



## Preservation through education

### Host a workshop in your community

As the competition for land in America intensifies, communities are searching for answers to questions about growth. How much development should we allow? Where should it be? How much land should we conserve? What kinds of farming practices should we encourage in our rural areas?

To respond to this need, American Farmland Trust (AFT) provides workshops and presentations to educate farmers, elected officials and others involved in land use about why and how to protect working farm, ranch and forest land. In response to local needs, AFT creates individual and customized presentations, panel discussions, and workshops for conferences and meetings.

Workshop topics can include:

- Why Save Working Land
- Public Opportunities for Saving Working Land
- Private Options for Saving Working Land
- Leadership Development
- Land Stewardship.

Workshop speakers, assembled by AFT, typically include farmland protection professionals, people who have protected their land, and land protection program administrators.

For more information on AFT's workshops, training and presentations, contact Jill Schwartz at 202-331-7300 or [jschwartz@farmland.org](mailto:jschwartz@farmland.org).

## Preserving farmland

**C**loned hogs. Organic certification. GMOs. While there are many divisive issues in agriculture, farmland preservation is not one of them.

[Jim Horne](#) discovered the unifying force of farmland preservation when he headed up a PDP project (ES02-062) to train agricultural leaders to help communities save farmland from development. As president and CEO of the [Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture](#) and one of the pioneers of the sustainable ag movement, Horne has a long history with the issues.

"I've never seen anything bring the ag community together like the struggle to save farmland," he says. "At the workshops we had the Sierra Club and the Cattlemen's Association at the same table. There were conventional wheat farmers along with SSAWG members. It made me realize that perhaps we need to find less controversial ideas for building bridges with mainstream agricultural groups."

The project consisted of three training workshops for approximately 100 agricultural leaders in Memphis, Atlanta and Oklahoma City. The curriculum was developed by American Farmland Trust using input from all the Southern states and protectorates. Along with presentations by AFT staff, local farmers shared real-life stories of trying to save their land from development.

At the Memphis meeting, the Holland family of McKenzie, TN, talked about their struggles against great development pressure. Each member of the family spoke about the challenges of keeping the land in production and the joys of being able to continue as a working farm family. They have battled the city council, developers and others intent on changing the use of the land and forcing them out of business.

Also speaking in Memphis was Miesha Thomas of the [Southern Federation of Cooperatives](#) who explained the unique challenges of preserving minority-held lands. She talked about the little-



A farmers' market is a useful tool for helping residents appreciate the value of local agriculture.

known issues of heir property wherein ownership of a farm may be held by 20 to 50 family members, any of whom may be able to petition the courts for sale of the property.

Preservation tools discussed at the workshops included agricultural districts, comprehensive land use plans, agricultural economic development and agricultural zoning. Breakout sessions gave participants time to plan ways to introduce the preservation tools to their communities after they returned home. And that's how the movement spreads, according to AFT's southeast director Gerry Cohn.

"Farmers around the Southeast are realizing that the land use decisions made in their community have a huge impact on their ability to survive on the farm. Fortunately, there are successful examples around the country of states and localities addressing these issues to create a landscape in which agriculture has a bright and sustainable future."

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# Kerr Center to manage PDP

As of January 2004, the Kerr Center became the hub of Southern Region SARE Professional Development Program activity. Jim Horne, Kerr Center president and CEO has been named PDP regional coordinator. David Redhage and Liz Speake are project associates. Together they will write the calls for proposals, develop evaluation criteria and convene review teams.

Jim Horne had a vision for SARE even before the program was established. In 1985 his testimony, along with that of Robert Rodale and others, convinced Congress of the need for a program to fund sustainable agriculture research. Once the program was established, he served in every capacity including chair of the Administrative Council.

“It was an honor to be chosen through a competitive process to manage Southern SARE’s Professional Development Program,” he says. “This is the first time in SARE’s history that a non-profit has been chosen to lead a program of this scope. We take this responsibility seriously and will use a collaborative approach to see that all stakeholders are well served.”

As part of that collaboration, Lee Myer, an extension professor in ag economics at University of Kentucky, is the 1862 Extension liaison. True to his background in marketing, Myer plans to start by listening to his audience.

“I’ll be working with the state sustainable agriculture coordinators to market the PDP program to its clientele,” he said. “In order to do that, first I’ll gather feedback from extension agents about their interests and needs.”

A full-time SARE staff position is being created at Fort Valley State University to concentrate on outreach to the 1890 institutions and other minority audiences. The influx of new people with fresh ideas can only make a good program better, according to regional director Jeff Jordan.

“We are excited about having someone of Jim Horne’s stature and experience in sustainable agriculture to head up this important part of Southern SARE,” he said. “With his leadership and our strengthened ties to the 1862 and 1890 extension programs, SARE will be able to efficiently design and implement training activities according to the specific needs within each state.”

## No whine in this vineyard

The bottom has dropped out from under Judy and Glen Clements of Lafayette, TN, so many times, they could qualify as professional bungee jumpers.

"Farmers have to adapt and keep changing or you get left behind," Glen says mildly. He speaks from his experience with dairying, hydroponic vegetables and tobacco before moving into wine with all the trimmings.

Many people would have given up and just gone into another type of business when changes in government tobacco allotments cut their annual income by \$30,000, but Glen and Judy aren't most people. In 1990 when they saw the declining tobacco market, they took note of Tennessee's fledgling wine industry and started transitioning to blackberries and grapes to sell to winemakers.

While the grapes were growing, they looked for resources through the [Center for Profitable Agriculture](#), a joint venture of the University of Tennessee and Tennessee Farm Bureau. Specialists with the Center suggested they take some college courses and talk to industry experts in Tennessee and other states. By the time their first grapes were ready for harvest, Judy and Glen were ready to put tobacco in their past, and by 1999 they moved from raising grapes to processing wine under their own label: Red Barn Winery. By 2000 their wine was winning regional awards and the tobacco barn was converted into a sampling room, retail outlet and special events facility.

Besides growing grapes and making wine, the Clements host weddings, catered dinners, murder mystery nights, and special events such as their annual Labor Day weekend grape stomping contest, which attracts 3000 visitors.

Are they enjoying their new life as vintners and purveyors of



Value-added products attract customers and inspire creative thinking in other farmers. Red Barn Winery (left) and Valley Home Farm (below) were two favorite stops on the Statewide Journey. Photos by Kim Martinez.

"Sure, it's an eight-day week, but that's better than not having a job" he continues. "Since we are in our 50s no one would hire us anyway, so we might as well do this. You might say that I'll look for any way to keep on farming."

The Clements determination and flexibility inspire other farmers to look for creative solutions that will allow them to keep farming. That's why they were chosen as one of six tour stops on the Statewide Journey of Sustainable Success (SARE project ES02-061) headed up by Rob Holland of the Center for Profitable Agriculture.

"We know that agricultural leaders learn best in a hands-on situation," says Rob, "So we wanted to let them see for themselves how some farmers are improving their livelihood with sustainable agriculture."

The tour could be called a training blitz. Participants traveled more than 800 miles through 23 counties with specific training in 7 counties. To enhance the hands-on experiences at the tour stops there was a 29-member teaching team armed with a custom-designed training manual and 19 educational handouts.

"It was great to see how worn and marked up those training manuals were at the end of the trip," recalls Rob.

Even though the tour was promoted as a train-the-trainer event, organizers were overwhelmed with applications from farmers.

"We had to add some trailing vehicles behind the bus to accommodate the farmers who wanted to attend," says Rob. "The Center is definitely interested in pursuing the development of future programs for farmers and agri-entrepreneurs based on the model of the Statewide Journey.

Materials used on the tour can be found at the Center's web site <http://cpa.utk.edu> or copies can be obtained by calling [Rob Holland](#) at (931) 486-2777. To read the final project report for ES02-067 go to [www.sare.org](http://www.sare.org) and check the national database of projects. For a hard copy of the report call the SARE office at (770) 412-4787.

Take a virtual tour of [Red Barn Winery](#) at [www.lafayettetn.com/red\\_barn\\_winery\\_&\\_vineyards.htm](http://www.lafayettetn.com/red_barn_winery_&_vineyards.htm)

## 200-year-old recipe rescues dairy

Jamie Mauthe can remember when the south Mississippi-Louisiana border was dotted with 1000 or more dairies. Now she estimates only about 50 remain in the six-county area between McComb and New Orleans.

"I'm fearful that someday our county will be without a dairy," she says. "Every week it seems another one sells out."

Thanks to a 200-year-old New Orleans recipe and a little help from a SARE project, Mauthe's Dairy will not be one of them.

In 1995, the dairy crisis was so severe that even with 120-150 cows, the 70-year old family dairy was struggling. Kenny and Jamie Mauthe purchased a grocery store as a second business to make up the shortfall. By 2000 they were tired of running two businesses, so they sold the store and started researching ways to make a living on the dairy despite low milk prices.

Through [Southern SAWG](#) they learned about adding value to their fluid milk, and Kenny's father remembered when the Mauthe's made and delivered Creole cream cheese to stores and restaurants in New Orleans.

For 200 years a favorite New Orleans breakfast was French bread topped with Creole cream cheese and sprinkled with sugar. The soft, mild curd is made from cultured skim milk with the uncultured cream poured back over it to produce a complex blend of flavors and textures. Despite its popularity, the labor-intensive product dropped out of the market when small dairies began selling milk to cooperatives. However, people in New Orleans kept its memory alive, and a few even made it at home whenever they could get unhomogenized milk.

So in May, 2001, there were some nostalgic customers waiting when Kenny brought their first commercial batch to the [Crescent City Farmers Market](#). More customers came as word spread that the culinary treasure was back on the market. To boost sales even more, Jamie brought samples of her

cheese cakes. Along with buying more of the cheese, customers also clamored for more cakes. In 2002 their cheese became the first American product awarded the [Slow Food label](#). So it wasn't long before the Mauthes had another dairy crisis.

"We were at a crossroads and didn't know which way to go," recalls Jamie. "Now we were the farmers, the manufacturers and the marketers of milk, cheese and cakes. There just wasn't time to do a good job at all of it. Should we downsize the dairy and concentrate on cheese, or what?"

That was where the SARE project led by [Keith Richards](#) came in. Keith was evaluating a technical assistance pilot program that would take farmers to a higher level of sustainability by linking them with consultants and a support group of knowledgeable peers.

The Mauthes and four other farmer cooperators from Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and Oklahoma were chosen as being at a point in their operations where they could most benefit from technical assistance in the areas of adding value and marketing.

The official assistance program lasted only eight months, but the effect was that of a crash course in sustainable agriculture with the curriculum tailored to an individual farm.

"The project helped us see our operation through a third party's eye," Jamie recalls. "I had a typical dairy farmer's pessimistic attitude. It made all the difference to have Keith or consultant Ed Martsolf encourage us and link us up with people who could help us make decisions. For example, right away Ed recognized the potential of the cheese cakes, and recommended that I expand into a certified kitchen. That was such a good move that we are now enlarging the kitchen so we can



Building customer relationships at the Crescent City Farmers Market is important for Mauthe's Dairy. Photo by Terry B. Loup.

diversify into more products and offer catering services."

As they learned about sustainable production methods, the Mauthes downsized to around 60 head and began rotational grazing year round, but still feeding grain during milking. The milk is free of antibiotics and hormones. In an industry where it's common for milkers to wear out by age three, Kenny is proud to still be milking some cows in their teens.

"Learning more about sustainable agriculture has opened us up to realizing we don't have to push for more production in order to make more profit," Jamie says.

She estimates that 20-30 percent of their milk is sold through a combination of six farmers' markets, about 30 stores and another cheesemaker who specializes in ricotta. The rest is sold through the milk cooperative.

As the dairy's profit margin has improved, the Mauthes have been able to bring in older family members who thought they had given up dairying forever and young ones who thought they would never have the opportunity.

# Lessons learned from a teaching experiment

The pilot program tested in SSARE project LS98-096 (highlighted in the story on page 4), was a learning experience for the project leaders as well as the farmer cooperators. Project investigator Keith Richards compiled a list of findings from their pilot effort that may be useful to other people interested in designing a similar training system.

**Urgent need.** We need better services to help farmers, farmer organizations and farm-based entrepreneurs hatch new businesses or expand current businesses that add value to sustainably produced farm products.

**Emphasize whole systems.** Even though the focus of the project was on adding value, farmers need assistance in a whole systems, whole farm manner. For instance, assistance solely on processing and market development will not be adequate for a farm that also has enterprise barriers related to production, business management, or land ownership.

**One-stop delivery.** Assistance is much more useful if it is delivered in a “one stop” system. Most farmers don’t have the time or skills to hunt and peck through numerous resources, hoping to find information one kernel at a time. If one agency or one consultant can facilitate the complete service delivery, farmers are much more likely to stick with the process until they get what they need.

**One-on-one attention.** When farmers are matched with consultants who can talk through problems with them and help them create a plan, the farmers are more motivated to take calculated business risks and create value-added operations. One-on-one attention is crucial both for developing new ideas and overcoming fears.

**Producer experience.** The most valuable sources of information are producers who have gone through several trials and errors, and still created successful enterprises. Assistance providers can draw on these experts by facilitating a visit to their farms, facilitating a discussion between the experienced entrepreneurs and farmers needing assistance, paying the producer entrepreneurs for their time, and following up the visit with further analysis and information.

**Tailored approach.** Even though we can identify general principles for success in creating value-added enterprises, there is rarely one learning and development approach that works for everyone. Assistance must be tailored to each client, along with numerous opportunities and channels for feedback and reassessment of future goals.

**Consultant database.** Consultants or organizations that facilitate sustainable enterprise development need to know how to access other appropriate experts, including business planners, accountants, bankers, legal experts, and marketing professionals. A database of possible consultants trained in the principles of sustainable agriculture needs to be developed and maintained as a tool for service providers.

**Networking.** Organizations and agencies that focus on sustainable agriculture need more expertise in small business management and entrepreneurship, and organizations that focus on small business management and entrepreneurship need more expertise in on-farm applications. There is a need for networking and collaboration between the two.

*For a copy of the final report LS98-096, check the database of projects at [www.sare.org](http://www.sare.org) or call (770) 412-4787.*



## Keys to Success in Value-Added Agriculture

In this 20-page booklet, 14 Southern farmer-entrepreneurs share important lessons they have learned in adding value to their farm products and marketing directly to consumers. Their keys to success include: high quality products, good record-keeping, planning and evaluation, perseverance, focus and building long-term relationships with customers. Written by Holly Born, the booklet was produced by SSAWG and ATTRA as part of SARE project LS98-76. Free from ATTRA at <http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/PDF/keystosuccess.pdf> or call (800) 346-9140.



## Building a Sustainable Business

This 280-page book uses experiences of six farm families for a real-life perspective on how they researched alternatives, determined potential markets and evaluated financing options. Includes blank worksheets and step-by-step strategies for developing a detailed, lender-ready business plan to take advantage of new opportunities in organic farming, agri-tourism, on-farm processing, alternative crops, direct marketing, and adding value. Send \$14 plus \$3.95 s/h to Sustainable Agriculture Publications, 210 Hills Building, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT 05405-0082. Credit card and discounted volume orders may be placed by calling 802/656-0484. Preview the publication online at <http://www.sare.org/htdocs/pubs/>.

## Matchmaking for manure nutrients

Don Veitor and colleagues at Texas A&M University and Virginia Tech are developing an alternative to the television commercial showing a visibly heavy rate of fertilizer spreading on an emerald lawn. Don worries that excessive rates of soluble fertilizers are being applied on home lawns without soil testing or calibration of spreaders.

“The phosphorus in excessive fertilizer rates can be carried in runoff down the gutter, into the sewer and surface waters on the watershed,” he says.

Observations of rising soil-test phosphorus values in urban soil samples by colleague Tony Provin, lab director of soil testing at Texas A&M, indicate Don’s concern is justified.

Phosphorus runoff has become such a problem in urban areas that water management districts, including one in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, are regulating sales of phosphorus fertilizers to homeowners unless a soil test shows the phosphorus is needed. This trend will likely continue, according to Don.

High soil test phosphorus values are of equal concern on fields near confined animal feeding operations in Texas and nationally, where manure and wastewater applications contribute to increasing soil phosphorus levels.

As part of SARE project [LS00-117](#), Don has put together a learning team to study ways of matching nutrient management concerns between livestock and turf producers that would improve both agricultural and urban environments. The team was made up of university research and extension faculty as well as dairy, turfgrass and commercial producers of manure compost.

Selling manure and compost has been a traditional way for some livestock producers to manage waste, but such high-volume, low-value products often don’t bring enough to pay for hauling them.



Manure-grown Tifway bermudagrass sod being harvested from an experimental field. Photo by [Don Veitor](#).

The SARE project evaluated the feasibility of exporting manure through a higher value product: turfgrass sod. Through trial plantings, the team discovered that surface applications of manure produced high quality sod which exported the accumulated phosphorus with it upon harvest.

When the sod was replanted in a new location, phosphorus runoff was reduced compared to runoff from sod grown with commercial fertilizer. Furthermore, the sod does not have to be fertilized for phosphorus and has better water infiltration than commercially fertilized sod.

As a result of the research, the team recommends that sod producers and dairy producers could benefit from collaborating while creating a product that will decrease phosphorus runoff from athletic fields, parks and residential lawns.

“Turf producers’ profit margins are very thin,” Don explains. “Add to that the fact that urban sprawl is making the sod producing fields more valuable for development. As urban sprawl crowds current production fields, sod producers are looking for cheaper land and new production sites. At the same time, dairy producers are looking for crops

through which manure and phosphorus can be exported.”

Mark Quinn, who raises replacement heifers for dairies, established just such a partnership through the SARE project. Mark now grows sod on a waste application field which he sells to Gardner Turfgrass. The sod joins composted manure and fresh manure as by products for Mark’s operation.

“The sod is a very important tool,” he says, “because it uses so much lagoon wastewater.”

Proximity is one of the challenges the research team is still addressing. GIS maps are being used to locate land parcels suitable for growing sod. Once suitable parcels are found, then the next step will be to map land application areas to see how close they are to the potential sod growing acres. When the work is complete, sod producers will have a new resource to help them locate potential partners for a collaboration.

To read more about the project that is forging a sustainable connection between livestock production, the emerald lawn and improved water quality see the annual report for [LS00-117](#) in the national data base at [www.sare.org](http://www.sare.org) or request a copy of the report from the SARE office at (770) 412-4787.

# 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.uga.edu/sare](http://www.griffin.uga.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 [sare@griffin.uga.edu](mailto:sare@griffin.uga.edu)

**Research and Education Projects** (including Planning Grants) 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. Planning Grants do not require preproposals.

**2004**

**March 1** Call for 2005 R&E preproposals and Planning Grant proposals released

**June 1** R&E Preproposals due, Planning Grant proposals due

**August** Full R&E proposals requested, Administrative Council announces Planning Grant awards

**Nov. 12** Full R&E proposals due

**2005**

**February** 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.

**2004**

**March 1** Call for 2005 proposal released

**November 19** Proposals due

**2005**

**February** Administrative Council announces grant awards

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

**2004**

**March 1** Call for 2005 preproposals released

**May 14** 2004 Preproposals due

**November 12** Full proposals due

**2005**

**February** 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.

**2004**

**August 2** Call for 2005 proposals released

**December 3** Proposals due

**2005**

**February** 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 one producer at all stages of the project. Funded for a maximum of \$15,000 for up to two years of activities.

**2004**

**August 2** Call for 2004 proposals released

**December 3** Proposals due

**2005**

**February** Administrative Council announces grant awards

**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 of activities.

**2004**

**July 1** Call for proposals released

**September 6** Proposals due

**November** Administrative Council announces awards

## *A new look at an old crop*

Weeds don't like them, and they contribute tons of biomass per acre--two reasons [Nicole Martini](#) thinks highly of velvetbeans. Now there's a third.

"When my grandfather was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, I told him I was researching the plant from which a drug to treat it is made," she says. "A few months later he showed me his medicine bottle and said, 'Look here's your plant.'"

Fairly new as a pharmaceutical in the United States, velvetbean has been used medicinally in many cultures for conditions as diverse as depression and snakebite. The medicinal properties come from a high concentration of L-DOPA (a precursor of the neurotransmitter dopamine), which may be the reason most insects avoid it.

Velvetbean was a favorite cover crop in the South for more than 150 years providing forage, controlling weeds, contributing nitrogen and providing biomass. However it disappeared from the rural landscape in the mid-1950s when better roads and inexpensive chemical fertilizer encouraged the move to monoculture. With growing concern over chemical inputs, researchers have been looking anew at velvetbean.

Nicole's experiments in Georgia centered on biomass production and weed control using the Georgia Bush variety developed by noted cover crop researcher Sharad Phatak. At the Coastal Plain Experiment Station in Tifton, 120 days after planting, velvetbean produced 65.6 tons of fresh biomass per hectare, about 50 percent more biomass than Sunn Hemp.

"We also found that a solution prepared using residue of velvetbean in water reduced growth of crabgrass, sicklepod and pigweed," she said. "It did not eliminate them, but reduced them compared to plain water solution."

From the data she concludes that through a combination of the additional biomass, the quick growth which shades out weeds and the allelopathic effect, a farmer would see fewer weeds if he used velvetbean as a summer cover crop before planting fall vegetables. Those soil-improving qualities combined with the potential for selling beans to the pharmaceutical industry could mean a major comeback for velvetbean.

"Farmers are more inclined to use cover crops if some part of that crop also has economic value," says Nicole.

The SARE project GS02-017 formed the basis of Nicole's master's thesis under the direction of Sharad Phatak. She also plans to farm and eventually use her research background in the realm of policy making. Read details of her project report at [www.sare.org](http://www.sare.org) or request a copy from the SARE office at (770) 412-4787.