

What is SARE?

Since 1988 USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program has administered competitive grants to fund research and education in agriculture that improves farm profitability, protects natural resources and revitalizes communities.

How does it work?

Southern SARE administers six different grant programs with staggered calls for proposals and submission dates.

The proposals are reviewed and grants awarded by a diverse group of researchers, farmers, educators and others knowledgeable about sustainable agriculture in the South.

Learn more about SARE and obtain the calls at:
www.southernsare.org

For more information

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Learning to Dream in Texas



Dreams can be unrealistic when you live eight miles north of the Mexican border, says extension agent Barbara Storz.

"When you are really, really, really poor your dreams are from a novella—of a prince on a white horse coming to save you. There are no realistic dreams of things you could actually accomplish," she says.

Dreams of fresh local food, for example. The farms around McAllen, Texas, produce the biggest variety of fruits and vegetables in the state but until two years ago, local residents didn't have access to fresh produce. It was all trucked away by the big packing houses.

Then Storz organized a group of low-income Spanish-speaking families, mostly women, into the Grow'n Growers of San Juan, Texas. Now they raise about 50 varieties of crops including bok choy, collards, eggplant, tomatoes, spinach, colored Swiss chard, grapefruit, limes, oranges, herbs, broccoli, cauliflower, Chinese and Indian vegetables.

White collar workers who used to speed by their community on the way to and from McAllen, now brake for their monthly market days. Some customers drive 70

miles from Brownsville for the fresh organic food. One woman has bought a residential lot next to her home and started a CSA. A man has turned the property behind his tire shop into another CSA. A woman sells pastured eggs from her farm. All of the families involved are enjoying an improved diet, English classes twice a week and an upwardly mobile sense of self.

It all started when Storz helped design a park behind a community center and Head Start facility. The county commissioner, Hector Palacios, asked if there was anything he could do in return. She requested help in starting a farmers market and community development project. He arranged for a bit more than an acre to be set aside and then built the facility.

Storz immediately called Heifer International and told them about the gift from the county commissioners. Heifer responded with technical assistance, donated seeds and travel expenses to visit similar enterprises to see successful farming and marketing. The first-year program taught raised-bed vegetable gardening to 17 families. The city of McAllen donated compost. Heifer provided

R&E grant program introduces entry-level opportunity

SARE's Research and Education grants have focused on complex agricultural systems since their inception in 1988. Research and Education projects basically study interactions among components of a given system to determine how that system performs. This systems approach to research is expensive and requires a longer time frame than the usual two- or three-year grant cycle. SARE recognizes that foundation work has to be in place before a systems research project can be undertaken.

For researchers who are not yet ready to apply for a systems research project, Southern SARE's Research and Education grants now offer funding for **planning** projects or **preliminary** research projects. A **planning** grant will pay for personnel time and resources to convene planning meetings, hold conference calls or otherwise facilitate communication among team members. These grants can

also support travel for scouting research locations on university property or on farms. The team can visit research sites that have done something similar to what they plan to do.

A successful planning project may culminate in the submission of a full scale systems proposal. However a planning project may discover that additional research data is needed before the team can submit a full-scale systems proposal. In that case, the team would apply for a **preliminary** research grant to fill in the knowledge gap.

The two-step funding process is a natural, graduated path to submitting a competitive systems proposal.

Information about applying for Research and Education grants, Research and Education planning grants or Research and Education preliminary grants can be found at www.southernsare.org

Learning to Dream in Texas

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a grant to pay for lumber, weed cloth and tools. Additionally Heifer and the SARE state sustainable ag coordinator's office partnered to sponsor a pastured poultry workshop in Spanish, with help from the Texas Health Department and ATTRA.

Networking was an important part of this success story. The opportunity to start the Grow'n Growers came because Storz volunteered to help on the neighborhood park. Years earlier she had first met Mike Everett, Southwest Plains Field Coordinator with Heifer International, when they served on the Southern SARE technical review committee. So when the Grow'n Growers needed technical assistance, Storz knew someone at Heifer to help her get started.

Her early volunteer work for SARE also came in handy as she learned, first hand, in reviewing grant proposals, that several universities and non-profits were providing similar training for small land owners. She attended SARE sponsored workshops and tours, at professional conferences, and visited farmers markets across the country, talking to producers and organizers.

As for the future, Storz's network of influence just keeps spreading.

"A new park is opening about 10 miles away," she says. "Commissioner Palacios wants to put in an outdoor classroom and demonstration garden in an even lower income neighborhood. It's difficult to imagine a neighborhood lower on the income scale than this one, but I am sure I will find a real determination to succeed on the part of the people."



From building raised beds to growing crops and selling at their own market, the Grow'n Growers do it all. Networking has expanded their community of influence wider than any of the women had dreamed possible.



Paw Paw: American heirloom fruit

Our largest native fruit is emerging from historical shadows into a bright future with organic farmers thanks to a research project at Kentucky State University, which has the only full-time paw paw research in the world.

Paw paws were an important food for Native Americans and early settlers. Tasting somewhere in the neighborhood of a banana, mango and pineapple blend, the custard-like fruit is delicious fresh or in recipes.

Paw paws were not commercially important in the past because their short shelf life makes them unsuitable for long transports. Renewed interest in local food has introduced this backyard fruit to new customers.

“Pawpaw orchards have been planted in Alabama, California, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, and West Virginia,” says KSU horticulture researcher Kirk Pomper. “Usually these plantings are several acres in size, or smaller, and fruit are mainly sold at



farmer's markets, directly to restaurants, and via the internet.

Pomper wants to make sure organic farmers aren't shut out of the new market. Since paw paw is resistant to many diseases and insects, he realized it would be an attractive crop for organic growers if production guidelines were available.

Pomper's SARE project tested organic culture of pawpaw and methods to promote early fruit production. His research results are part of an entertaining and educational web site that was recognized as an outstanding extension publication by the Southern Region American Society for Horticulture Science. The site includes paw paw history, anecdotes, delicious recipes and even a paw paw discussion group at: <http://www.pawpaw.kysu.edu/sare.htm>

Read the SARE final report at www.sare.org by searching the project data base for LS03-151.

Marketing a cash cow

When it comes to local meat and dairy products, demand has certainly outpaced the supply, so what prevents producers from turning their critters into cash? Lack of information, according to North Carolina A&T state sustainable ag coordinator John O'Sullivan.

Who knows what agency or agencies regulate food sales? When does a producer need inspected facilities or licenses to sell products made on the farm? Are there custom meat processors in your state? Can eggs be sold from the farm or market?

Extension agents are bombarded with such questions from farmers eager to add value to the livestock they raise. To help answer them, O'Sullivan led a PDP project that developed a curriculum for a series of two-day workshops conducted in North Carolina and other Southern states. More than 100 extension faculty and other educators attended at least one of the workshops and then returned home to train others as well as serve clients.

The entire curriculum is posted on-line in user friendly MsWord, PowerPoint and Excel files. The six ready-to-use conference sessions include: entrepreneurship and vision; food safety; permits, licenses and food handling regulations; customer-centered marketing; business planning and

management; and evaluation and reporting. It's available at http://www.sustainable-ag.ncsu.edu/pmmlp_materials.htm

Read the final report at www.sare.org by searching the project data base for ES03-066.



North Carolina Cooperative Extension, NRCS staff and growers take a pasture walk at Fred Dobson's farm to see hogs enjoying an antibiotic free, outdoor life rotating with cover crops through a series of paddocks.

Projects led by 1890 institutions or minority organizations

LS88-002 Whole-Farm, Low/Reduced Input Farming Systems and Educational Program, Prairie View A&M University, \$223,882, Hoover Carden

LS88-005 Planning Funds for a Proposal on Extending Sustainable Agriculture to Small Farms, NCA&T, \$15,000, Ray McKinnie

LS89-016 Development of a Low-Input Multiple Cropping System for Small-Scale Farms, Southern University, \$73,000, Owusu Bandele

LS96-077 Seedless Watermelon and Fall Lettuce in Rotation with Green Manures, North C A&T University, \$182,751, M.R. Reddy

LS97-89 Integration of Freshwater Prawns into Diversified Farm Systems, Kentucky State University, \$155,197, James Tidwell

LS98-92 Sustainable Cropping Systems for Canola on Limited-Resource Farms in Alabama, Alabama A&M, \$124,488, Udai Bishnoi

LS99-103 Pastured Poultry and Vegetable Production, Southern University, \$89,800, James McNitt,

LS99-104 Polyculture of Paddlefish with Catfish in Southern Region, Kentucky State University, \$140,135, Steve Mims

LS99-106 Integrated Crop and Sylvan Systems with Swine, North Carolina A&T University, \$156,262, Charles Talbott

LS00-114 Dairy Goat Industry Innovative Methods of Product Development, Fort Valley State Univ., GA, \$225,470, Young W. Park

LS01-119 Goats for Sustainable Vegetation Management in Grazing Lands, Langston University, OK, \$172,210, Arthur L. Goetsch

LS01-124 Control of Gastrointestinal Nematodes in Small Ruminants, Fort Valley State University, GA (planning grant), \$12,600, T.H. Terrill.

LS01-125 Sustainable Vegetable Production in Rural Mississippi, Alcorn State, MS, \$133,260, Franklin O. Chukwuma

LS01-127 Organic Management of Cucumber Beetles with Cucurbits, Kentucky State University, KY, \$134,038, Gary Cline

LS02-132 Cover Cropping and Residue Management, NC A&T Univ, NC, \$99,154, Keith R. Baldwin

LS02-138 An Investigation of the General and Niche Market Goat Meat Demand, FVSU, GA, \$161,074, Mack C. Nelson

LS02-141 Sustainable Year-Round Forage System for Goat Production, Tuskegee University, AL, \$178,120, Sandra Solaiman

LS02-143 Sustainable Control of Gastrointestinal Nematodes in Small Ruminants, Fort Valley State Univ, GA, \$242,677, Will Getz,

LS03-151 Development of Organic Production Practices for Pawpaw on Selected Rootstocks, Kentucky State University, KY, \$153,698, Kirk W. Pomper

LS05-177 Sustainable Control of Nematodes in Small Ruminants, Fort Valley State Univ., GA \$250,000, Thomas Terrell

LS05-181 Renewable Energy for Pond Aquaculture, Tuskegee University, \$14,850, Barrett Vaughan

LS06-185 Biofumigation for soil health, Kentucky State Univ, \$170,000, Michael Bomford

LS08-207 Enhancing sustainability of limited resource farmers through marketing research & education, Tuskegee University, \$122,000, Tasha M. Hargrove

LS08-211 Niche pork production systems and marketability of Heritage swine breeds, \$175,000, Sang H. Oh

LS09-223 Nutrient optimization for sustainable goat production systems in the southeastern U.S., Tuskegee University, \$170,000, Sandra Solaiman

ES96-010 Sustainable Small Scale Agricultural Development Training Project, Southern University, LA, \$27,500, Adell Brown

ES98-041 Training in Value Added Syrup Crops, Alcorn CES, MS, \$99,912, William Patton

ES01-052 The Third Tuesday-Thursday Thing, Kentucky State University, \$50,000, Marion Simon

ES03-065 Building Sustainable Soil Systems, NC A&T State University, NC, \$119,848, Keith Baldwin

ES03-066 Producer Managed Efforts in Marketing of Livestock & Livestock Products, NC A&T, NC, \$89,400, John O'Sullivan

ES04-075/ES05-081 Regional goat production and marketing projects, Kentucky State University, \$84,550/\$39,568, Marion Simon,

ES06-084 Smart Drenching and FAMACHA Integrated Training, Fort Valley State Univ, \$72,955, Seyedmehdi Mobini

ES09-098 Strengthening the Goat Industry: a national conference, Florida A&M, \$80,000, Angela McKenzie-Jakes

GS02-018 Analysis of a Biological Control Strategy and its Potential in a Pest Management Program in Florida Cabbage, Florida A&M Univ., FL, \$10,000, Stuart Reitz and Nathan Herrick

GS04-036 Assessing the Viability of the Inland Shrimp in Alabama, Tuskegee Univ., \$9,900, N. Baharanyi and A. S. Deanes

GS04-042 Microbiological Hazards and Critical Control Points in Regional Rabbit Processing Facilities, \$10,000, Leonard Williams and Cornelius Howard

GS06-054 Sustainable control of nematodes in llamas and alpacas, Thomas Terrill and Ann Gillespie, FVSU-AES, \$10,000

CS05-034 Rural Women as Agriculture Leaders, SW GA Project for Community Education, GA, \$9,980, John Perdw

CS05-037 Agritourism and Agribusiness Entrepreneur Training, Tuskegee AL, \$9,956, Barrett Vaughan

CS06-041 Linking native agriculture community with tribal institutional economic opportunities, Paul Killfirst, Native American Indian Farming & Ranching Cooperative, \$10,000

CS06-042 and CS08-062 Sustainable Farming: regional agriculture and community development in Coastal Georgia, John Littles, McIntosh SEED, \$10,000

CS07-059 Chicora Farmers Market, Bill Stanfield, Metanoia Community Development Corporation, \$6,300

CS05-039/CS06-046 /CS07-060/CS08-068 Training for Sustainable Community Development: Phase 1-3, Robert Zabawa, Tuskegee University, \$35,000 combined

CS08-061 Mentoring Today for Tomorrow, Ben F. Burkett Indian Springs Farmers Association, MS, \$10,000

CS08-067 The Alabama Blackbelt Community Food System Project, \$10,000, Andrew Williams, (TUCCA)