

Program Helps Farmers Test, Share Innovations

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Northeast Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program has awarded \$97,398 to 39 producers to test alternate farming practices.

Through these grants, SARE is helping producers conduct their own farm-based experiments to answer their own production and marketing questions. Many of the projects involve several producers who are working cooperatively to solve common problems.

The goal is to develop systems and practices that promote stewardship of natural resources, prevent agricultural pollution and improve farm profitability.

The 39 projects that were selected for funding aim at diversifying farms, developing direct and alternate markets for producers, reducing purchased inputs; building, adapting and testing innovative equipment; and using beneficial biology to control pest problems.

The Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program is a USDA competitive grants program. Its mission is to develop farming practices and systems that are environmentally sound, economically viable and that contribute to the quality of life of farmers and society as a whole. The Northeast region includes Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia and Washington, D.C.

The following list provides a brief description of each project. For more information about any of these projects, please contact SARE at (802) 656-0471.

Connecticut

• Peter Jacquier of East Canaan will work with four other farmers to organize a cooperative, multi-farm manure storage, solid separation, composting and digester system. The goal is to help these farms improve manure management and disposal practices, and adapt new technologies to the size of their farming operations. Grant: \$6,000.

Maine

• Gloria and Gregg Varney of Turner will research, document and evaluate the production and economic feasibility of once daily milking on a certified herd used for a raw milk bottling operation. The Varneys, who operate a small, diversified farm, will examine how once daily milking, in combination with rotational grazing affects labor, overhead, feed production, herd health and overall farm profitability. Grant: \$4,990.

• George James of Easton will demonstrate that a virtual waste material which is a burden to a local vegetable processing plant, can be a value added product, by dehydrating the waste and incorporating it into feed used for horses. In addition, he will develop and expand markets for alternative crops of carrots, oat hay, alfalfa and timothy. Grant: \$4,350.

• Michael Macfarlane of Ellsworth will attempt to establish a commercially viable, organic cranberry bog, focusing on ways to promote maximum rooting, runner and upright growth with mulches, innovative planting methods and use of liquid seaweed as a rooting agent. Grant: \$2,080.

Maryland

• Eric Rice of Middletown and Bill Hastings, organic growers in different climates in Maryland, will investigate the feasibility of

growing annual organic strawberries and organic fall vegetables using sustainable practices. The project builds on a 1994 annual strawberry production demonstration at the University of Maryland's Wye Research and Education Center, and work being done by ARS. Grant: \$3,150.

Massachusetts

• Peter Konjoian of Andover will test the use of ethylene, a naturally occurring plant hormone to stimulate branching and control flowering of floricultural greenhouse crops. The project seeks to find alternatives to synthetic chemical growth regulators and to reduce labor costs. Grant: \$3,700.

• Tim Coppinger of Montague plans to compost waste from a local supermarket with horse manure and sawdust. His project includes experimentation with composting techniques and chemical analysis to determine if there are pesticide residues in the compost, and evaluate whether there are any environmental and safety issues to be addressed during the composting process. Grant: \$1,169.

• Clifford Hatch of Gill, along with another strawberry grower, will demonstrate alternative planting systems designed to reduce herbicide use, mechanical cultivation, hand hoeing and weeding. The two-year project is geared to respond to consumer and neighbor pressure to reduce pesticide use in Connecticut Valley operations, and will compare the systems effectiveness at weed control, total expense and yields. Grant: \$6,215.

• Susan Minnich of Washington will evaluate a woodland system for growing New England wildflowers and medicinal plants such as goldenseal, blue cohosh, maidenhair fern, solomon's seal, trillium and trout lilies. The project attempts to respond to growing demand for these plants, and to develop a sustainable production system. Grant: \$1,850.

• David Stanley of Belchertown will rear, release two naturally occurring caterpillar predators of major sweet corn pests, and examine their effectiveness at controlling European corn borer, fall army worm and corn ear worm in organic corn. He also will attempt to collect a third predator, a Coccinellid beetle that masses in late season tasseling corn, store it over the winter and use it the next season against Colorado potato beetles and European corn borers. Grant: \$3,525.

New Hampshire

• Klee Dugan of Hillsboro will test whether recirculating tank systems with solar domes can extend and prolong the growing season for New Hampshire fish farmer. Grant: \$3,936.

• David Trumble of Frances-town will examine the most economically feasible way to grow greens, lettuce, spinach, flowers and herbs during the early spring and late fall. The purpose of the project is to explore long-term solutions to the issue of season extension. Grant: \$1,570.

New Jersey

• Kay Magilavy of Union City, together with nine other farmers in New York, will establish a farmer-to-farmer mentoring program to assist farmers in the start-up of an organic operation. The advisory service will provide assistance to new (and transitioning) farmers as they create a farm plan and during the first growing season. Grant: \$5,400.

• Ed Lidzbarski of Jamesburg, working with other farmers, Rut-

gers University personnel, and a local wholesaler, will develop an organic tomato production and marketing manual. This project builds on a previous New Jersey Agriculture Department and NOFA New Jersey initiative that successfully developed a uniform packaging system and established a market for organic tomatoes. Grant: \$4,935.

New York

• George and Heidi Kollias of Freeville will test the feasibility of using predator scents to control deer damage to Christmas trees. The predator scents will be compared to conventional chemical repellents and soap sprays. For small-scale Christmas tree growers, deer damage can be significant, and the cost of conventional controls is high. Grant: \$960.

• Robert Schultz of Jamestown will use chopped newspaper as a mulch in tomato production systems. The project aims to recycle waste and reduce the use of pesticides and plastic mulches. Grant: \$612.

• Klaas and Mary-Howell Martens of Penn Yan will use soil conserving, organic production methods to establish trellised plantings of hardy kiwi, a smaller-fruited, fuzzless relative to the kiwi fruit. Grant: \$1,078.

• Marion Kise of Clyde will pasture raise chickens and build a small on-farm poultry processing plant. Grant: \$1,862.

• Carole Corcoran of Westhampton will build and test modular row-cover structures aimed at extending the growing season and reducing flea beetle damage to arugula and other leafy greens. Grant: \$633.

• R. Peter Childs of Humphrey, experiment with harvest and marketing methods to expand and develop a cottage industry for Chinese chestnuts. Grant: \$2,400.

• James P. Barney of Sherman will examine the economics of growing and feeding grass-based forage crops as an alternative to alfalfa/corn rotations for dairy farmers in the southern tier of western New York. Barney's two-year project will track yields, feed quality and costs. Grant: \$3,050.

• Jeanne L. Giambrone of Little Valley will explore ways to extend the growing season for vegetable crops grown for sale at farmers' markets. The project, aimed at increasing income for producers who sell at farmers markets, will examine early and late protection methods, choice of varieties, timing, and pest management considerations using IPM methods. Grant: \$1,200.

• Jim Lucey of Belmont, will build and assess a "cover crop undercutter" for use in three small vegetable crops. The undercutter will be based on a design developed at Ohio State University but not being commercially manufactured. Grant: \$1,150.

• Craig Kawasaki of E. Moriches will test a predatory mite for control of two-spotted spider mites in his greenhouse. His project is designed to help greenhouse growers of ornamental plants learn about using beneficial biology to control pests. Grant: \$500.

• Aaron Gabriel of Schaghticoke will test two alternate methods for controlling flea beetle damage to spring broccoli. He will use nematodes which are commercially available and labeled for controlling flea beetle larvae in the soil, and Chinese cabbage as a trap crop for controlling adult flea

beetles. Grant: \$850.

• Elizabeth and Peter Ryan of Staatsburg will evaluate an alternative method for controlling leafhoppers in apple production systems. They will test the use of a single thinning application of carbaryl shortly after petal fall. Preliminary trials at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station suggest this strategy can significantly reduce egg laying adults and second generation nymphs, thus reducing the need for additional pesticide applications later in the season. Grant: \$2,275.

• Sue Smith-Heavenrich of Candor will evaluate methods for encouraging spiders through the use of mulch in potatoes and other crops. This project continues a 1994 study which suggested that mulch does influence spider populations, which in turn may control leafhopper populations. Grant: \$938.

Pennsylvania

• Harry Karl Zimmerman of Kintnersville will evaluate the economic feasibility of producing greenhouse strawberries for the local (southeastern Pennsylvania) market. This project continues a 1994 SARE-funded project. Grant: \$1,075.

• Edgar H. Rits of Honey Grove will expand direct sales of sustainably produced beef in the Harrisburg area, and offer customers the opportunity to visit the farm on which their food was produced. Grant: \$1,304.

• Jim Weaver of Wellsboro will develop and test a quick, inexpensive method for determining protein content of pastures used for rotationally grazing cows. The goal is to provide graziers with information on pasture quality to make timely management decisions that will enhance grazing performance. Grant: \$2,610.

Vermont

• John Williamson of N. Bennington will evaluate the production and marketing feasibility of growing sweet sorghum in southern Vermont and processing it into syrup using maple sugaring equipment. The goal is to determine whether sorghum syrup could be an additional cash crop for maple producers. Grant: \$1,750.

• Todd Pinkham of Johnson will build and test a facility integrating an existing heifer barn and mo-

ern greenhouse, with the aim of using heat from the heifer barn to warm the greenhouse. The project seeks to demonstrate energy and nutrient-savings as a result of the integration and diversification. Grant: \$779.

• Rob Litch of New Haven will assist other poultry growers with economically viable methods to transport birds to a regional processing plant. The project is aimed at providing small-scale growers with improved access to processing plants, reducing damage, disease and mortality, and enhancing profitability for poultry producers. Grant: \$3,025.

• Joseph Klein of Plainfield will test the use of pastured chickens to control Colorado potato beetles. Grant: \$821.

• Jonathan Blumberg of East Thetford will develop an environmentally benign and cost-effective method of hop production through a soil improvement and fertilization program, use of legume cover crops and secondary intercrops, and efficient hop cultural techniques. Grant: \$5,970.

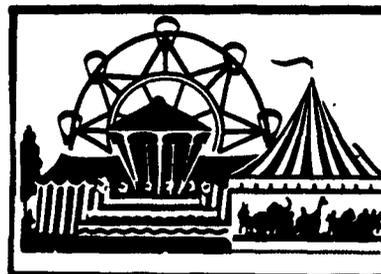
• Chuck Armstrong of Browns-ville will evaluate two bacterial biofungicide seed treatments in vegetable crops, comparing them to chemical fungicide and no treatment. The project aims to explore an alternative to chemical fungicide treatments, particularly for crops that are susceptible to poor performance in cool spring soils. Grants: \$1,250.

• Judith Hall of Belmont will evaluate low-maintenance turf-grass and various mulches as alternatives to cultivation in cut flower production systems. Grant: \$2,482.

• Jack Lazor of Westfield will develop low-cost machinery to overseed clovers and other green manure crops into existing plant stands. His goal is to provide practical, economical methods for farmers to maintain and build soil health and productivity. Grant: \$4,348.

West Virginia

• Pam Talley of Caldwell will evaluate a living mulch system for cut flower production. Talley's goal is to explore alternative weed control methods that reduce chemical herbicide use and contribute to soil quality and conservation. Grant: \$1,605.



Fair Happenings

'Year Of The Dairy Cow' To Be Celebrated

Increased premiums, butter sculpting, milking demonstrations, and educational exhibits highlighting the dairy industry will be some of the many activities planned for the 1995 Montgomery County Agricultural Fair—Aug. 18-25—when the Year of the Dairy Cow is celebrated.

The annual Gaithersburg, Md., event, which draws more than 400,000 spectators, recognizes an animal species each year as the Animal of the Year.

"There are so many dairy-related activities and educational programs that we are able to offer to our visitors," said Fair President Robert Pack. "We hope that the dairy exhibitors will also see this

year's fair as a special opportunity to compete with other top-notch breeders. The increase in the premiums offered for our dairy shows will hopefully draw those who don't normally exhibit at our fair."

Activities to be included at the 1995 fair are a butter sculptor, a milking parlor, calf judging and milking contests.

A one-ton replica of a Holstein cow will greet fair visitors at the Perry Parkway entrance to the fair courtesy of Turkey Hill Dairy of Conestoga, Pa., while a cluster of cows grazing atop a platform will highlight the fair's circle display at Chestnut Street.

Complete rules and regulations for exhibiting at the Montgomery County Agricultural Fair can be obtained by calling the fair office at (301) 926-3100.