

# Sustainable Agriculture Trainer

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

Volume 2, No. 1

## Training Projects Funded for \$197,000

A sum of \$197,000 of Professional Development Program (PDP) funds will be disbursed to four training projects in the states of Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Arkansas in 1996.

The project titled "Facilitating Farmer-to-Farmer Networks: An Experimental Approach", will allow the University of Florida and Florida A&M University to jointly explore ways in which Extension can facilitate the development of small farmer networks. The project will, over a period of 18 months, examine experiences with farmer networks in the Southern region, conduct training

in basic concepts of sustainable agriculture and group processes, assist in local networking, and participate in a self-evaluation process in which representatives of local groups trade experiences, solve problems and review their performance. Anticipated benefits from the project include increased use of farmer-to-farmer networks in north and central Florida, enhanced resource protection, and economic stability for farmers belonging to these groups.

In Kentucky, the "Southern Gathering on Agricultural Problem-Solving" will consist of a series of

workshops to develop farm community skills in issues deliberation, strategic planning, and conflict management. This initiative responds to landgrant mandates to improve understanding of rural communities, enhance local innovation, nurture local leadership and help to define and implement sustainable farm systems.

The project "Sustainable Ag Marketing through Collaborative Policy Development" will focus on alternative marketing in Arkansas, Tennessee, and Kentucky. Recognizing that collaboration in policy innovation has given a much-needed

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## Search For New Members

The PDP Executive Leadership Committee is looking for three new members to replace Jerry Pennick (GA), Charles Miller (KY), and Jim Pease (VA), members who will rotate off the committee in January 1997.

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

Members of the Leadership committee, says Jim Lukens, who is on the management team, set policy for the Training Consortium; this includes the establishment of priorities for calls for proposals and funding for states, and determining how proposals should be evaluated.

The three new candidates will represent the farming community, an NGO and a landgrant institution, respectively. They must hail from three of the following six states and territories: Oklahoma, Mississippi, Virgin Islands, Georgia, Kentucky or Virginia. Other committee members are Samuel Bass (SC), Barry Colley (AR), Cynthia Connolly (FL), Robert Jenkins (TN), Anthony Judice (LA), John Meetze (AL), Oscar Muniz-Torres (PR), Peggy Sechrist (TX), and James Smith (NC).

For more information, call Jim Lukens (501) 442-9824, Roger G. Crickenberger (919) 515-3252, or John O'Sullivan (910) 334-7956.

## Newsletter Gets New Name

We are pleased to announce the *Sustainable Agriculture Trainer*, a new and improved version of our earlier newsletter - which went by the name of *Chapter 3 Bulletin*.



This publication aims to keep folks informed about Training Consortium activities in the Southern region. Constructive criticism and other forms of feedback are welcome. Write to:

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## Call For Training Projects in July

A proposal for competitive grants for sustainable agriculture training projects under the Southern Region SARE/ACE program is expected to be released in July, pending approval by the Leadership Committee.

Projects may be of two types: they must either provide training and professional development opportunities for Extension Service agents and other professionals involved in education and transfer of information about sustainable agriculture; or they may be State Training Enhancement Projects that enhance the effectiveness of training offered through the state sustainable agriculture training program.

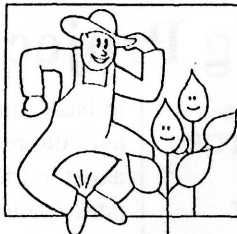
Projects that represent the meaningful participation of farmers and collaboration among landgrant universities (1862 and 1890) and non-governmental organizations will be strongly encouraged. The tentative deadline for acceptance of proposals is September 10.

## "Thumbs up" for Lexington meeting

*70% of survey respondents rate it "good to excellent"*

Participants gave a thumbs-up to the Southern Region Sustainable Agriculture Training Consortium workshop hosted earlier this year in Lexington, KY.

According to results of a survey, 70% of the respondents, consisting of farmers, Extension agents, specialists, and administrators, rated the program "excellent to good", 23% thought it was "okay" while 2.7% found it "poor".



### Promoting education

All groups indicated that they would use interactive learning in their work and that the networking and interaction skills they had observed would be especially useful to promote education in sustainability. Respondents said that they were going home with potential resources, ideas for collaboration with local groups, and plans to utilize a systems approach in helping farmers. While Extension agents valued the tips on conflict management, problem-

solving and planning, farmers said that they had learned about presentation skills to improve information delivery and were taking home ideas on networking with other groups of people.

### Sharing tips

All groups requested that more time be devoted to sharing tips and success stories. Non-farmer groups requested information about practical applications and method reports from other states about successes and failures. Farmers emphasized the need for scientific data on sustainable agriculture, information on the efforts of others in the field, and networking assistance. Extension agents were concerned with the ability to access information on "what really works" in sustainable agriculture. Specific requests included information about job opportunities and curriculum planning for youth. Farm tours and field trips emphasizing

(See Thumbs Up, page 3)

## SARE grants: \$10,000 for states in 1996

In June, the regional Administrative Council will consider for approval a proposal to continue to support training in sustainable agriculture by providing up to \$10,000 to each state to assist in the development and implementation of state strategic plans for training activities.

At a meeting of the PDP Leadership Committee, held in Puerto Rico in late April, it was recommended that \$10,000 be made available to each state, rather than to each landgrant institution, as was the case in the past couple of years. If the Council approves the proposed change, a call for proposals will be distributed by July 1. Applications will be accepted from any organization or agency and must represent the participation and team effort of all landgrant institutions in that state. Only one application will be considered for funding in each state. The deadline for submission, August 20, 1996, will be observed. If no application is received from a state by this date, or if an application is not approved for funding, the money will be used to fund competitive SARE/ACE projects.

### Mark Your Calendar! Regional Training Project Deadlines

**June:** Call for proposals approved by the Administrative Council.

**July:** Call for proposals announced.

**August 20:** State workplans due  
**September 10:** Project proposals due.

**October:** Proposal review meeting; state coordinators' workshop.

**November:** Awards approved by the Administrative Council.

**December:** Awards announced.

"Give sustainable ag education a hand"

## Partners in Progress and Sustainability

The implementation of the Professional Development Program (PDP) will bring about meaningful changes in the working of Extension, according to Tom Trantham, dairy farmer from South Carolina.

Trantham was speaking at the two-day workshop hosted by the Sustainable Agriculture Training Consortium in January, in Lexington, KY. The purpose of the workshop was to enhance understanding about partnerships in sustainable agriculture, to strengthen the capacity to deliver high quality training programs, and to showcase successful ventures in sustainable agriculture.

Moderating the first session on "Partnerships for Sustainability", John O'Sullivan acknowledged the challenge of grappling with compli-

\*I took away some things I want to share back home on training the trainers - **Carlos Robles, Coop Extension, Virgin Islands.**

\*Lots of good points. I came away with a heightened awareness of problems other farmers, conventional, sustainable, organic, are dealing with - **Mike Blevens, beef, corn, pumpkin farmer, TX.**

\*It's a good meeting to make contacts that we can use back home in organizing - **Liz Cox, VISTA worker, MS.**

cated concepts on a regional scale and stressed the importance of broadbased support for sustainable agriculture education. Jerry DeWitt, the national liaison between the USDA and the regional programs, said that partnerships allowed for closer cooperation and endowed specific rights and responsibilities on

partners. Recognizing the importance of indigenous farmer-based knowledge, DeWitt suggested a revision in relationships between land-grant universities and farmers and urged the latter to take on a more proactive role in determining the universities'

(See Partners in Progress, page 4)

### Thumbs up for Lexington meet

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practical concerns were favored by the respondents. Farmer involvement in small group discussions and interactions was desired and appreciated.

According to John O'Sullivan, Consortium Management Team member, requests for less of classroom learning and more of practical applications indicate that people are wanting to assist farmers with real solutions, not textbook remedies.

#### Hands-On Training

O'Sullivan's observations are supported by the findings of another survey administered by the Consortium to find the best ways to train Extension agents and other ag professionals in the principles of sustainable agriculture. Here, too, respondents were heavily in favor of moving out of the classroom and into the field. They were also in favor of hands-on workshops and the involvement of farmers as trainers. Techniques that emphasized theory - classroom training, magazines and newsletters, and speakers and conferences - were ranked as poor alternatives.

Respondents favored training in certain areas of production such as the use of crop rotations, biological pest control, and the integration of crop and animal production systems. They also indicated that the ability to facilitate better ties among farmers, consumers, and environmentalists ought to be a basic requirement in the training curriculum. Training in communicating about agriculture to non-agricultural audiences, and facilitating dialogue between differing value systems and different vocabularies were ranked as high priorities.

In-state training was favored significantly over multi-state and region-wide training.

### Training Projects

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impetus to value-added enterprise, it will apply lessons learned in an earlier project in Kentucky, where environmentalists, landgrant researchers, nonprofits, state agencies, and the Farm Bureau helped to create a policy mechanism that allowed farmers, researchers, and environmentalists to jointly write water quality regulations. The same methods will be applied to an effort in alternative marketing in the three states.

The "Sustainable Small-Scale Agricultural Development Training Project", will educate professional agricultural workers about the principles of sustainable agriculture and rural development through a couple of workshops - one in Perryville, AR, and another in Baton Rouge, LA. Alternative enterprises, market development, and sustainable rural development will be emphasized.

Ten sub-contracts issued

## Implementation Plans Okayed

Following the acceptance and approval of strategic and implementation plans submitted by landgrant institutions in the 15 southern states for the year 1995-96, ten sub-contracts have been issued to institutions in the states of North Carolina, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, Texas, Tennessee and the Virgin Islands. Sub-contracts will be issued to those in Florida and Louisiana pending final approval of their implementation plans.

The Administrative Council had approved a plan last year to provide up to \$10,000 to each landgrant

institution in the region, contingent upon completion of their strategic plan and submission of a three-page plan of work and budget. Plans would be reviewed by the management team and the leadership committee. If they were not approved, the management team would work with the state or institutional contact to revise or submit an approvable plan.

Several states have yet to turn in their revised plans to the management team.

## Partners in Progress and Sustainability

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research and education agendas.

Following a group discussion on subjects that should be included in a training program and the design of an appropriate training delivery approach, Barbara Meister of the USDA provided an overview of the federal outlook for sustainability issues.

The following day's session, moderated by Samuel Bass, SC Extension and Consortium Leadership Committee member, focused on approaches to sustainability. Paul Mueller, state coordinator for NC, chronicled training events in sustainable agriculture at the NC Extension, and recalled the begin-

ning of field training for agents in 1993. Hands-on training in IPM had also been included. Gerrit Cuperus, IPM and sustainable ag coordinator at Oklahoma State University, noted the similarities between IPM and sustainable agriculture and said that differences between the two were primarily in scope, time, and participation by farmers.

Tribby Vice, a Kentucky farmer, and Jackie Drake, a student, described the efforts of the Fleming Creek Project to improve local stream quality. Pollution problems caused by agricultural run-off had been measured by students and solutions found with the assistance of local farmers.

Local efforts led to the Kentucky Water Quality Bill which is designed to protect other watersheds in the state. Both Vice and Drake acknowledged that the grant application process had been a long and painful struggle but that it had forced them to think ahead and take responsibility for the project.

