



**9th Immigrant and Minority Farmers Conference  
Executive Summary  
February 1-2, 2014  
University of Minnesota Continuing Education and  
Conference Center**

The 9th annual Immigrant and Minority Farmers conference was held on February 1-2 in St. Paul, MN, with attendees from Minnesota, Wisconsin and Ohio. Numbers of registrants totaled 160 on Saturday and 137 on Sunday, of which ~60% were farmers, and the remainder being sponsors, exhibitors, presenters, interpreters and volunteers. The entire conference was simultaneously interpreted into Hmong, Spanish, Bhutanese, Nepalese and Karen.

**Farmer Demographics**

**Farming experience:** On average, 20% of the farmers attending this year's conference have been farming less than 1 year, 36% between 1-5 years, 15 % between 6-10 years, and 24% more than 10 years.

**Distance to farm:** Thirty-six percent of the farmers attending on Saturday and 29% attending on Sunday reported that they farm on their own land. Over 50% of the farmers travel less than 30 minutes to get to their farms.

**Age:** The vast majority of the farmers attending the conference were over 40 years old (~69%). About 25% of attendees were between 20 -40 years old, and 5% were younger than 20.

**Ethnicity:** Over 50% of the farmers attending the conference were Hmong. Of the remaining attendees, about 12% were Bhutanese, 11% Latino, 7% Karen, 7% African American, 4 % Caucasian, and 3% Nepalese. Native Americans, Moorish Americans, Sudanese and Lebanese Americans each comprised 1% of the attendees.

**Events introduced at this year's conference:**

- *Film Festival curated by Michele Schermann - received excellent feedback and recommendation that it be expanded and continued in the future.*
- *Exhibition of a 80 hp John Deere tractor courtesy of the University of Minnesota – allowed close inspection by farmers unfamiliar with this equipment.*

**There were 15 workshops that paired farmers with agency or University of Minnesota personnel as presenters. On average, 66% of attendees reported a knowledge gain, stating that they might use the following new concepts in their farming:**

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| Flame weeding                                      | How to measure their land                             |
| Different types of cultivation including "no till" | Types of financial records to keep for farm business  |
| Crop mapping                                       | Importance of reading pesticide label                 |
| That tractors and PTO's can kill people            | Techniques for getting loyal customers                |
| How to get insurance for farmers markets           | How to get different hand tools, how to maintain them |
| Not to wear baggy clothes around tractors          | Not to let children near tractors                     |
| How to appreciate customers                        | That it is ok if a customer stops being a customer    |

**Focus group evaluators** liked the University of Minnesota Continuing Education and Conference Center venue, and thought that the farmers who made presentations were excellent, especially lauding Ryan Browne, Hli Xooj, Paula Foreman and Aaron Blyth. Suggestions for further improvement included asking presenters to practice pausing and working with interpreters, giving interpreters a larger presence at workshops and introducing their language groups, and highlighting workshops providing information that is not Minnesota-specific for farmers from other states.

**Contributions totaling \$44,059 were received from the following sponsors:** AgriBank, AgStar, Crossroads Resources, Farley Center Farm Incubator, Hmong American Farmers Association, Hmong American Partnership, Land Stewardship Project, Latino Economic Development Center, Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Services, MN Crop Improvement Association, MN Department of Agriculture, MN Food Association, MN Institute for Sustainable Agriculture, Mississippi Market, National Immigrant Farming Initiative, North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program, Renewing the Countryside, Seed Savers Exchange, United FCS, University of Minnesota Extension, and USDA-APHIS, USDA -Farm Services Agency, USDA-National Appeals Division and USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service as well as from paid registrations. The conference costs totaled just under \$40,000 for 2014.

**Planning Committee Members responsible for planning the conference were:** Diane Dodge, Amy Doeun, Paula Foreman, Patrice Johnson, Mary Lange, Wayne Martin, Cutrina Moreland, Nan Roberts, Michele Schermann, Nigatu Tadesse, Joci Tilsen, Cindy Tong, Que Vang, Michael Walzak, and Hli Xyooj.

