



# Using Farm Family Case Studies To Teach Sustainable Agriculture

## Overview

The Farm Family Case Study Video Project is a two-year project initiated in 1996 to extend information about sustainable agriculture and its benefits to both farmers and the general public. The focus of this project is the creation of a series of videos that documents the successes and failures of farms in the southern region that have implemented sustainable agricultural practices. The southern region SARE/ACE program has invested in this project to enhance the sustainability of agriculture.

## Purpose

The purpose of this project is to extend a greater understanding and support of sustainable agriculture and encourage increased adoption rates of sustainable technologies on the farm. The goals of this two-year project are fourfold:

- (1) One video to educate civic groups and the general public about trends in agriculture and the impact of agriculture on the community;
- (2) Four to six videos to inform farmers about sustainable practices and demonstrate how others have implemented these practices on their farms. Supporting written materials to accompany the videos, including written case scenarios, farm physical and financial resources, and economic and environmental impacts of adopting sustainable practices;
- (3) Up to five condensed videos complementing the Ag in the Classroom curriculum to educate junior-high school children about agriculture; and
- (4) Several public service announcements.

## Approach

A Farm Family Case Study Video Project Steering Committee has been formed to guide the project, and includes extension representatives from Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee, a farmer, and video crew personnel. The committee will set selection criteria for case study farms, assist in identifying and selecting the farms to be used as case studies, and review draft versions of videotapes and written materials developed in the project. Following the completion of the case study videos, a second youth project steering committee will be appointed to develop a short, targeted pilot-test version of the materials for use in teaching youth.

**Creative Concept** The videos will focus on the idea of farmers teaching farmers, with the majority of information presented by the cooperating farmers. Whole-farm case studies will be developed for each farm, emphasizing management changes which have occurred in order to achieve sustainability goals. A variety of farm types demonstrating themes in sustainability, such as profitability, resource conservation, environmental impact, farm family quality of life, and integrated management and marketing will be represented in the case studies.

**Education and Outreach** The completed materials will be distributed nation-wide to each land-grant university. The case study materials will be used to present concepts of sustainable agriculture to at least 250 individuals over a two-year period. A follow-up evaluation of audience members will be conducted six months after they view the project materials to determine what changes have been implemented.

**Organizations** The project involves agricultural and video professionals from several institutions and organizations who will provide technical assistance, including the following:

- University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service
- Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service
- Mississippi State Cooperative Extension Service
- Tennessee Farm Bureau
- Cooperating farm families

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