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**Expert says volatile economy makes Master Marketer Program more important than ever**

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SAN ANGELO – The downturn in the economy makes Texas AgriLife Extension Service's Master Marketer Program more important than ever before, said an AgriLife Extension economist.

The 64-hour curriculum, which starts Jan. 21-22 at San Angelo's Tom Green County 4-H Building, is offered as four, two-day sessions held every two weeks.

Bill Thompson, AgriLife Extension economist at San Angelo, said the program is the most intensive marketing/risk management training offered through any Extension Service in the U.S. at any price.

“Though it may not be publicized as often, the ongoing downturn in the U.S. economy has hit agriculture as hard if not harder, than other segments of our population,” Thompson said. “The historic price volatility we are now seeing, large increases in production costs and a considerably tighter credit market, makes the Master Marketing Program more relevant today than at any point in its 13-year history.

“When participants leave this workshop with a working marketing plan tailored to their operation, they and their lender will benefit. Producers will have a good idea of what to expect in the coming year, and if conditions change, they will have a working contingency plan to fall back on to avert financial disaster. Our goal is to provide the tools and confidence to allow producers to evaluate market conditions and adjust their marketing plans accordingly.”

Each participant is surveyed 2 1/2 years post graduation. The 705 past participants showed their

gross annual income increased an average \$33,640, based on what they had learned from the training, according to Thompson.

“There is no reason all program graduates shouldn’t expect to earn this level of increased returns for the next 10 years,” he said.

“This program is truly tailored for anyone interested in maintaining a long-term profitable agricultural enterprise. It's as applicable to those new to agriculture as it is to the old pro whose family has held the business together through many generations.”

Due to its hands-on nature, attendance will be limited, so early registration is encouraged.

Individual registration is \$250, which includes meals and materials.

Thompson said the fee is only part of the total cost, with most being underwritten by grants and partnerships with other agencies and commodity groups.

For more information call Thompson at 325-653-4576 or register on-line at:

<http://agrilifevents.tamu.edu> .