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Women in Agriculture: Balancing Family and Farm: Summary of the 1991 Conference

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Women In Agriculture:
Balancing Family and Farm

Summary of The 1991 Conference

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Economics Staff Paper Series No. 91-5
April, 1991

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**Women In Agriculture:
Balancing Family and Farm**

March 1991

PART ONE

The success of the first "Women In Agriculture" conference, entitled "Challenging The Future", has the South Dakota Cooperative Extension Service to develop the second program entitled "Balancing Family and Farm". The first conference was designed to provide women with the incentive to challenge the future of agriculture while the second conference was designed to help women learn how to balance their family life with the business of farming or ranching.

The second "Women In Agriculture" (WIA) conference was held in Pierre, South Dakota in March, 1991. The overall goal of the conference was to provide women with an opportunity to enhance their farm management skills. The conference was well attended and the final evaluations reveal a high level of satisfaction with the program.

This report summarizes the conference. The first part of this summary includes a brief overview of the workshops that were conducted, the keynote addresses, a summary of the final evaluation form and comments made by the women about the conference. The second part of the report will make recommendations for future topics, improvements in the conference and comments from the women concerning what they feel they have gained from the conference. The last part of this report details program development and recommendations for conference improvement from the coordination level.

Conference Summary

The 1991 conference was held at the Ramkota Inn in Pierre, South Dakota on March 4th and 5th. Pierre was chosen as the sight for the conference for two reasons: 1) the conference coordinators choose to have one conference in the 1991 calendar year and 2) Pierre is centrally located in South Dakota. The Ramkota Inn was chosen as the site based on the facility's ability to handle a large group of individuals and it's reputation for catering to the special needs of conference groups. The time of year was selected based on a schedule that would work around field and ranch work schedules.

A total of 160 women preregistered for the conference. A large portion of the women registered for the conference lived in the Pierre area, but there were a number of women that traveled greater than 200 miles, one way, to attend the conference. One woman traveled 260 miles, one way, to attend the conference.

Several speakers conducted workshops or spoke to the women on various issues. The workshops that were conducted in the 1991 conference were; 1) Managing Hired Help, 2) Basic Marketing, 3) Family Budgeting, 4) Women As Farm Owners and Managers, 5) Farm Safety, 6) Understanding ASCS Programs, 7) Estate Planning, 8) Effective Communication, 9) Stress Management and 10) Developing Financial Statements. The keynote speakers addressed inter-generational farm management, and provided a humorous view of life as a farm/ranch woman. There were two keynote addresses that provided information about current research at South Dakota State University on the woman's role in agricultural production and management and the components of successful farms in South Dakota.

Conference Evaluation

At the end of the conference, participants were encouraged to complete an evaluation form. The participants were asked to evaluate the conference, keynote

and workshop speakers, and the conference facility. The responses were tabulated and will be beneficial to the development of the next WIA program. This section of the report will summarize the evaluation forms and provide a summary of the comments made by the women about the conference, speakers and facility.

Overall Conference and Facility Evaluation

The evaluation form asked the women to provide their perception of the conference as a whole. They were asked to rate the conference from one to five (a rating of one was considered excellent and a rating of five was considered poor). Figure 1 graphically depicts the responses to the overall evaluation. The women also provided comments about the conference as a whole. Some of their comments were:

"A very nice convention and well satisfied with it all. Really liked central location of the conference."

"A very enjoyable and worthwhile conference."

"I enjoyed it very much and I received alot of very good information from this workshops."

"Where is next years? Hats off to those involved in organizing this event. We need this!!"

"We need to come up with a way to keep these going."

Some of the women indicated that the location of the 1991 conference provided an opportunity for all farm and ranch women to attend. The women also indicated they appreciated the opportunity to meet women from other areas of the state and to share common experiences.

The women were asked to rate the conference meeting rooms, motel rooms, meals and refreshment breaks. On an average the meeting facility was rated excellent by the women attending the conference. Some women did indicate that their meals were delivered cold to their table but the majority of the women

indicated that the meals were served promptly and hot. The women appreciated the variety of the meals, but indicated they would prefer lighter breaks with more fruit juices being served.

Workshop Evaluations

The workshops were divided into two overall themes during the two day conference. The first day of the conference was devoted to farm business management topics. The second day was devoted to farm family related issues. The women were given an opportunity to select and attend those workshops that best fit their particular needs. During the course of the conference, the women attended five different workshops. Some of the women expressed a dissatisfaction with this method, due to the desire to attend all of the workshops.

The women were asked to rate the workshop, as a whole, from one to five. One was considered to be an excellent rating and five was considered to be a poor rating. A summary of the number of responses is provided on Table 1.

Managing Hired Help

The "Managing Hired Help" workshop was conducted by Dary Talley, a Minnesota Area Extension Agent, and designed to assist individuals in exploring the costs associated with hired labor and how to account for those costs. The workshop also provided participants with an understanding of employee contracts and the tax advantages associated with family hired labor as well as non-family hired labor.

Some of the comments the women offered on this workshop were:

"The handout sheet was excellent, knowing 90% of the information was at my finger tips made it easier and more enjoyable to listen to Mr. Daly."

"Good information, I especially liked the tax information."

Basic Marketing

The "Basic Marketing" workshop was conducted by Gene Murra, an Extension

Livestock Marketing Specialist at South Dakota State University. The workshop was designed to help individuals understand different forms of marketing and risk management. During the basic marketing workshop individuals were given an opportunity to explore the complex marketing terms, how to use (or not use) marketing alternatives and gave practical examples of how they work. The workshop provided an opportunity to compare the different forms of marketing through actual marketing problems.

Some of the comments shared by the women attending the Basic Marketing workshops were:

"He was very helpful. I now understand more of the terms that my husband uses."

"Good basic information and easy to understand."

Family Budgeting

The "Family Budgeting" workshop was conducted by Jean Ohm, an accounts manager and owner of a collection agency in Huron, SD. The workshop assisted individuals in developing long and short term goals, offered budgeting tips for farm/ranch families and encouraged participants to recognize the warning signs of financial problems.

Some of the comments offered by women attending this workshop were:

"Very knowledgeable information."

"It was good to hear of what to look for on a budget."

"The workshop was good, but would like to have had more information on farm family budgets."

Women As Farm Owners/Managers

The "Women As Farm Owners/Managers" workshop was conducted by Carol Anderson, a farm owner/operator from Onida, SD. The goal of the workshop was share some of her experiences as a farm owner and operator and the challenges one

must undertake both financially and emotionally.

Some of the comments the women expressed about this workshop were:

"She was well prepared and was very knowledgeable about her topics. Made us feel you can do it."

"Her presentation and ideas were very worthwhile."

"Many good suggestions from her own practical experience."

Farm Safety

The "Farm Safety" workshop was conducted by Gail Broch, the Director of Information for the South Dakota Farm Bureau. Gail presented a portion of the "First Care" program to those choosing to attend this workshop. The First Care program was designed to train farm families to deal with a farm accident before help arrives. While a condensed form of First Care, the workshop gave women an opportunity to explore ways in which they could handle farm accidents before help arrives.

Some of the comments women offered about this workshop were:

"She gave an excellent presentation. We appreciated her giving us a list of things we can put together for aids from within the home. We need to hear her yearly and be reminded of what we need to do."

"Very helpful. There is much more information which I could use and this is just a start."

"Motivated me to go home and get first aid kits in vehicles, water in pickups and telephone list for help by phone."

Understanding ASCS Programming

The "Understanding ASCS Programming" workshop was conducted by Steve Cyriacks, a county Executive Director for the Hughes/Stanley ASCS Office and Dean Anderson, the State Executive Director for ASCS. The workshop examined price support/loans, conservation/ACP and CRP programs, emergency programs and deficiency payments. The workshop was designed to provide basic information about

the programs and to answer specific questions about ASCS programs.

Some of the comments offered by the women about the program were:

"Questions were well answered. You need to include this program every year."

"Really needed this."

"Speaker was not ready for such a well informed group. Hard topic to explain. Some were beginners at this and some were well informed. Made it hard for the speaker to adjust. Could have been in a two part section possibly."

Estate Planning

The "Estate Planning" workshop was conducted by Mike Newton, the owner and operator of an independent insurance agency in Highmore, SD. The workshop was designed to assist individuals with developing a plan to minimize estate tax, reasonable distribute the business among family members, and how to preserve the operating unit.

Some of the comments offered by the women about the workshop were:

"Very good, could have stayed there, there was more material we did not get covered."

"There was allot of information presented in a short period of time, handouts would have been very helpful."

"Interesting and startling to hear what can happen to your estate if not planned properly."

Developing Financial Statements

The "Developing Financial Statements" workshop was conducted by Christine Schirber, the President of the Dewey County Bank. The workshop was designed to give participants an opportunity to understand how a banker views the various financial statements and to analyze them. The workshop examined several examples of each of the financial statements and how to properly prepare the statements.

Ms. Schirber also spoke at the 1990 conference.

Some of the comments offered by women attending this workshop were:

"Excellent speaker and presentation. I only wish my banker was as caring and understanding."

"Good basic skills and ideas in filling out financial statements which will be helpful next time I fill out a financial statement."

"Good dynamic speaker."

Effective Communication

The "Effective Communication" workshop was conducted by Deb Johnson, a Counselor for the East Central Mental Health Center in Brookings, SD. The workshop gave participants an opportunity to understand non-verbal communication and how to improve communication skills. The participants were encouraged to learn how to express their needs verbally and assertively to improve their family relationships.

Some of the comments offered by women about the workshop were:

"I liked the "shoulder-on" examples. Very pertinent information. It would be nice to have more group participation in a lengthier time."

"I could have listened to her for another hour."

"I really enjoyed this session and found it very resourceful."

Stress Management

The "Stress Management" workshop was conducted by Lynette Olson, the Family Life Specialist for the South Dakota Cooperative Extension Service. The workshop was designed to help participants identify the sources of stress in their lives and offered ways to manage the stress.

"Not only were stress potentials identified but solutions were suggested as well."

"I enjoyed combining group activities with the sessions."

"It was good to talk about stressful things that are going on in our life."

PART TWO

1992 Topic Recommendations, Recommendations For Conference Improvements and Participants Feelings About The Conference.

The final evaluation requested information about what the participants would like to see at the next conference, recommendations to improve the conference and what the participants felt they gained from the conference. Some of the women attending the conference felt the conference met several of those needs that were not currently being met with local or statewide programming. The women were also interested in expressing their needs for future conferences.

The types of topics desired for future conferences could be categorized into self improvement and specific farm management techniques. Suggested topics under specific farm management techniques included.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Farm Computer Software | 9. Advanced Marketing |
| 2. Income Tax Advise | 10. Animal Care |
| 3. Farm Safety Course | 11. ASCS Programming |
| 4. Home Businesses | 12. 1992 Farm Bill |
| 5. Grain Marketing | 13. Retirement Planning |
| 6. Chemical Safety | 14. Kid Proofing Farm |
| 7. Animal Health Management | |
| 8. Financial Management | |

Those topics that were suggested that related to self (or family) improvement included:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. Family Violence | 9. Parenting Skills |
| 2. Assertiveness | 10. Farming and Ranching
After The Death Of
A Spouse. |
| 3. Family Farm Problems | 11. Divorce on the Farm |
| 4. Self-Esteem | |
| 5. Communication | |
| 6. Stress Management | |
| 7. Aging Parents | |
| 8. Women's Health | |

The women requested that they be able to attend all of the workshops, as opposed to selecting five workshops to attend. It was suggested that the women select those workshops that would benefit themselves and their particular

farming/ranching operation.

The topics chosen for the 1991 conference were timely and was presented in a fashion that was practical in nature. The women expressed that the information they received they would be able to use ~~NOW~~ on their own farms and ranches.

The final evaluation asked women to express what they felt would improve the WIA conference. A number of women expressed they were very satisfied with the conference and only requested that the conference be offered again next year. Another group of women offered some practical advise that would help improve the conference. Some of those comments were:

"Have the conference in a couple of locations. I know more people would have attended but the distance prevented it."

"With 50% of the women working off the farm this should be on a weekend. Many more would have attended."

"Registration went too slow. Possibly have name tags in the packets."

"Please print program promotion material on paper that it can be reproduced and have a separate section to be mailed back in."

"Perhaps the fall could be a better time to come because of calving."

"There were allot of women that did not hear about the conference."

"Maybe having the conference in Pierre again, but in the fall would be better as it was hard to get away during calving."

The conference was held in two locations in 1990 and in one location in 1991 and the time of year for both years remained the same. Due to the diversity of agriculture in South Dakota there may not be a time of year that will best suit every farm or ranch operation. It is recommended that the conference be held in the spring in Eastern, South Dakota and during the fall in Western, South Dakota to try to accommodate as many individuals as possible.

The numbers of women attending the 1991 conference was larger that either of the two 1990 conference and thus their were problems associated with

registration. It is recommended that name tags be placed in the registration packets and that the coordinators investigate alternative methods of registering a large number of women for the conference.

The women were asked on the final evaluation to express what they feel they gained from attending the WIA conference. A number of the women expressed a feeling of "one-ness" with other farm and ranch women. Most stated they felt they were not alone in the types of problems that they deal with on their own operations.

Some of the other comments expressed about the conference were:

"Encouragement and Confidence."

"I have been supplied with allot of survival tools for our farming operation."

"I am grateful there is a conference for Women In Agriculture. The number of women attending represent a fraction of the number of women involved in Ag. that could benefit from the conference."

"I feel more confident more confident about the management and business end of farming."

"I feel I am more educated and perhaps I can be even more of an asset to our operation."

"I have gained a better understanding of marketing and ASCS and plan to put this knowledge into practice in our farming operation. I learned some good, practical advice on family budgeting and developing better communication skills."

"Immediate methods, ways, etc. that I can put to use today or insight on things I can do myself to improve my attitude toward those things I find hard to cope with or manage."

The individuals attending the conference have provided suggestions to improve the conference, topics to consider in the future and provided insight into what they feel they have gained from the conference. The following section will summarize those suggestions and make recommendations for the next WIA conference.

Recommendations For The 1992 Women In Agriculture Conference

The final evaluation has provided insight into the types of topics desired at the next conference, the strengths and weaknesses of the conference and a sense of satisfaction with the conference as a whole. The individuals attending the conference appear to be desiring more specific workshops on various topics and the goal of the next conference should be to target these needs.

It is recommended that the following types of courses be offered at the next conference: 1) both a beginning and intermediate marketing workshop, 2) a variety of types of bookkeeping courses that can be tailored to individual operations, 3) the full "First Care" program, 4) continue to offer workshops on stress management, developing a greater self esteem, and family communication, 5) a workshop that explores home business opportunities, 6) income tax avoidance and financial management, 7) the effects of divorce on the farm, and 8) ASCS/SCS programming and the 1992 farm bill. The previous section will provide ideas for additional topics, if desired.

Due to the numbers of women that are currently working off the farm, the program coordinators should consider holding all or part of the conference on the weekend. This would enable those with off farm jobs as well as those individuals whose labor is required weekdays, but could leave the farm on the weekends when their children could help with chores.

The 1992 conference should consider holding the conference in two locations at different times of year. To meet the needs of those women residing in the western half of South Dakota, the conference should be held in the fall of the year, possibly on a Friday and Saturday in Rapid City. To meet the needs of those women residing in the eastern half of South Dakota the conference should be held in the spring of the year, possible on a Friday and Saturday in Mitchell. Both

locations offer adequate meeting facilities as well as an opportunity for attendants to attend to farm or ranch business needs.

The women attending the conference made several suggestions about the food that was served and the overall flow of the conference. It is recommended that the next conference consider serving fresh fruit and fruit juices during the breaks. It is very difficult to satisfy each individual dietary needs during a two day conference. It is recommended that the conference continue to try to serve as much beef, pork, lamb and poultry during the course of the conference as possible. Each industry is slowly beginning to recognize the importance of the conference and may be willing to provide a cash donation toward the purchase of the meat or to provide the meat for a meal.

As the conference has grown, so has the complexity of managing and organizing the conference. It is recommended that an alternative way to registered participants should be explored. The conference coordinators should explore the possibilities of coordinating a conference board, consisting of several women from across the state to provide input into the organization of the conference and to suggest possible workshops, meals, a conference agenda and speakers for the conference.

Due to the problems with funding the program, it is suggested that the conference coordinator solicit the help of a professional fund raiser to assist in soliciting support for the conference. There are several unexplored funding sources that should be thoroughly researched to provide the needed financial security for the conference.

The Women In Agriculture program, while still in the maturing process, has been an extremely successful program in South Dakota. The program continues to provide a needed educational opportunity for the rural women of South Dakota. The

women have, and will continue to provide, the much needed input to ensure the success of the program. It is further recommended that the program continue on it's present course, making the suggested changes, toward meeting these needs.

PART THREE

Program Development

During the past two years the Women In Agriculture conference coordinators have strived hard to develop a high quality program. The program requires great attention to detail and the coordinators feel they have gained a great deal of insight into how to run this program successfully. This section is devoted to sharing some of the program development procedures that have been found to be extremely successful. It takes approximate one year, working intermittently, to produce the WIA program and begins almost immediately after the previous conference has concluded.

It is important to choose the site for the program carefully. The program site should be in a area that is accessible to the target audience, the facility should be large enough to accommodate the number of workshops, keynote speakers and numbers of individuals attending the conference. Conference facilities usually book a year in advance, so it is important to get the conference on their schedule as soon as possible.

The most difficult part of coordinating the program is soliciting monetary support for the conference. During the past two years the conference has been supported, through break sponsorship, by several financial institutions. One sponsor has chosen to contribute money to support a keynote speaker each of the past two years.

A large number of women are sponsored by banks to attend the conference. This ranges from support for registration fees to full financial support (which

includes motel expenses, mileage and reimbursement for meals). It is important to continue to solicit their support.

For this reason outlined above, it is also important for the coordinator to explore alternative methods of soliciting support. This should include exploring both grant possibilities as well as private sponsorship for the program.

Selecting the workshops and speakers should be accomplished six to nine months prior to the conference. Speakers may be found within the university system, extension and private industry. Often times "networking" will provide a speaker for difficult topics.

The greatest improvement to coordinating the conference will come with developing a conference board, consisting of women from across the state, to assist in developing the program. The board will be able to assist in choosing appropriate workshops and may be able to provide insight into speakers for the various topics.

Once the site has been chosen, topics selected and speakers contacted (and accepted) it is important to develop an agenda and brochure. In the past the conference has encompassed the bulk of two days. The first day generally runs from 8:30 a.m. to 8 or 9:00 p.m. The second day is generally shorter running from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The workshops are scheduled for one and one half hours each with half hour breaks between the workshops. This amount of time for each workshop is enough for a 45 minute to one hour presentation and a 45 minute to one half hour question and discussion period. It will be important to adjust these times if the full "First Care" program is offer in 1992, as the program takes approximately three hours to complete.

The keynote speakers address topics of general interest to the group as a

whole. The keynote speaker after the evening meal is usually entertaining and informative, while the keynote speaker after lunch on the second day is generally a "feel good about farming and the future of farming" speaker. The first keynote speaker on the first day is generally a "feel good about myself and my role in farming" type of speaker. It has been found in the past that these types of speakers will relate well to the needs of the audience.

Advertising and promoting the program generally begins approximately three months prior to the conference. It is important to begin working with Agricultural Communication on campus early to ensure adequate written coverage as well as spots on the radio. The county extension agents will also provide assistance in advertising the program and it is important to provide them with the necessary tools and information. The banking institutions in the state should also be contacted at this time to request their assistance in promoting and sponsoring the program. The banks in previous years have provided outstanding support for the program and it is important to work closely with the banks during this period of time. There is currently available a data base of approximately 3,000 women across the state. This list includes all past women involved with the program as well as the pool of names used in the WIA research project. It has been found in the past that if the woman receiving the brochure does not desire to attend she will pass the information along to someone else. Figure 2 graphically depicts the effectiveness of each of the forms of advertising. T.V. was zero in 1991 due to that form of media not being used. Word of mouth has also been a strong form of advertising for the program.

One to two months prior to the conference it is important to contact the conference facility coordinator to coordinate meals, workshop and keynote speaker room set-up, audio/visual equipment (if needed) and any special needs you may

have for the conference. In the past the workshop rooms have been set up classroom style, while the general meeting rooms have been set up theater style. The size of the conference in prior years has allowed for separate rooms for meals and general meetings, but as the numbers of women attending the conference grows there will be a need to change this arrangement.

The banquet coordinator will offer suggestions as to types of meals to serve and the style in which they should be served. This past year, since there is not a noon speaker on the first day, the noon meal was served banquet style and consisted of soup, salads and sandwiches. The evening meal and the second day noon meal has traditionally been a sit-down meal since there are speakers associated with those meals. The evening meal is generally a "dressier" affair and last year prime rib was served.

Once the conference has been set there will be what will seem to be "a million" small things to accomplish prior to the conference. These will include (but are not limited to) 1) registering individuals for the conference, 2) having posters made for break sponsors, 3) developing the packets of material to be distributed, 4) coordinating travel arrangements for speakers, and 5) completing conference facility arrangements. It is important to work closely with speakers, the newly formed board, the Chamber of Commerce in the host city, and the facility coordinator to ensure a successful conference.

In past years the conference has requested a final evaluation of the conference, workshops and suggestions for future topics. It is important to see that each of those individuals attending the conference completes the form. The data is entered into a data base after the conference to gain insight into the success (or failures) of the conference and to determine the topics for the next conference.

The WIA conference is successful due to the organizational efforts of those individuals involved. The women attending the conference appreciate the attention to detail, organization and that the conference runs on schedule. It is important to maintain the high degree of professionalism when coordinating the program.

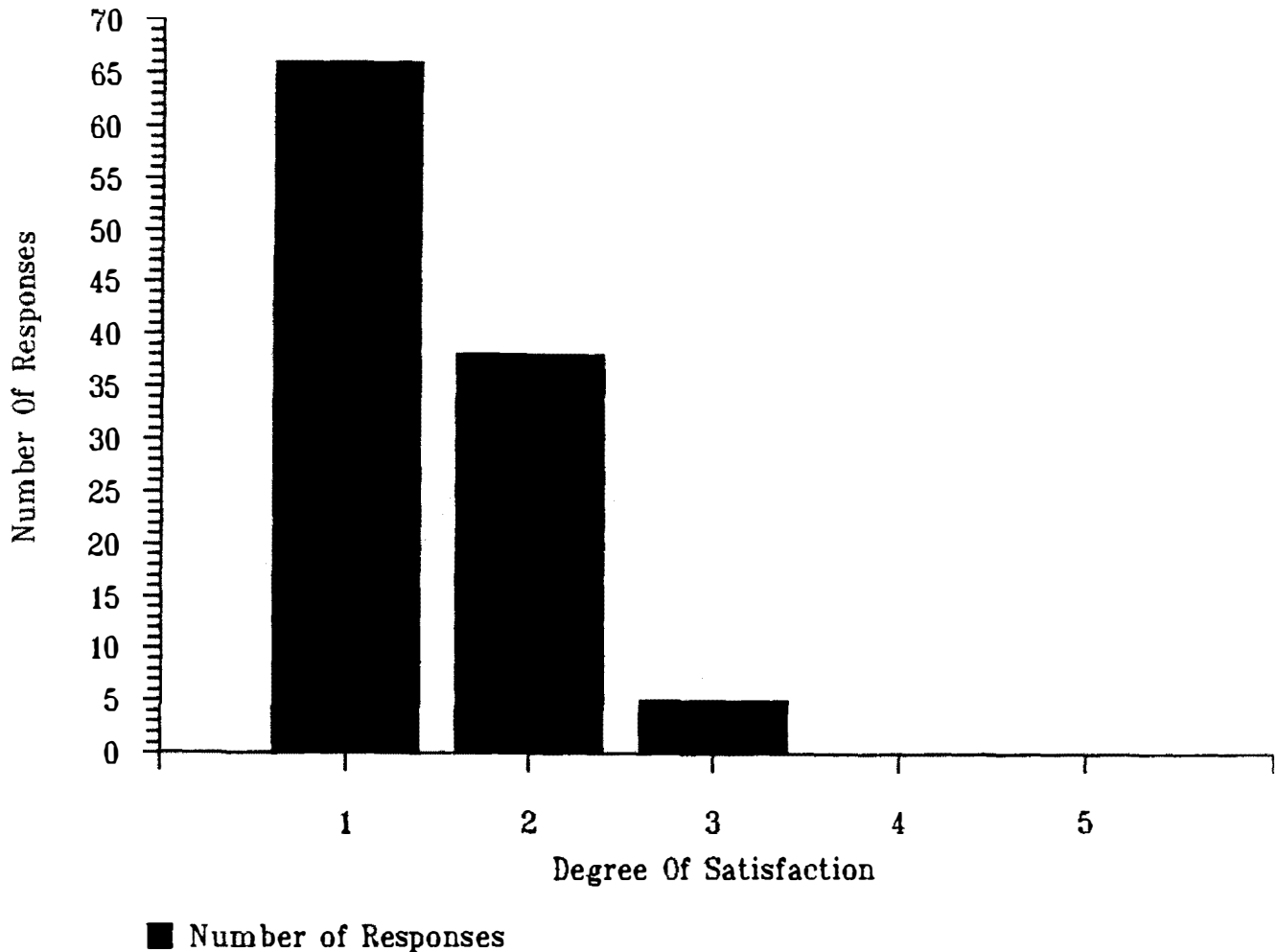
PAPER SUMMARY

The 1991 "Women In Agriculture: Balancing Family and Farm" conference was very successful in reaching 160 farm and ranch women in South Dakota. The program provides women with an opportunity to enhance their farm management skills and to network with other women in similar situations to solve current problems on their own operations. The program, while with an enormous amount of success, is having to meet with its own challenges for the future.

The program is currently is not funded for 1992. The program will loose its coordinator in June, 1991 and the current outlook for private funds is bleak. While not all funding opportunities have been explored, it is doubtful they will be explored without a conference coordinator.

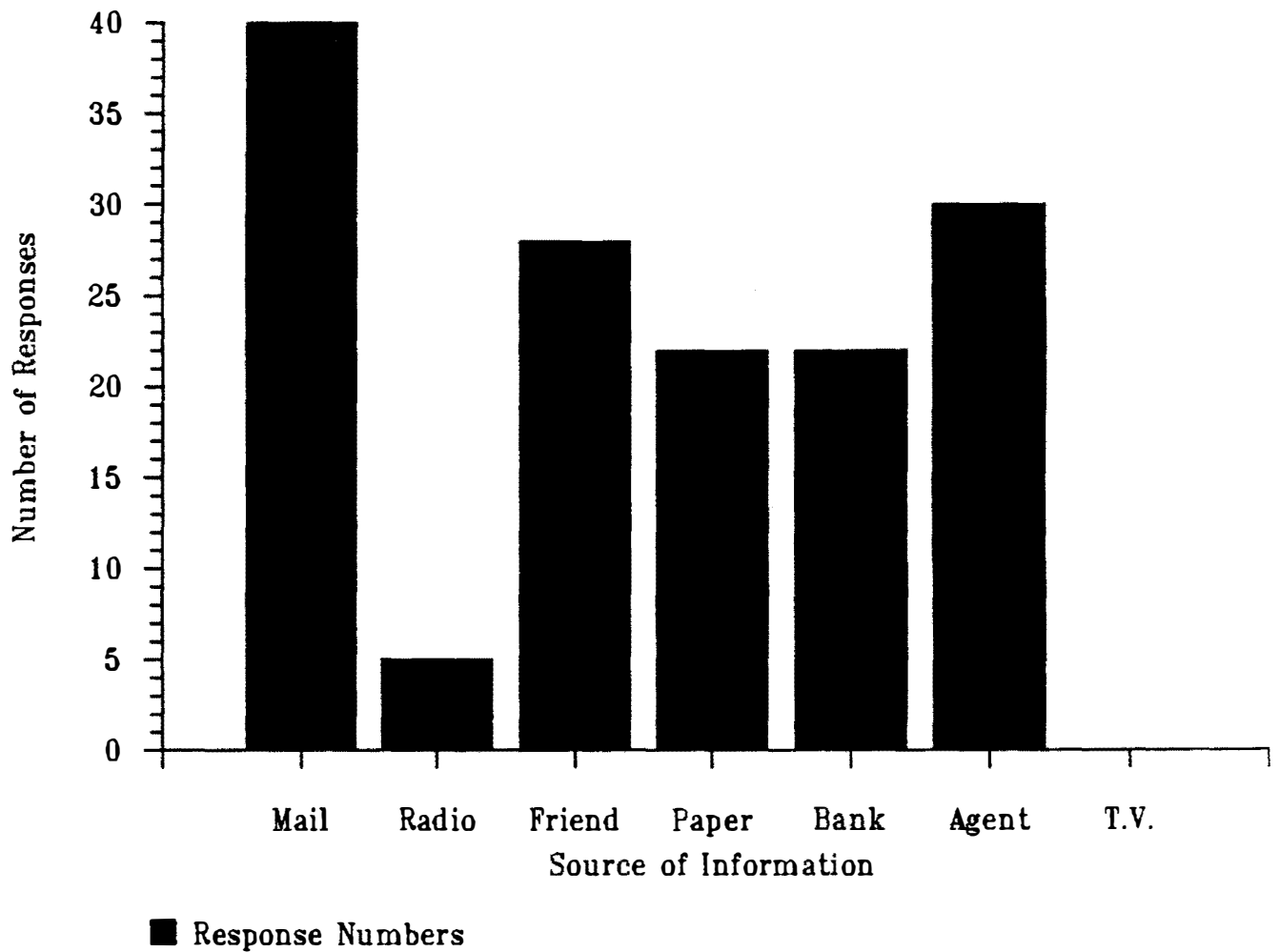
Over the course of the two year period the WIA program has proven to be a successful educational tool for rural women. It is important that the program continue on its present course and be recognized for the contributions that this program has for those women involved in agricultural production and management.

Figure 1 Degree of satisfaction with the conference as a whole in number of responses (1).



(1) Women were asked to rate the conference from one to five. One was considered to be the best rating and five the worst rating.

Figure 2 Where individuals received their source of information about the conference in number of responses (1).



(1) Women were asked to indicate where they received their source of information about the conference. Some women indicated they received their information from several sources.

Table 1. Workshop rating by those individuals attending the workshop in numbers of responses¹.

Workshop	Rating ²				
	1	2	3	4	5
Managing Hired Help Dary Taly	11	6	6	2	4
Basic Marketing Gene Murra	32	19	5	1	0
Family Budgeting Jean Ohm	15	18	4	1	0
Women As Farm Owners/Managers Carol Anderson	26	18	10	5	0
Farm Safety Gail Broch	33	15	3	0	1
Understanding ASCS Programming Dean Anderson Steve Cyriacks	13	20	18	5	4
Estate/Tax Planning Mike Newton	28	25	13	3	1
Developing Financial Statements Christine Schirber	23	14	6	2	0
Effective Communication Deb Johnson	42	17	11	2	0
Stress Management Lynette Olson	35	12	7	0	0

Source: Final evaluation at the 1991 South Dakota Women In Agriculture Program.

¹ The women attending the conference were given the opportunity to choose those workshops they felt best fit their needs and thus the numbers of individuals attending each workshop varied. The total number of women attending the conference was 160.

² The individuals were asked to rate the workshop from one to five. A rating of one was excellent and a rating of five was poor.