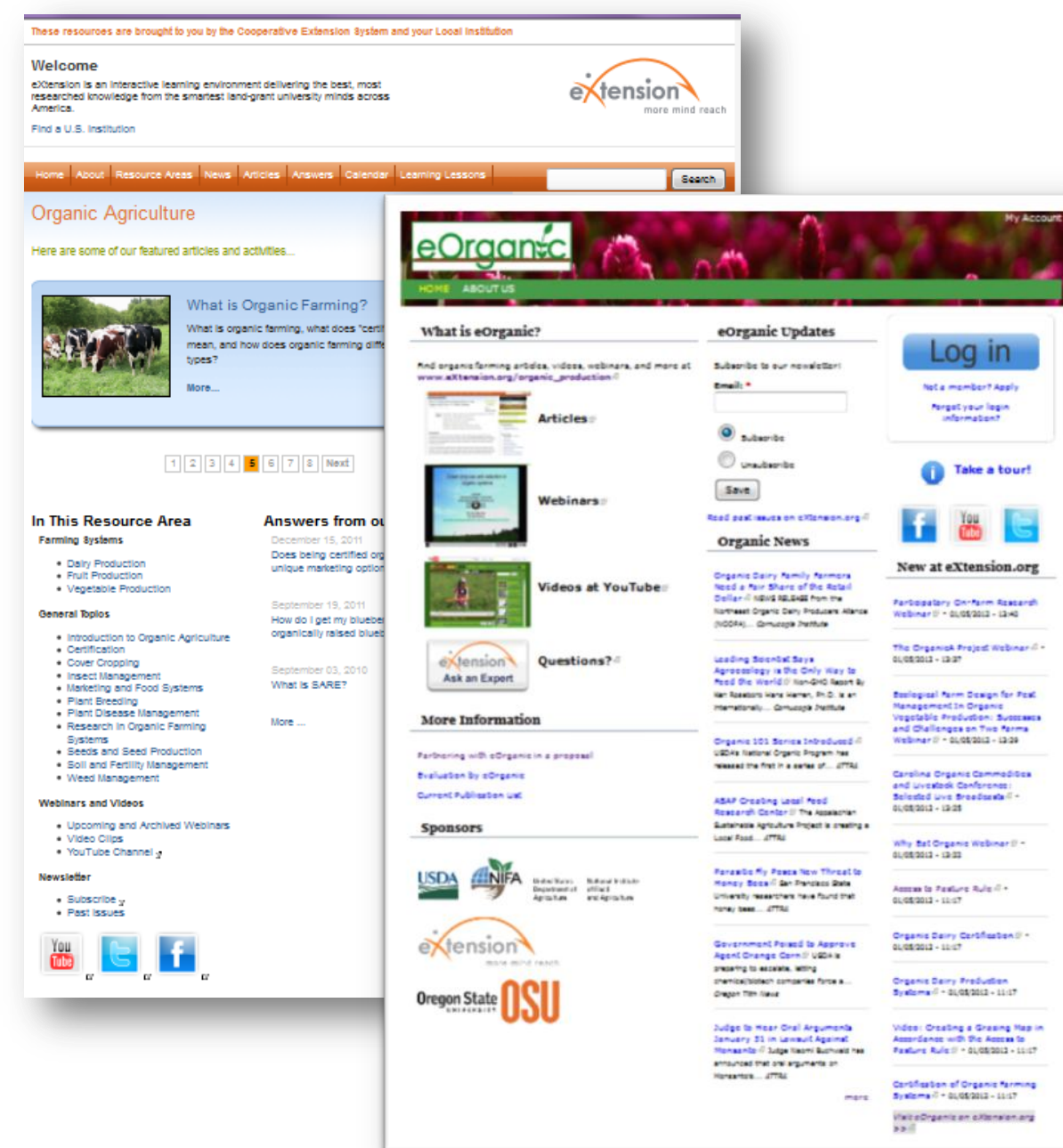
¹Extension, University of Vermont, St. Albans, VT ²College of Agriculture, Chico State University, Chico, CA

Introduction

Certified organic dairy agriculture has been the fastest growing sector of the organic market, yet there is an information gap among agriculture service providers on organic dairy production systems, and more organic dairy farmer support is needed throughout the U.S.

eOrganic.info is a venue for providing online information to service providers and farmers.

eOrganic is the organic agriculture Community of Practice for eXtension.org, a national web initiative among Cooperative Extension. It provides online workspace for developing collaborative research projects and publishing content on science-, experience- and regulation-based organic agriculture information.



About the Project

In 2010, eOrganic's dairy team received a USDA Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) grant to develop organic dairy content (webinars, articles, videos, and two online courses) for Extension, NRCS and other ag service providers, and the farmers with whom they work. The project is also creating regional learning hubs around the U.S.

Our goal is to build a network of providers knowledgeable about organic dairy production systems who are better able to provide direct assistance to current and/or aspiring organic dairy farmers. As a result of our efforts, we hope that organic dairy farmers will feel more supported and have the information they need to guide farming decisions, helping to ensure their success!

Learn More

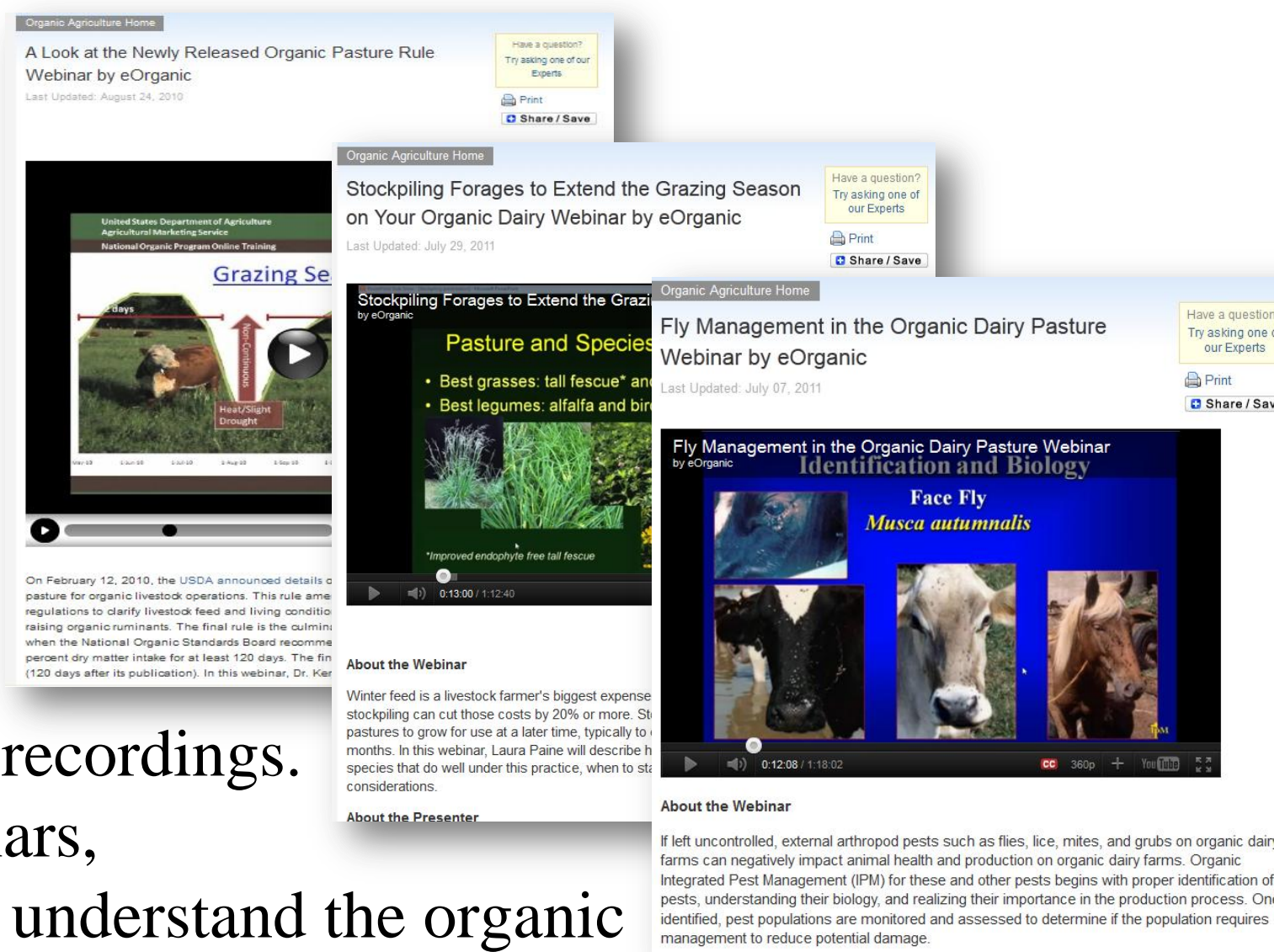
- View our content at: www.extension.org/organic_production.
- Visit eOrganic's workspace at: eorganic.info.
- See eOrganic's YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/user/eOrganic.
- Contact eOrganic Dairy Team Coordinator Debra Heleba at debra.heleba@uvm.edu.

Webinars

Our webinars allow participants to view presentations live or as recordings. Initial organic dairy webinars have focused on the Pasture Rule and management intensive grazing topics

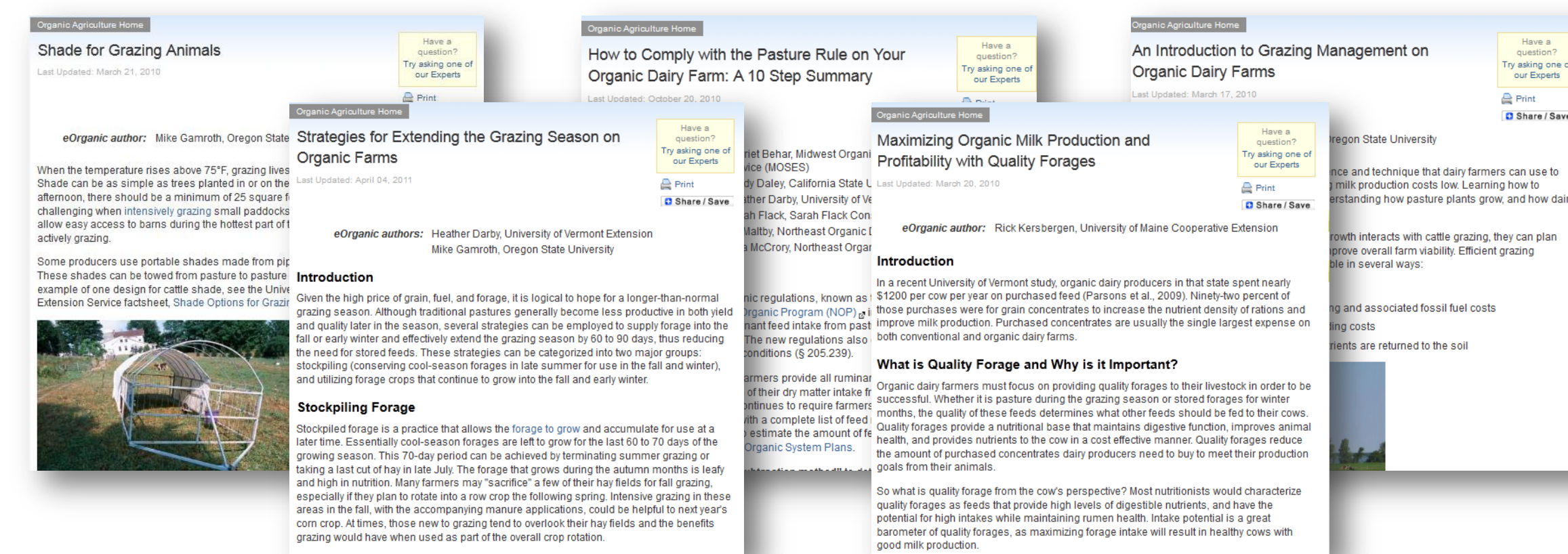
In 2011, we gave 7 webinars that reached 115 farmers and 452 agricultural service providers who viewed the live broadcasts, and an additional 3,557 people who viewed the recordings.

- As a result of the webinars,
- 80% said they better understand the organic dairy topics addressed;
- 65% will make changes to their farm practices or how they advise farmers based on what they learned;
- 78% better understand the inter-relationships between pasture management, feeding, and animal behavior;
- 88% now know how to avoid problems in their grazing systems;
- 44% will change the way they feed concentrates to their cows during the non-grazing season; and
- 85% will add grains to their cropping systems.



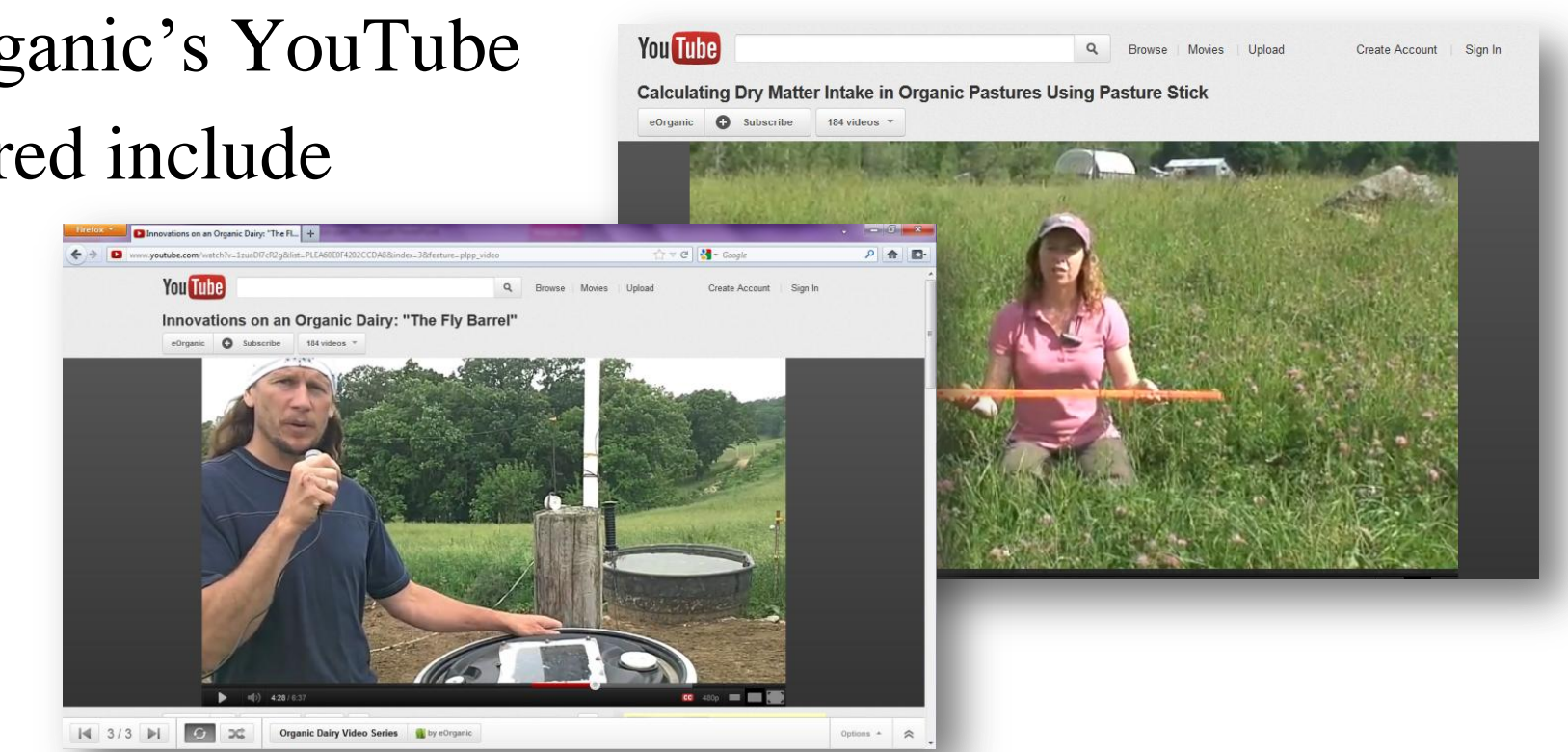
Articles and On-line Courses

The eOrganic dairy team has published 58 peer-reviewed articles at eXtension.org on topics ranging from grazing management and the Pasture Rule to herd health and certification. All content (webinars, videos, and articles) will be used to build a "Train the Trainer Certificate Program" composed of two asynchronous online courses on introductory and advanced topics. The courses will provide continuing education credits and be used as curricula for emerging academic organic dairy programs. They will be completed by the end of 2013.



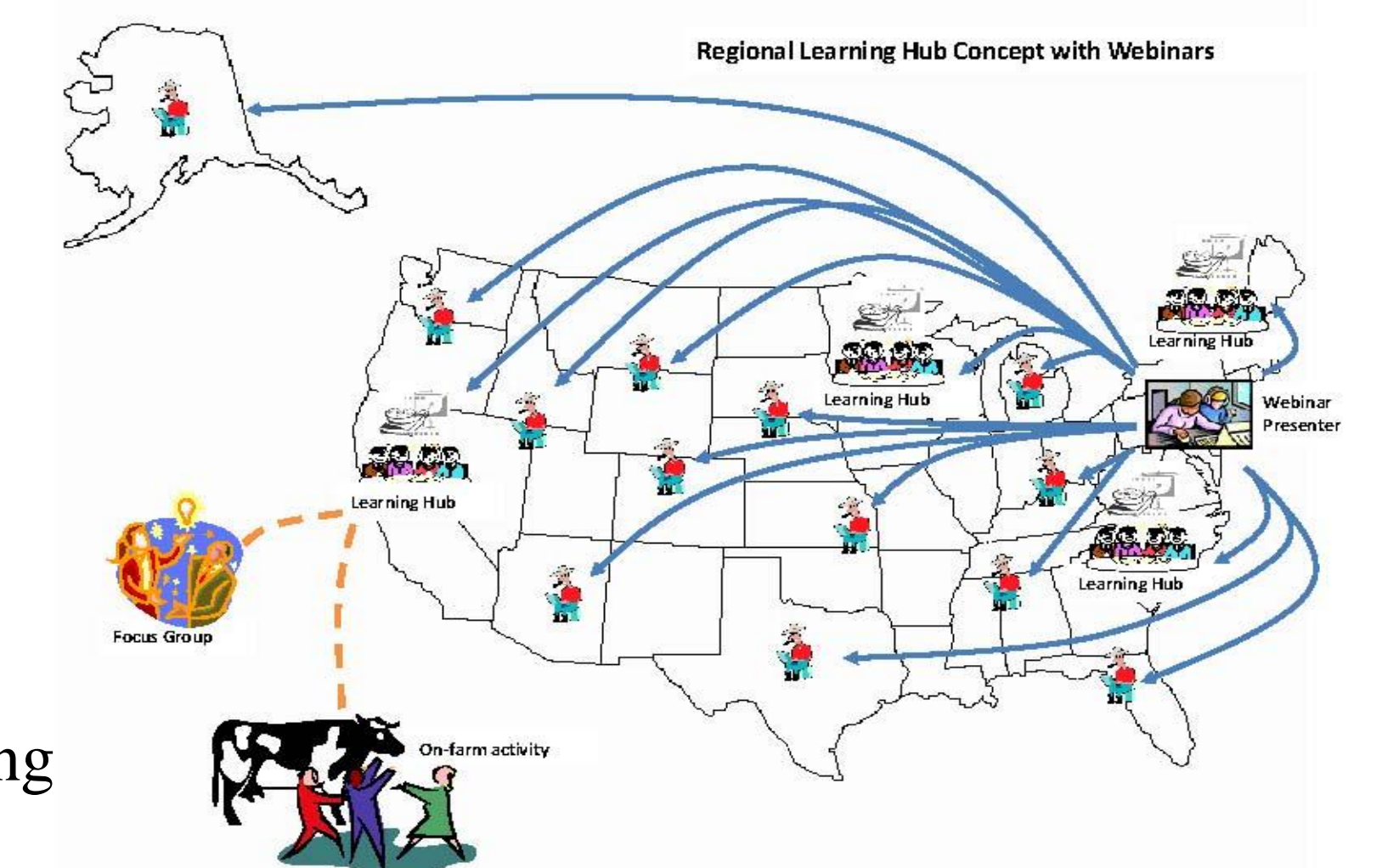
Videos

The project is creating instructional and farmer case study videos. To date, 7 videos have been developed, viewed 2,960 times on eXtension.org or eOrganic's YouTube channel. Topics covered include pasture management, calf rearing, organic fly management, and herd health.



Regional Learning Hubs

The regional learning hubs integrate online learning with traditional Extension education—they are places where "Internet life" and "real life" intersect. The hubs provide co-learning environments for farmers and service providers; provide the online content to farmers who may not have access to the Internet access; and act as focus groups for evaluation purposes. They provide educators with training materials on topics that may be unfamiliar, and are ways to bring in expertise at low cost. The project currently has 4 hubs around the U.S. (CA, NC, WI, and VT). We have piloted hub activities by a) broadcasting virtual presentations to live in-house audiences, and b) broadcasting webinars and conference presentations out to virtual audiences. Effectiveness of the hubs will be assessed over the course of the project and integrated into a tip sheet for those interested in replicating this model.



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