

# Sustainable Agriculture Trainer

A bulletin for sustainable agriculture trainers in the 15 southern states and territories

Volume 2, No. 2/ September 1996

## Deadline Extended

### Workshop to Help With Plan Submission

State coordinators who have not turned in a training implementation plan for FY96 will be offered assistance in putting their proposals together at a regional workshop in Greensboro, NC, on October 14-15.

So far, only six states and territories - Florida, Tennessee, Texas, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and the Virgin Islands - have turned in their annual training plans for the third cycle of funding. The earlier deadline of August 20 has now been extended to October 21.

The workshop has been especially designed to meet the needs of the state coordinators. It will

identify their program support requirements and identify strategies to address these needs. Participants will explore the role of the coordinator in leading the training effort at the state level, and ways to develop a closer linkage to the regional training consortium.

According to John O' Sullivan, SARE PDP regional coordinator, participants will also be required to complete and turn in a form about training status in their respective states. The form must indicate the number of agents trained and the level of training imparted. Submis-

(Continued on page 4)

### Watch Out For Upcoming events



**October 14-15:** State Coordinators meeting;

**October 23, 24, 25:** Meeting of the Executive Leadership Committee;

**October 28:** National meeting of Regional Coordinators;

**November 12, 13, 14:** Southern Region SARE Administrative Council meeting;

**January 15-16:** Annual Professional Development Program meeting for the southern region.

## PDP Exhibit Fashioned for National Extension Meet

Participants at the annual meeting of the National Association of County Agricultural Extension Agents, in Nashville, in September, were treated to a unique poster exhibit on the Southern Professional Development Program.

The panel was written and designed by Roger Crickenberger, SARE PDP regional coordinator, and Gwen Roland, regional communications specialist at the University of Georgia. BK Lilja, editor and public information specialist at Fort Valley State University, then translated the design into a colorful display of vinyl lettering on foam core panels, along with two 16" by 20" photographs of PDP projects. "We couldn't have done it without BK," says Roland.

The exhibit, whose central theme is the Southern region's sustainable agriculture training program, helped define the PDP both nationally and for the southern region.

An associated theme of the display is the scope of the training program in the South, especially the competitive projects and support for state training plans.

The national gathering was a logical place to make contacts with agents who are the primary audience of the PDP program, according to Crickenberger. "We had an audience and took the opportunity to communicate about the PDP." Commercial and educational exhibits, including those focusing on applied research by Extension, were a prominent attraction at the meeting.

The portable PDP display also focused on linkages to the SARE-ACE program, linkages between 1862 and 1890 landgrant institutions, and linkages to other regional coordinators. It is available for use and may be obtained by contacting Crickenberger at (919) 515-3252.

Crickenberger also made a brief presentation on the PDP to the Agricultural and Natural Resource Extension Program leaders who met during the meeting.

## SSAWG Announces New Publications

The Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (SSAWG) is offering three publications of interest to agricultural professionals and producers working towards sustainability.

**Farming More Sustainably in the South, Volumes I and II: Farmers' Stories**, edited by Keith Richards and Susan Drouilhet, discusses the innovative production techniques, resource management and marketing strategies of 21 pioneers in sustainable agriculture. Examples include a Louisiana family which has made dramatic improvements on 3,300 acres of sugarcane by concentrating on soil health and well-designed equipment that works with the eco-system, instead of against it; and a South Carolina farmer who turned a conventional hog farm that was losing \$60,000 a year into a profitable, diversified organic farm. Cost: \$9.50 for Volume I, \$12 for Volume II, or \$17.50 for both volumes (includes shipping and handling).

**Making it on the Farm: Increasing Sustainability Through Value-Added Processing and Marketing**, by Keith Richards and Deborah Wechsler. The book includes profiles of farmers who are adding value to their farm products, a discussion on keys to success in farm-based value-added operations, and a list of resources. Cost: \$12 (includes shipping and handling). Discounts are available for bulk orders. To order, send check or purchase order to SSAWG Publications, PO Box 324, Elkins, AR 72727. For additional information, call (501) 292-3714 or send e-mail to HN3551@handsnet.org.

## NE Farm Tour Offers Tips to State Coordinators

A recent farm tour convened by the Northeast regional training program in Maryland may offer fresh insight on the advantages of bringing state coordinators together, to explore the challenges associated with sustainable farming.

State coordinators in the NE spent two days in late August touring the Wye Research and Educational Center at the University of Maryland, where work is underway in cover crops and watershed management, rotational grazing and poultry litter composting. They also visited a 600-acre farm incorporating kenaf (for fiber), grains, chrysanthemums, pumpkins and turkeys; and a certified organic bedding and transplant greenhouse heated by recycled woodfuel.

According to Mark Davis, Extension Coordinator at Delaware State University, the tour provided an opportunity for informal interaction not possible in meetings. "We have a good group here," he says. "Time together gave us a better understanding of local and sub-

regional problems."

What made it especially interesting was a visit to a 165-acre organic homestead in north Delaware where the farmer was contemplating a return to conventional production. The farm, says Herb Cole, SARE's regional coordinator, symbolizes perfectly the dilemma of farmers struggling to be both profitable and environmentally sustainable.

Seated around tables in the yard, the coordinators spent a couple of

hours discussing with the farmer and his family whether organic was truly sustainable. "With the rain and unseasonably cool weather this year," says Davis, "the farmer was having a hard time staying transitional organic. Farming without chemicals takes much more time and effort, and this affects the quality of life and time spent with the family.

"Nevertheless, the coordinators had good questions and prodded the

(Continued on page 3)

## Good Turnout on Proposals

Sixteen proposals from eight states have been received in response to the Request for Proposals, issued in July, for competitive training project grants.

A majority of the proposals pertain to training opportunities for Extension and other professionals involved in information transfer about sustainable agriculture.

The proposals are currently under review by a diverse team of 12 people from across the southern region.

Funding recommendations will be presented to the Administrative Council in November and sub-contracts for projects will be awarded shortly thereafter.

# Deadline For ELC Nominees Is November 8

The Executive Leadership Committee of the Southern Region Sustainable Agriculture Training Consortium is still seeking three people to replace committee members Jerry Pennick (GA), Charles Miller (KY), and Jim Pease (VA), whose terms expire in January 1997.

Prospective candidates must have experience in the area of sustainable agriculture; demonstrate the ability and willingness to address training needs and methods; and have the ability to work as a team dealing with contemporary issues facing agriculture.

To ensure an even geographic representation, nominees must be from

Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Virginia, or the Virgin Islands. Other states and Puerto Rico are

already represented on the committee. The new members will represent the following three categories: landgrant universities and other agricultural agencies; farmers; NGOs and other organizations.

Nominations must be forwarded to Roger Crickenberger by November 8, 1996. Please limit your written nomination to a maximum of two pages. Members will be expected to attend two committee

meetings and a regional conference each year. Committee terms last for four years. Questions about the nomination process may be addressed to Roger Crickenberger

at (919) 515-3252, John O' Sullivan at (910) 334-7956, or Jim Lukens at (501) 442-9824.

## Written nominations should include:

- \* a statement of the nominee's ability to work collaboratively to address training needs;
- \* A description of the person's interest and contribution to sustainable agriculture;
- \* A description of teamwork capabilities;
- \* Confirmation of the nominee's consent to be nominated;
- \* Demographic information (gender, race, type of farm, commodity interest, address and telephone.)

## Farm Tour Tips

(Continued from page 2)

farmer to re-evaluate his decision."

Roy Jeffrey at the University of Connecticut Coop. Extension, found the experience particularly useful because it focused on "very real world" issues - how the farmer coped with urbanization and development pressures and how he struggled to stay organic. "I found his thought process useful and a radical shift from conventional thinking."

Jeffrey adds that the visit to the organic bedding plant gave him insight into marketing and distribution issues in the mid-Atlantic region.

Following the tour, the coordinators formed a discussion group on the Internet to follow up and discuss their observations and ideas.

## Good Turnout at Grazing Workshops

In 1995, Alan DeRamus at the University of Southwestern Louisiana (USL) began a series of workshops on management intensive grazing (MIG). Funded by SARE-ACE, the project provided comprehensive management in MIG to Cooperative Extension Service and NRCS personnel, and innovative livestock producers in the humid, temperate, and sub-tropical regions of the Gulf South.



This month, as he concludes his seventh and final workshop, he reflects on the success of the venture; enrollment has averaged approximately 80%-85% and pre- and post-workshop surveys suggest a high degree of appreciation and interest from participants.

DeRamus reports the strong presence of farmers and NRCS personnel from across the South; understandably, a significant majority hailed from immediately adjacent areas. However, with the exception of a few agents, Extension turnout was low. DeRamus, a former Extension agent, is, however, pleased with participation in his most recent workshop: a record ten agents showed up this September. DeRamus says that MIG is popular among some farmers, but has been recognized as a component of sustainable agriculture by Extension only recently. "The fact that USL is outside the landgrant system may also have been a limiting factor in attracting

(Continued on page 4)

## SSAWG Interaction Suggested

### Plans Underway for PDP Meet in January

Preparations are underway for the annual Professional Development Program conference to be held on January 15-16, in Gainesville, FL. The proposed theme is "Accessing and Sharing Information" and the objective is to facilitate an understanding of sustainable agriculture among the target audience and increase the information resource base.

Planning is still very preliminary, says Peggy Sechrist, who serves on the Executive Leadership Committee and is helping to design the event. Tentative suggestions for the agenda include a success-story discussion by sustainable producers; a poster session involving non-profit groups and members who have submitted their annual training implementation plan; and a session for state and territory coordinators to exchange information.

Efforts are being made to encourage participants to attend the initial round of the SSAWG conference scheduled to begin in Gainesville on January 16.

Florida's state coordinator Mickie Swisher has been advocating programming common to both SSAWG and the PDP on January

16. "It'll be great if folks stayed on through the afternoon of the 16th - and perhaps the morning of the 17th - and attended a farm tour and SAWG workshops of interest to Extension," says Swisher. "Alternatively, SSAWG participants could be encouraged to come in earlier, and observe the tailend of the PDP conference. Last year, the two groups met only in the lobby of the hotel."

The SSAWG conference will continue until January 19 and will include around 25 workshops on sustainable production, marketing, research, and policy. It will also feature farm tours that showcase sustainable producers, and a trade show of agricultural products

For more information about the SSAWG conference, call Jean Mills at (205) 333-8504.

### October Workshop

(Continued from page 1)

sion of the form to the SARE office is mandatory. Says O'Sullivan, "Greensboro is a good place to meet - lots of great restaurants! I'm sure we're going to get a lot of work done."

## Grazing Workshops

(Continued from page 3)

Extension" he says. He lists other possibilities. "Restricted travel to areas outside one's jurisdiction? Lack of publicity? We sent a notice to Extension Directors - perhaps we should have done a little more than that."

DeRamus believes he could have coordinated advertising better. On the positive side, he says the participatory learning, both through classroom discussions and field workshops, was a great experience. An advanced workshop last summer for return participants was well attended.

Stan Dutile, one of the ten Extension agents who attended September's workshop, says he found the hands-on demonstrations very valuable. Dutile, who is from Lafayette, LA, says that producers need to analyze their situation and decide if MIG will work for them. "The workshop helps them do just that," he says.

Funding runs out this year but DeRamus plans to continue the project through the USL. A video currently being produced will be marketed in early 1997, at cost, to Extension and other government institutions.