

Sustainable Agriculture Trainer

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

Volume 2, No. 3/ December 1996

Training Projects Funded

Eight sustainable agriculture training proposals will be funded by the Southern Region SARE Professional Development Program for 1997. In November, the SARE Administrative Council approved a sum of \$401,663 for projects originating in the states of Oklahoma, North Carolina, Kentucky, South Carolina, Georgia, and Arkansas. Three of the projects will be funded through 1998. A brief description of each follows:

✓ **State Training in Integrated Erosion Control Systems (OK)**
The project will train 120 agricultural professionals in integrated erosion control, in three or four week-long sessions. The proposed training will focus on wind erosion control systems, riparian management, and gully control, and help in the development of an integrated curriculum in erosion control. A videotape will be produced for use in training efforts and distance learning. The project will draw from the results of a companion training program in Integrated Erosion Control Systems which addresses barriers to effective training in erosion control. The project will increase farmer involvement in strategic plan implementation and training; enhance institutional support for sustainable agriculture training; improve professionals' perceptions of sustainable agriculture; and develop up-to-date, state-specific curriculum in integrated erosion control training.

✓ **Barriers to Sustainable Agriculture Training in Oklahoma**
Sustainable agriculture training efforts in Oklahoma have met with resistance because of misconceptions about the nature of sustainable agriculture. The current proposal will arrive at a definition or vision statement of sustainable agriculture and its relevance to the agricultural, rural, and urban sectors; and indicate how sustainable agriculture can be integrated with current educational and research programs in the landgrant university's Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.

✓ **Nuisances in the Community: Training on the Issues and Methods of Mediation (AR)**
In the past several decades, small, diversified family farms have given way to large concentrated grain or livestock operations. Problems accompanying this include odor and pollution. Potential solutions include education of agricultural producers and community members on sustainable alternatives and training in dispute resolution. This project will provide agricultural professionals with an understanding of nuisance laws in southern states; right to farm laws; anti corporate farming laws; odor regulations; environmental regulations controlling livestock and other agricultural operations; community confrontations over expansion of agricultural operations; principles of alternative dispute resolution and mediation laws; successful mediation techniques and principles effective in resolving divisive community problems.

✓ **Kentucky Cooperative Extension System Training Project**
The project will educate landgrant Extension professionals and paraprofessionals about sustainable agriculture and organic agriculture. The Kentucky
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Request for Proposals

The southern region SARE program is once again requesting proposals for training projects in sustainable agriculture. A proposal may be either a **Training Project** or a **State Training Enhancement Project**, and must expressly provide for or enable the training of Extension workers, NRCS personnel, consultants and farmers who will function in training or educational roles.

Training projects develop understanding, competence, and the ability to teach and communicate the concepts of sustainable agriculture. Training *enhancement* projects identify obstacles to training and develop strategies to overcome them. Interdisciplinary and multi-institutional projects are strongly encouraged. Participation in and support of the proposal by landgrant universities, while not required, will improve prospects of funding.

Proposals must be received by February 11, 1997. For additional information, contact Roger G. Crickenberger, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, Box 7602, 214 Ricks Hall, Raleigh, NC 27695-7602. Ph: (919) 515-3252.

Upcoming events

January 15-16: Annual regional PDP workshop, Gainesville, FL.

January 16-18: SSAWG annual conference, Gainesville, FL.

February 11: Training and Training Enhancement Project deadline.

February 11-13: Southeastern Sustainable Animal Waste Mgmt. Workshop, University of Georgia, Tifton. Call (912) 386-3416.

Week of March 3-7: PDP proposal review committee meets.

Week of March 17-21: PDP Executive Leadership Committee meets.

April 1-3: Southern SARE Administrative Council meeting.

Countdown to Florida Workshop Begins

Preparations are under way for the Southern Region's Professional Development Program workshop to be held on January 15-16, in Gainesville, FL. Coordinated by the Training Consortium, the workshop is a step forward in ongoing efforts to develop sustainable agriculture training infrastructure in the region. The agenda will comprise several broad themes.

On the morning of the 15th, John Ikerd of the University of Missouri will speak and initiate a discussion on the multidimensional (economic, environmental, and social) nature of sustainability. The post-lunch session will consist of a presentation by Teresa Maurer, ATTRA project manager, on

"Accessing Sustainable Agriculture Information Sources," followed by Kirk Gadzia, holistic resource management consultant, who will speak on "Using Information in Sustainable Decision-Making." ATTRA, SAN, the regional SARE program, and the southern SAWG are among those information providers with confirmed booths and displays. The next day's session, moderated by Roger Crickenberger, PDP regional coordinator, will focus on the challenges and successes faced by the Professional Development Program. Projected speakers are Rob Myers, director of the SARE program, Jim Pease, Executive Leadership Committee member from VA, Clark Garland, training project leader from

Tennessee, Michael Sligh and Tom Trantham from the southern SAWG, and farmers Jackie Judice from Louisiana and Ben Burkett from Mississippi. The workshop is designed for those in a position to lead the sustainable agriculture initiative in their state. Each state or territory is encouraged to send between eight and twelve participants, especially farmers and those representing landgrant institutions and NGOs. Participation by minorities, including women, is encouraged. Farmers in need of scholarships should apply to the sustainable agriculture coordinators in their state. Additional information on registration and lodging may be obtained by calling Roger Crickenberger at (919) 515-3252.

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State University Research Farm will host a statewide field day and monthly mini field days to show and educate participants about the feasibility of sustainable and organic farming and the reduced use of pesticides. The mini field days are especially valuable because, unlike regular field days which give a "one-shot" picture, they allow participants to observe the natural and seasonal progression of a project over a longer period of time and promote a more critical understanding of the process.

The First Requirement of Agricultural Sustainability: Efficient Management of Available Resources (SC)

Limited resource farms, especially those owned by African and Native Americans, are disproportionately affected by changes in agriculture. The project will train agents in agricultural management that is sensitive to the needs of the small and socially-disadvantaged farmer. Agents will be better equipped to help farmers develop short and long-term strategies for profitable and sustainable farming; identify practical and accessible resources; reduce off-farm inputs and generate a profit.

Overcoming Training Obstacles: A Realistic Cost-Effective Approach (SC)

The best way to provide the small-scale farmer with tools to survive is by training farm agents, government organizations, and the farmers themselves. The project will train 60 agents to overcome identified obstacles that impede effective training. These range from poor delivery of information to limited technical support and few on-site demonstrations.

Building Capacity in Sustainable Agriculture: A Comprehensive Training Program in Organic Farming Systems for Cooperative Extension Agents, Specialists, and Other Educators (NC)

A number of diverse groups in North Carolina will conduct a series of workshops on how to incorporate the major components of organic production into a working and productive management system. Much of the training and demonstrations will be conducted at the Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS) established in Goldsboro, NC in 1994. The information presented at the workshops and the demonstrations will be compiled into a manual and made available to other southern states.

Developing Trained Professionals and Teaching Aids to Support Educational Programs Addressing Management of Stored Grain in the Southeast (GA)

The primary objective of this project is to improve agents' understanding of management techniques used to maintain the post-harvest quality of grains. The training will consider the unique insect and mycotoxin problems associated with storage under conditions of high temperature and humidity. It will emphasize a systems approach that encompasses cultural practices in the field as well as post-harvest management. The University of Georgia Cooperative Service, along with the Alabama Cooperative Extension Service, will work together to conduct a train-the-trainer seminar; the proceedings and a video tape developed will be provided free to all county extension offices in the participating states of Georgia and Alabama.

TX Range Workshop Meets With Success



County agents participate in prescribed burning training in March, 1996, on Waggoner Ranch in Vernon, TX.

County Extension agents with little formal training in rangeland management were introduced to the subject at workshops conducted by J.F. Cadenhead, range specialist at Texas A&M at Vernon, TX. Funded through the SARE Southern Region Training Consortium, the project provided participants with the skills to develop viable range management practices for sustaining both the land and its manager.

In three sessions held between July, 1995 and March, 1996, the agents learned about goal-setting, inventorying of resources, stocking rates, habitat diversity, and the use of prescribed burning to maintain and promote sustainable grazing systems. In the third and last workshop, agents were able to draw up a fire plan and conduct a prescribed fire burn.

An adult education specialist who attended a couple of workshops helped to design the evaluation instrument administered to the participants. Asked if the workshops had met their expectations, all 19 agents indicated they had

learned something that they could share with their clients. A range management handbook, a compilation of Extension publications and workshop notes, will soon be available.

Resource lifeline

CSAS, ATTRA publications help farmers

Beginning with this issue, we would like to devote a column to information resources in sustainable agriculture, resources like books, magazines, videos, Internet sites, individuals, organizations, workshops, anything of use to those in the business of sustainable agriculture training. We are especially interested in the grayest of gray literature, the hard-to-find but invaluable resource that few people know about, the odd manual, handbook or video produced at a training project.

A set of four volumes of Extension and education materials is now available from the **Center for Sustainable Agricultural Systems** in Lincoln, NE. The materials comprise papers, case studies, discussions, and do-it-yourself worksheets and exercises, some of which represent the outcome of workshops and symposiums in 1995. Some of the material is available on the Internet at <http://ianrwww.unl.edu/ianr/csas>.

Copies may be purchased for \$10 each from the Center at **225 Keim Hall, Lincoln, NE 68583-0949. Ph. (402) 472-2056**. The Center facilitates research and education (including classroom, outreach and in-service training) activities and provides information in the areas of

agronomic crops, livestock, agroforestry, and fruit and vegetable production and direct marketing.

The Center publishes a bi-monthly newsletter as well as other educational materials, maintains a Web page and a reference center containing books, reports, proceedings, videos, periodicals and newsletters from universities and organizations around the U.S.

ATTRA (Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas) is the national sustainable farming information center located at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. Funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, it provides information free of charge to farmers, Extension agents, university researchers, farmers, agribusiness, and other information providers.

Since its inception in 1987, ATTRA has helped callers with reports on improving farm income with crop and livestock diversity, reducing dependence on costly off-farm inputs, improving soil fertility and water quality, incorporating value-added and farm-processed products, and on many more topics. Call **(800) 346-9140, Monday through Friday (8.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. CT)**.

Auburn shares W. region concerns at Greensboro

According to Jill Auburn, SARE Western region training coordinator, integrating sustainable agricultural education with ongoing extension and NRCS programs is only one of many issues on the Western region's agenda. Speaking at the Southern State Coordinators' October meeting in Greensboro, she emphasized the importance of competitive grants and the exchange of information between Ch. 1 and Ch. 3 of the SARE program. These, she said, helped to develop collaboration between landgrant universities and NGOs.

Auburn says the Western region is grappling with other issues as well. For instance, what is the best way of sharing information produced - the videos, publications, resource notebooks, strategic plans - in the region? How best to motivate agents to remain interested in sustainable agriculture, after his/her immediate need for information has been satisfied? How to address "quality of life" or social issues in professional development training? Should audiences other than county Extension and NRCS professionals be targeted? What are the best ways to evaluate the impact of educational programs?

Information about the Western SARE program is available on the Internet at <http://ext.usu.edu:80/wsare/>

Is The PDP an Excellent Program Yet?

by Jim Lukens

The Professional Development Program in the southern region has come a long way in a short time. When it began just a few years ago, all we had was the general and somewhat vague goal of coordinating and enabling sustainable agriculture training for Extension Service personnel and other agriculture professionals in the region. Today we have training activity occurring in every state in the region, and more than a dozen regionally-funded training projects completed, underway, or newly approved. How did we get this far?

Structural elements of the program emerged first, starting with a management team approved by the regional SARE Administrative Council. Next came the formation of a regional Leadership Committee, and the appointment of Sustainable Agriculture Coordinators by each landgrant university in the region. In addition, State Coordinators created diverse state teams to help guide the planning and implementation of sustainable agriculture training in the state.

With some structural elements in place, programmatic elements soon followed in these three areas: state sustainable agriculture training plans; regional competitive training projects; and an annual regional workshop.

These are good structural and programmatic elements. Does all this activity mean we have an excellent regional program? I suggest that to be excellent, a program needs to be deliberately goal-driven, cohesive, and self-improving. How does our regional PDP program stack up against these criteria?

Is the program deliberately goal-driven? No. While state plans have goals, and the Leadership Committee is developing goals, goals for the overall regional program remain

vague. The program can't be program-driven without clear goals.

Is the program deliberately cohesive? Only partially. While the various elements were deliberately designed to complement each other, they too frequently operate as if independent. There is potential synergy between competitive projects and state training, between state teams and Leadership Committee, between regional activities and local activities that we are not capturing. We should work to make the program more cohesive without making it more rigid.

Is the program deliberately self-improving? Yes, I believe it is. With good leadership from the Leadership Committee and State Coordinators, significant attention is being paid to evaluation for the sake of improvement. Evaluation is being built into state plans, into training projects, and into the annual workshop. I hope work will begin soon to develop consensus on clear goals, and concrete and measurable objectives for the overall regional program. This would be a major positive step.

Is PDP an excellent program yet? No, but if the program is indeed self-improving, excellence is possible. I hope it becomes reality.

(This piece is the author's opinion and does not reflect the views of the Southern Region Professional Development Program. Readers are invited to contribute by writing 350-400 words on related topics.)

Nominations received

Nominations to the Executive Leadership Committee have been received for individuals from the states of Georgia, Kentucky, Virginia, and Oklahoma. The Committee will be making a final decision in the next few weeks and the new members will take office at the PDP workshop in Florida, on January 15-16.

The Sustainable Agriculture Trainer is edited and published quarterly by the National Center for Appropriate Technology, for the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program. It is mailed free of cost to Extension, NRCS and other agricultural professionals. News items, story ideas and other suggestions and feedback are welcome. Contact Radhika Bala at NCAT-ATTRA, P.O. Box 3657, Fayetteville, AR 72702. Ph (501) 442-6085; FAX (501) 442-9842; e-mail rbala@ncatfvyv.uark.edu