University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension recently launched two online short courses on irrigation and soils at marketplace.unl.edu. The courses combine the convenience and flexibility of online learning with the opportunity to obtain continuing education unit (CEU) credits.

UNL Extension educator Chuck Burr said the virtual learning environment is especially suited for those whose schedules or location may prevent them from attending traditional extension training opportunities. The modules are intended for crop consultants, agency personnel, crop producers and others interested in improving their soil science or soil fertility management and irrigation management skills.

“UNL Extension still offers programs for those who prefer traditional, classroomstyle training,” Burr said. “However, the new online course on irrigation management allows participants to learn at the click of a mouse.”

“The courses are designed to assist online learners in acquiring new knowledge,” UNL Extension educator Keith Glewen added. “This in turn can result in management decisions which have a positive impact on financial and environmental outcomes.”

The soils course aims to expand the participant’s knowledge of soil science, including the origins, physical properties and chemical properties of soil. Understanding this information benefits those making management decisions related to soil fertility and crop production. This in turn can improve the efficiency of fertilizer applications, reduce nutrient loss and improve crop yields.

The irrigation management course will help increase awareness and understanding of irrigation management concepts. Agricultural water users can optimize water use efficiency and protect the quality of water resources by applying basic information about irrigation systems, crop water use and management practices.

Reducing irrigation application amounts and increasing uniformity of application leads to reduced deep percolation and runoff. The result can be reduced irrigation costs, increased efficiency, increased yields and reduced surface and groundwater contamination.

Formal admission to UNL is not required to enroll in the short courses. Register online at http://marketplace.unl.edu/extension/registration. The registration fee for each course is $50. CEU credit is available for an additional $10 per credit with a maximum of 13 credits per course.

Contact Chuck Burr at chuck.burr@unl.edu for details on the irrigation short course and Keith Glewen at kglewen1@unl.edu for information on the soils short course.