



Meeting the Diverse Needs of Limited-Resource Producers is a new, 16-page bulletin for agricultural educators, heads of community development and agricultural organizations, government agency staff and others who want to better connect with and improve the lives of farmers and ranchers who remain hard to reach.

SARE's newest free bulletin features nine success stories from around the country as a jumping off point for adapting innovative programs to varied areas. It also provides

- "how-to" ideas for educators

- socio-economic characteristics/barriers to working with varied audiences
- proven teaching methods
- successful connection strategies.

Like other SARE bulletins, this inspires and motivates readers by showcasing good examples, providing some key "how-to" tips, then pointing to more detailed resources on the subject. In this case, our primary audience is educators, and the projects we feature take the form of success stories that might stimulate ideas for people to ponder across the country.

Call Gwen Roland at Southern SARE (770) 412-4786 for up to 10 copies. For larger quantities call the National SARE office at (301) 504-5236. If you have internet access, find a printer-friendly version at www.sare.org/bulletin/limited-resource.

Harvesting New Ideas On the Road

For Angie Stober, who raises beef in Carrollton, Georgia, a scholarship to attend the SARE national conference came at just the right time.

"We had recently removed some trees to put in a riparian buffer around a stream in our pasture," she says. "When I saw shiitake mushrooms at one of the farms on the tour, I knew I had to try it."

Once back home in Georgia, it was a simple matter to cut the downed trees into lengths.

"Now I just have to order the inoculant, and hopefully, I'll have mushrooms to sell at the farmers market next season," she continues.

A total of 109 farmers from around the country received scholarships to *On The Road To Sustainable Agriculture*. Like Angie, most of them had toyed

with the idea of trying some new enterprises, and had even read quite a bit about something they wanted to try, but they just needed to see another farmer doing it before taking the plunge. Surveys show that farmers prefer to learn from other farmers.

Robert Robinson of Brookhaven, MS, has been farming all his life. Robinson and his wife Anna raise their own vegetable seedlings in a 32-by-40-foot minimally heated greenhouse. Produce is sold directly from the farm to customers who have depended on Robinson's bounty for 25 years. With a lifetime of experience behind him, Robinson still seeks out every opportunity to learn. During the tours he was especially intrigued by the no-till concept.

Continued on page 2



Fred Miller talks about the new enterprises at Hilltop Farms, which has been in the family since the 1600s. Taking advantage of encroaching development, the Millers market vegetables, fruits and flowers through a CSA, a local florist, a farmers' market and restaurants. Photo by Gwen Roland



Common Ground is published by the Southern Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program. SARE funds projects that develop environmentally sound, economically viable and socially acceptable agricultural methods. SARE is funded by USDA and EPA.

The Southern Region SARE Program is administered by the University of Georgia and Fort Valley State University. The Southern Region includes Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Puerto Rico and the U.S.V.I.

Communications Committee

Janie Hipp, Chair
Kerr Center
Oklahoma

Peggy Barlett, Vice Chair
Emory University
Georgia

Jill Auburn
National SARE Director
Washington DC

Majorie Bender
American Livestock
Breeds Conservancy

Shirley Harris
Producer
Tennessee

Lora Lee Schroeder
EPA
Georgia

Wayne Solley
US Geological Survey
Georgia

Comments welcomed by
Gwen Roland, editor
Ph: (770) 412-4786
Fax: (770) 412-4789
groland@peachnet.edu

Continued from page 1

"We visited one farm that hadn't been plowed in 20 years," he said. "It had six inches of topsoil and plenty of earthworms over hard clay. I had read a little about that but had not seen it close up. I've planted my pasture no-till, and if I can get the special equipment to plant my vegetables like that, I'd sure like to try it. I'd also like to try mulching my vegetables like we saw at the Center for Environmental Farming Systems. I'll save leaves and pine straw this winter and then mulch the plants when we set them out next spring."

Jimmy Dale Graham of Gainesville, GA, won his scholarship as a doorprize at an agriculture forum. Semi-retired from a non-farm career, he plans to farm in partnership with his son, a student at Abraham Baldwin Agriculture College. They are going to buy 300 acres to grow row crops, honey bees, vegetables and fish. The scholarship offered Graham, who grew up on a conventional farm, his first look at sustainable agriculture.

"I was blown away by the no-till process we saw at one of the farms," he said. "This was a new concept for me. I was amazed to find out about the savings in fuel, labor and equipment."

Next, Graham was most impressed by a presentation at the conference center about large volume composting, another technique he plans to use on his farm.

The farmer panel also gave him plenty to think about.

"Hearing Alex Hitt speak during the farmer panel was such a revelation to me since I didn't know a small parcel of land could make a living," he said.

Even the bus rides provided learning opportunities for Graham..

"One day I sat next to a man who grows tilapia in tubs with water chestnuts on top," he continued. "After talking to him during the rides between tour stops, I am convinced to try some kind of aquaculture on my farm."

Intrigued by what he saw and heard *On The Road*, Graham is making plans to attend the SSAWG conference in January.



One early bus stop found Dot McAdams out in the morning mist cutting flowers for market. Started in 1885, the McAdams Farm grew only tobacco until 20 years ago when the family diversified into cattle. In response to changing markets, they've now dropped tobacco and expanded into vegetables, strawberries and fresh flowers. Photo by Gwen Roland

PDP projects produce resources for new

As the publishing arm of SARE, the Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN) mass produces books and bulletins of interest to the widest possible audience. However, there's also a need for smaller print runs of technical publications addressing production practices for specific crops or climates or soil types. This important publishing niche is often filled by projects funded through the Professional Development Program. Here's a review of some recent materials developed as part of a PDP project. Perhaps this list will bring to mind training needs of your peers or clients that could be met with a SARE PDP grant.

New Crops in Florida

Thinking of growing olives in Florida? Not a good idea according to the University of Florida Extension publication *Sustainable Assessment of Fruit Crops for North and Central Florida*. Olive trees don't like high humidity and warm winters. Ditto for pistachio nuts, English walnuts, and raspberries.

However muscadines, black walnuts, mayhaws, oriental persimmons and chestnuts made a decent showing in sustainability rankings. Besides the ranking charts, the 12-page bulletin includes text on the profit potential of 13 fruit crops that are of interest to small farmers.

The bulletin was one of 12 that was produced or updated as part of a SARE PDP grant (ES97-030) to Gary Knox and Tim Crocker. The project also produced four field days that attracted a total of more than 520 participants, some from as far as 300 miles away.

Knox and Crocker proposed the training in alternative crops because they knew that small farmers in North Florida were feeling the pinch from larger operations, particularly in producing traditional agronomic crops. But the response to the field days and publications surprised even them.

"Our specific objective in the SARE project was to train at least 30 county extension faculty members and at least 30 farmers and other professionals during two field days," said Knox. "But the requests were so numerous as more people found out about the project that we had to find sponsors to put on two additional field days."

The array of trainers included county extension agents and faculty from the University of Florida and the University of Georgia speaking on the production of muscadine grapes, blueberries, stone fruits, wildflowers, vegetables, crape myrtles and other ornamentals. All together, they covered just about any crop that can be grown profitably on a farm or nursery in north Florida.



"The largest number of attendees were 284 master gardeners. They represent an important group in disseminating information about sustainable crop production," said Knox. "They play very important roles in county extension offices by talking to clients over the phone, holding clinics and participating in speakers bureaus."

While Knox is proud of what the project accomplished, he sees it as a starting point.

"What farmers and landscapers need now is economic information regarding costs of production of these crops as compared to the cost of producing conventional crops."

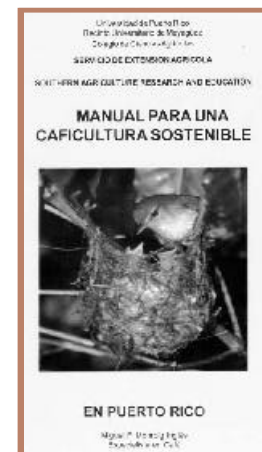
- Obtain *Sustainable Assessment of Fruit Crops for North and Central Florida* online at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG367>
- Read Knox's entire final report by searching for project ES97-030 in the SARE data base at www.sare.org.
- If you don't have internet access, order a free copy of either document from the SARE office by calling (770) 412-4787.

and traditional crops

A break for coffee and plantains

In Puerto Rico, Miguel Monroig headed up a PDP project that produced the first Spanish-language manuals for growing coffee and plantains using sustainable practices. Environmental problems from severe soil erosion on the steep farm lands and intensive use of pesticides and fertilizers prompted the work.

The task involved literature reviews, visits to Costa Rica where sustainable techniques were already being used, validation of practices on the farms, field trips to farms, and meetings to discuss what techniques should be included in the books. The task force included 43 leader farmers, 21 county agents, 6 investigators, 2 conservationists and an ecologist. Their effort produced 2000 copies of the coffee manual and 3000 copies of the plantain manual. Puerto Rico's Department of Agriculture and the Natural Resources and Conservation Services in coordination with the Agricultural Extension Service used the materials to train farmers to adopt the sustainable practices.



- Request copies of the manuals from:
Miguel Monroig
Fax: (787) 832-4590
monroigmiguel@hotmail.com

P is for profit

A PRIMER for Selecting Enterprises for Your Farm, may be the most entertaining publication ever produced on the keyboard of an ag economist. In designing the 12-page primer and 11 worksheets, Tim Woods and Steve Isaacs of University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service have proved that enterprise planning can be fun as well as profitable.

"School children used to learn to read from a primer, a thin book that laid the foundation for a lifetime of reading," Woods says in the introduction. "Similarly, an agricultural primer can lay the foundation to evaluate a wide range of farming options."

Woods used the word *primer* as an acronym representing the basic factors to consider when making decisions about farming: profitability, resources, information, marketing, enthusiasm and risk. The introductory text broadly defines each of these factors and gives examples of how to evaluate them.

The first exercise in the PRIMER, uses short, preliminary score sheets to help readers determine whether they need to go any farther in exploring an enterprise. For example, the *Marketing* score sheet ranks an enterprise from 10 (people are begging for the product) to 0 (selling ice cubes to Eskimos). On *Enthusiasm*, rankings go from 10 (I can't sleep at night, this idea is so exciting) to 0 (Why do I even have to do this?)

The total from all six score sheets will give an early indication of whether to proceed into the more detailed worksheets. Woods suggests that each member of the family who will be affected by an enterprise should answer the questions.

Woods is quick to warn that the PRIMER is not a substitute for a farm plan, an enterprise budget or a mission statement.

"It helps the user ask the right questions to evaluate the potential of an enterprise, and it can help develop the planning tools mentioned above," he explains.

The PRIMER was developed as part of a large multi-state PDP project (ES98-038) headed by Jim Worstell of Delta Land and Community. Using a multifaceted approach that included conferences, case studies, and one-on-one training, the project aimed to help agents and producers develop entrepreneurial skills for farmer-owned processing and marketing. The activities helped farmers in Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee start dozens of businesses as varied as organic soybean exportation to making epoxy from sugar and marketing aromatic rice.

Even though the SARE portion has been completed, the conferences and other trainings continue through the support of other sponsors.

- Get the PRIMER at:
<http://www.uky.edu/Ag/AgEcon/publications>
or call (770) 412-4787.
- The project has produced a wealth of materials besides the PRIMER, most of which can be found on the web site:
<http://www.deltanetwork.org/>
- A detailed 45-page final report of the project ES98-038 can be found on SARE's national data base at www.sare.org

Which SARE grant program for you?

Southern SARE administers six separate grant programs, each with its own priorities and audiences. The process begins with the release of calls for proposals for each of the programs. The SSARE web site www.griffin.peachnet.edu/sare is the quickest way to receive the calls for proposals as soon as they are released. If you prefer a mailed copy of any of the calls for proposals, contact Paige Patton at (770) 412-4787 or ppatton@griffin.peachnet.edu

Research and Education Projects generally are conducted by interdisciplinary, multi-institutional, and often, multi-state research teams coordinated by a principal investigator from a non-governmental organization, university or governmental agency. These projects include farmers as participants.

June Call for preproposals released
August Preproposals due
February Full proposals due
March Full proposals reviewed
April Administrative Council announces grant awards

Professional Development Program Projects train agricultural information providers in sustainable agriculture techniques and concepts.

June Call for preproposals released
August Preproposals due
February Full proposals due
March Full proposals reviewed
April Administrative Council announces grant awards

On-Farm Research Projects are conducted by agricultural professionals such as extension agents, NRCS and/or NGO personnel who currently work with farmers and ranchers. Cooperators must include at least three producers at all stages of the project. Funded for a maximum of \$15,000 for up to two years of activities.

September Call for proposals released
January Proposals due
March Proposals reviewed
April Administrative Council announces grant awards

Producer Grant Projects are developed, coordinated and conducted by producers or producer organizations. These projects are generally located in one state, often on one farm. There is a \$10,000-limit for funding proposals submitted by an individual producer and a \$15,000-limit on proposals submitted by producer organizations.

September Call for proposals released
January Proposals due
March Proposals reviewed
April Administrative Council announces grant awards

Graduate Student Awards are intended for full-time graduate students (masters or Ph.D.) enrolled at accredited colleges and universities in the Southern Region. Up to \$10,000 will be awarded to each successful applicant for up to three years of project activities. The funds are paid directly to the university for use on the graduate student's project.

May Call for proposal released
January Proposals due
April Administrative Council announces grant awards
May Call for proposals released

Sustainable Community Innovation Projects link sound farm and nonfarm economic development with agricultural and natural resource management. Applicants may be farmers, ranchers, researchers, community organizations, environmentalists, ag and community development professionals, entrepreneurs, governmental and non-governmental organizations. Funded for a project maximum of \$10,000 for up to two years.

September Call for proposals released
November Proposals due
Spring Awards announced

SARE Schedule Change: Index Coming in Spring

Common Ground readers normally receive an index of Southern SARE projects in January because project investigators have traditionally submitted reports in December.

In 2003 Southern SARE will start collecting reports in the spring, which will coincide better with the grants cycle and the fiscal year. That means the Index will include all the projects that submitted annual and final reports for 2002 as well as a listing of all the new grants awarded next spring.

Now that SARE project investigators submit reports electronically, the summaries are available within minutes of being submitted. To read summaries of any SARE project, visit the national database at: www.sare.org.

Type in key words to find projects by state, topic or project investigator. If you don't have internet access you can order project reports by calling Paige Patton at (770) 412-4787.

Practical Tools and Solutions for Sustaining Family Farms

Southern Sustainable Agriculture
Working Group (SSAWG)
2003 Conference

January 23 - 26, 2003

Adam's Mark Hotel
Mobile, Alabama

For more information:
Ryan Cohen
racfarm@earthlink.net
Phone: (404) 370-1813

The University of Georgia
Campus at Griffin
Southern Region SARE
1109 Experiment Street
Griffin, GA 30223-1797

**NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
GRIFFIN, GA
PERMIT NO. 155**

Address Service Requested