



Value-Added counselors can provide technical assistance

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MADISON – A group of newly certified counselors are available to work with local food and farm businesses in need of technical assistance to potentially increase their bottom line.

Starting this week, 18 counselors from throughout Wisconsin are offering assistance in areas such as cost of production modeling, market research, marketing, funding options, sales channels, and business models.

The new Value-Added Food and Farm Business Counselor Program was developed by the WI Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection in conjunction with the UW-Extension Food Finance Institute and is being administered by DATCP.

“My colleagues in the local food industry were seeing a need for a collection of people with targeted knowledge on how to offer technical assistance to farms and value-added food businesses,” said program manager Kietra Olson, a DATCP agriculture program specialist. “We’re hoping that this network of certified counselors can offer a long-term solution to that need.”

The program started last autumn with an application process to find experienced industry members who underwent intensive training to receive Value-Added Food and Farm Business Counselor certification. The training was provided by Tera Johnson of the UW-Extension Food Finance Institute, who will continue to mentor the new counselors as they begin their work with clients.

The group of counselors consists of local food industry professionals who bring their own expertise and knowledge to the table. Areas of expertise cover everything from the dairy industry to value-added processing, specialty meats, organic farming, CSAs, branding and marketing, and more.

Counselors’ fee schedules range from no cost to \$150/hour. A full list of counselors, including contact information, fees and background can be found on the DATCP website at http://datcp.wi.gov/Business/Buy_Local_Buy_Wisconsin/Food_and_Farm_Certification_Program/index.aspx

Businesses interested in receiving technical assistance from one of the counselors listed, should contact the counselor directly to discuss the potential to work together.

Businesses needing assistance on how to select a counselor, or help with other questions, can contact Kietra Olson at kietra.olson@wisconsin.gov or (608) 224-5112.