

Nebraska Extension's Weather Ready Farms Certification Program



Overview

The Weather Ready Farms certification program is designed to **improve or increase resilience towards the impacts of extreme weather on Nebraska's farms**. This program recognizes and rewards Nebraska farmers who prioritize weather readiness and are committed to reducing the impact of extreme weather events on their farms.

About the Program

The Weather Ready Farms certification program is a **one- or two-year program**. The length of the program is dependent on a participant's previous and current experience implementing crop management practices related to extreme weather and climate variation.

The program is delivered locally or regionally, with local or regional Extension professionals coordinating the program and communicating with participants. **Participants apply to the program by completing and submitting a self-assessment**, which serves as a part of the application.

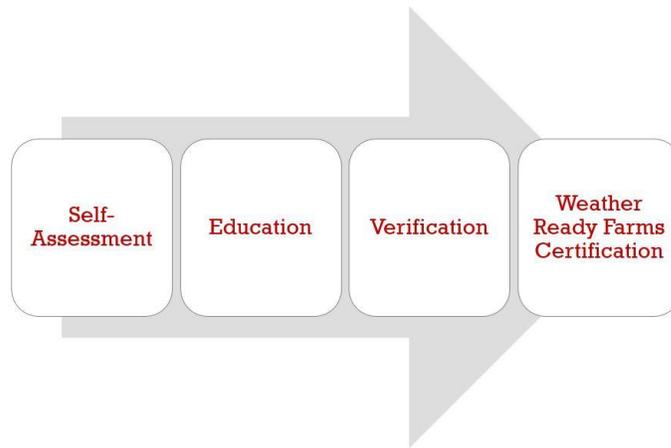
Throughout the certification program experience, **participants learn through face-to-face and online teachings methods**.

Certification Category

At this time, there is only one category in which farmers can receive certification: Crop Production. More categories will be added in the future.

How Certification Works

There are **four phases** to the Weather Ready Farms certification program.



- **Self-Assessment:** Participants complete a self-assessment to determine areas of vulnerabilities on the farm.
- **Education:** Participants attend a variety of Nebraska Extension programs and partner events, where they learn about new research and ways to implement practices on the farm. In the Crop Production category, participants learn about topics like climate literacy; management of soil, water, pests, and crops; and disaster and emergency planning and preparedness.
- **Verification:** Participants prioritize areas on the farm where they can implement new management strategies, and these practices are verified by a third-party provider.
- **Certification:** Participants who have completed phases 1-3 receive the Weather Ready Farms certification status.

Certification Benefits

The benefits for receiving the Weather Ready Farms certification status include but are not limited to:

- Early access to Nebraska Extension, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and program partners' educational resources and programs
- Certification signage for the farm and local recognition
- Improved or increased resilience towards the impacts of extreme weather on the farm

Weather Ready Farms'

Phases to Certification



Overview

There are **four phases** to the Weather Ready Farms certification program:

- Self-Assessment
- Education
- Verification
- Certification

The Weather Ready Farms certification program is approximately a **one- or two-year program**. The length of the program is dependent on a participant's previous and current experiences implementing crop management practices related to extreme weather and climate variation. The self-assessment and education phases take participants approximately 9-12 months to complete, and the verification and certification phases takes an additional 3-12 months.

Self-Assessment Phase

Each participant takes a self-assessment upon acceptance into the certification program. The self-assessment allows both the participant and the certification program team 1) to understand what practices the participant is already doing to reduce the impact of climate variation and extreme weather on the farm, and 2) to develop a learning plan for the participant.

The self-assessment is divided into three tiers: 1, 2, and 3.

- **Tier 1** encompasses introductory practices to increase farm resilience to extreme weather.

- **Tier 2** includes practices that are intermediate in their approaches to increase farm resilience to extreme weather. These practices may require more time and resources to implement.
- **Tier 3** includes advanced management practices that are the most time and resource intensive.

Education Phase

The education phase of the certification program includes in-person and online teaching methods, and it takes place over 9-12 months. All participants enroll in core education programs. Each participant enrolls in different elective programs, which are based on the participant’s self-assessment and interests.

Verification Phase

In the verification phase, participants reflect on concepts learned and apply new or alter crop management strategies to reduce the impact of climate variation and extreme weather. A third-party verifier works with each participant to confirm the management strategies used on the farm. Verification encompasses information from the self-assessment and education phases, and this phase of the certification program is approximately 3 months for each participant.

Once a participant is ready to reach certification, a third-party verifier will review the participant’s initial self-assessment and implementation of crop management strategies at the participant’s farm. The goal of program is to identify ways in which the participant has increased on-farm resilience to extreme weather; the results will be subjective for individual farmers and their farm, experiences, and decisions. Following the verification meeting, the verifier, in conjunction with the Nebraska Extension project team, will determine certification status and notify the participant.

Certification Phase

The certification phase is the final phase of the Weather Ready Farms program. For participants to achieve certification, they must demonstrate management practices that increase resilience to extreme weather. Examples include:

- If a participant’s initial self-assessment mostly falls in Tier 1, certification is awarded if the participant implements and documents Tier 2 management practices.



Figure 1. A mockup of a farm sign that indicates Weather Ready Farms certification.

- If a participant's initial self-assessment mostly falls in Tier 2, certification is awarded if the participant implements and documents Tier 3 management practices.
- In the rare event a participant's initial self-assessment mostly falls in Tier 3, certification is awarded through an agreement of personalized management practices between the participants and the Nebraska Extension project team.

Upon notification of the certification status, the participant is recognized for accomplishments. Means of recognition may include but are not limited to:

- Farm sign (example shown in Figure 1)
- Feature in local or regional publications or media
- Reception or banquet
- State Ag Day ceremony

For More Information

For more information or questions about the Weather Ready Farms certification program, contact **Ashley Mueller**, Extension Educator and Disaster Education Coordinator, at ashley.mueller@unl.edu.