



# BRIDGING THE GAP:

## Strengthening Support for North Dakota's Small Farms through NDSU Extension

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### Project Background

Small farms are an essential and growing part of North Dakota's agricultural landscape. Data from the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service 2022 Census of Agriculture indicate that nearly 2,900 farms in North Dakota operate on 1 to 49 acres, an 8% increase from 2007.

These operations produce a wide range of products and play a vital role in local food systems and community resilience. A 2022 master's research project found that small farms face unique challenges not fully addressed by traditional programming. The NDSU Extension Small Farms team is your gateway to practical, research-based resources that help small farm owners, gardeners, and local food producers succeed, covering livestock and horticulture, food preservation, value-added products, marketing, and local food systems.



### Objectives

1. Establish a multidisciplinary team of Extension agents and specialists to support small farm owners.
2. Develop a centralized resource website that provides small farm owners with access to relevant, research-based information and support.
3. Promote the team and its resources first to Extension agents and specialists and then to small farm owners and policymakers through coordinated outreach and communication efforts.

Educational program focus areas:

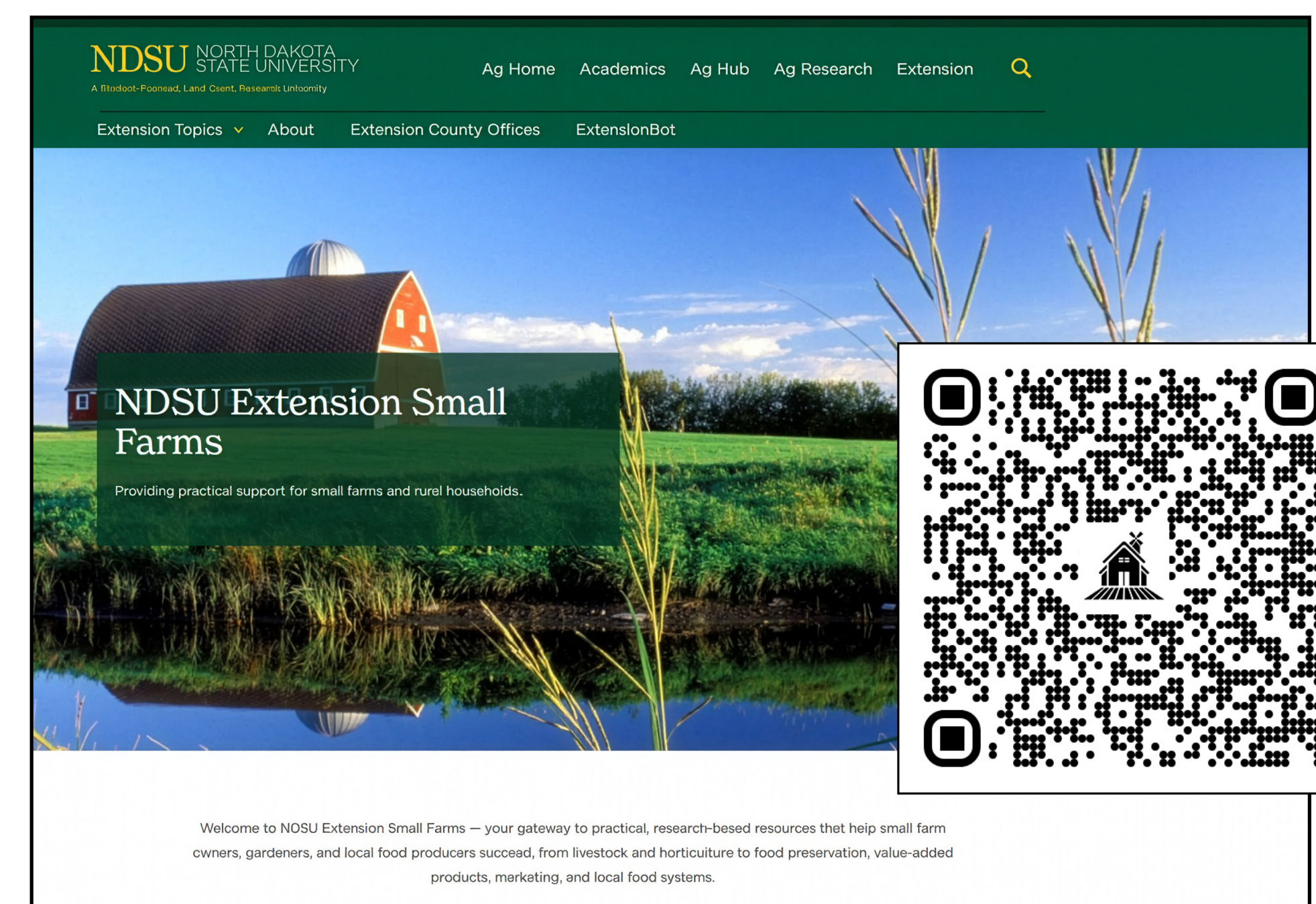
- Farm to School
- Field to Fork
- Food Entrepreneurship
- Gardening and Horticulture
- Livestock and Poultry

### Results

Educational impact in North Dakota increased through NDSU Extension efforts, connecting small farm operators to local, science-based information.

#### WEBSITE

[www.ag.ndsu.edu/smallfarms](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/smallfarms)



#### PUBLICATIONS



### Lessons Learned

We have a unique opportunity to connect with a new audience who have small farm operations and are not traditionally NDSU Extension users. This audience is eager to learn and desires the material we are providing, as evidenced by publication views and webinar feedback.

#### WEBINAR SERIES



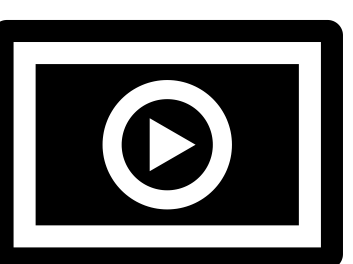
##### Food Entrepreneurship

**94%** increased knowledge of small farm food and management resources  
**50%** applied what they learned



##### Field to Fork

According to follow-up surveys:  
**36%** taught someone what they learned about preserving food safely  
**2,170** live participants (2025)

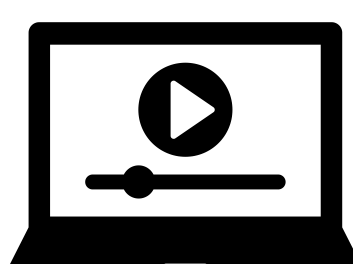


**6,730** recording views (as of Jan. 16, 2026)  
**53%** taught someone what they learned about growing a garden



##### Horse Management Webinar (2020-2024)

**972** live participants



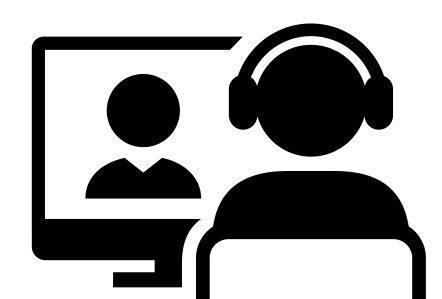
**4,472** recording views

**82%** of the 320 live webinar participant respondents rated the webinars as very or extremely useful

**All 18** topic areas presented resulted in change (five-year review)



##### Buying and Selling Local Meats



**132** live participants (2022–2023)



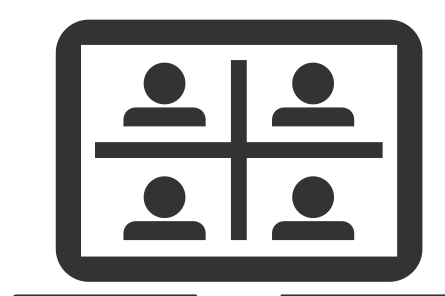
**1,591** YouTube video views

Interest in:

- connecting producers to consumers
- offering local meat through custom-exempt, state-inspected, and USDA-inspected products.



##### Grant Writing Workshops



**128** individuals trained

**27** NDSU Extension staff trained to host workshops in their communities

### Future Plans

NDSU Extension aims to spark meaningful dialogue among educators, researchers and policymakers about Extension's evolving role in supporting small farms.