



Federal grants go toward plastics, forage projects

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Two agricultural projects in St. Lawrence County will receive nearly \$10,000 each in grants from the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program.



A Cornell Cooperative Extension of St. Lawrence County research project looking at the use of brassica forages for certain periods of the year will receive \$9,864. Local implementation of the Recycling Ag Plastics Project at Cornell University, Ithaca, will get \$9,850.

The competitive grant program through the U.S. Department of Agriculture supports research and education projects. The Northeast is one of four regions and the regional office is at the University of Vermont, Burlington.

Stephen R. Canner, agronomist for St. Lawrence and Franklin counties' extension offices, will lead a research project on the use of forage brassicas. Brassicas, plants from the brassicaceae family, include turnips, kale, broccoli, cabbage and mustards.

"Varieties of the species have been developed specifically for animals to graze," Mr. Canner said. "They are a high-quality feed source."

During the middle of summer and at the beginning of fall, cool-season grasses, which are widely used as a main forage material, experience a slump in growth. Mr. Canner is pursuing the



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possibility that brassicas may fill in during that slump time.

"One of the primary objectives is to demonstrate and educate farmers on the crop," Mr. Canner said. "Brassicas have fallen out of common usage and they do or could have a place in some farms."

The project will include yield trials at extension's Learning Farm and three collaborating organic farms and investigation of a low-cost way of planting the annual crop.

The grant will pay for a portion of the research time of extension staff and transportation, the time and equipment of participating farmers, seed and supply purchase, sample testing and production of a fact sheet on the results.

For the plastic-recycling project, St. Lawrence County's Planning Department wrote the grant application on behalf of the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board. The board is working with Cornell Cooperative Extension to implement a long-term program for the county.

"It's a small-scale project with good long-term ramifications," county Planning Director Keith J. Zimmerman said.

He said about \$7,400 of the grant will go to extension staff time, \$1,000 for material to create storage containers on some farms and the remainder toward other expenses, including fuel for transporting a modified tobacco BigFoot baler around the county by the county's Highway Department.

"It's wonderful to get the SARE grant opportunity," project field coordinator Blake L. Putman said. "St. Lawrence County has a lot of dairy farms and a fair number of horticulture producers who can use the baler."

The project is awaiting a grant from the state Department of Environmental Conservation to come through to buy a baler to share among St. Lawrence, Lewis and Jefferson counties.

During the program's recent spring tour, 32 farmers participated in St. Lawrence County. Ms. Putman said she expects to have 50 farms saving and baling by the summer tour July 10 to 17.