

NESARE Announces \$660,000 For Research, Education

ITHACA, N.Y. — The Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NESARE) program located at the University of Vermont in Burlington has announced its research and education awards for 2003. Funds will support a total of 16 research, demonstration, and education projects support the long-term viability and sustainability of farms and farming in the northeast region.

NESARE characterizes sustainable agriculture as profitable, environmentally sound, and making important contributions to the community in which it resides.

Seven farmers will share approximately \$42,600 to conduct on-farm research. The grants were awarded based on their relevance, innovation, and promise to contribute to sustaining farming operations across the northeast. NESARE awarded a total of \$268,744 to farmer/grower projects in the Northeast. Awards for New York are Peter Anderson; Long Eddy, N.Y.; compost mounds and no-till for pumpkins; Michael Glos; Berkshire, N.Y.; season extension for organic culinary herbs; Ron Khosia; New Paltz, N.Y.; low cost electric seeding and cultivating tractor; Bi-Co View Farm; Munnsville, N.Y.; heated beds for dairy cows; Chris Pawelski, Goshen, N.Y.; commercial spring salad mix for Muckland; Matthias Reisen; Avoca, N.Y.; organic high production of medicinal herbs; Fred Forsburg; vinegar as an organic herbicide for garlic.

NESARE awarded \$2,255,075 to 19 researchers in the Northeast who will explore topics as diverse as exploring reduced tillage techniques for vegetables, controlling mites in honeybees, and linking local food sources with local schools both in the cafeteria and the curriculum. Awards totaling approximately \$568,000 will support four projects in New York:

- Soil health assessment, management, and training: Vegetable production systems. George Abawi, New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y. As soil is depleted, growers increase their use of fertilizers, pesticides, tillage, and irrigation to maintain acceptable yield, all of which have led to more interest in soil assessment and improvement to save money and labor. The project leader will assess the soil health on 50 to 100 vegetable farms and establish demonstration trials in the adoption of sustainable, biologically based soil management. An assessment protocol, Website, and materials kit for educators will be developed, and farmer adoption and economic impact will be tracked and analyzed.

- Determining the commercial viability of an exclusionary production system using disease-resistant columnar apple and sweet cherry cultivars. Peter Jentsch, Cornell University's Hudson Valley Lab, Highland, N.Y. Apples are pesticide-dependent, and costs for pesticides run \$400 an acre in the Hudson Valley. The project manager will grow disease-resistant columnar apple and dwarfing sweet cherry trees in five different orchards using a v-trellis high-density system, integrating mulches, irrigation, a fixed-canopy spray system, and supports for barrier netting. These sites will be used to familiarize fruit growers with an integrated system that will protect against hail and discourage pests without the use of synthetic pesticides.

- Optimizing reduced tillage systems for vegetables grown in the upper Northeast. Anusuya Rangarajan, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y. The cool climate in the northern part of the region often makes no-till difficult, since the soil takes a long time to warm. The project manager will use on-farm and experiment-station research, workshops, and field demonstrations to promote reduced-tillage strategies specific to the climate and soil of this area. At least five techniques will be tested, and vegetable farmers will learn about and adopt the ones best suited to their farms. Case studies will capture the experiences of individual farmers as they adopt reduced tillage practices and will be used for further outreach and education.

- Beach plum: A new crop for new markets. Thomas Whitlow, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y. This continues a previous SARE project.

LNE01-153, which focuses on beach plum as a low-input sustainable crop suitable for adding value. The project leader will build a marketing consortium and focus on market research, business planning, and producer, chef, and processor workshops. A Beach Plum Consortium Council will support and oversee marketing, and the emphasis will be on quality niche markets and responding to consumer preference for a wild-flavored jam with a distinctive regional identity. The overall goal is to continue building product quality and consumer interest in beach plum products.

NESARE partnership grants are awarded to agricultural professionals who work directly with farmers. The grants are for demonstration, research and marketing projects that relate directly to the long-term sustainability of farming and agriculture in the northeast region. In 2003 16 grants totaling \$150,000 were awarded. Six Cornell Cooperative Extension Educators received grants totaling \$48,000 for work in New York State:

- Alternative continuous cover forage crop systems for the Northeast. Paul Cerosaletti, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Delaware County, N.Y., and Lisa Fields, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Schoharie County, N.Y. Dairy farmers in south-central New York often grow their own forage, but struggle to establish cover crops needed to mediate soil loss. The project leaders will see whether sorghum sudangrass, interseeded with small grain cover crops and perennial forages, will provide a continuous cover, and whether winter rye and triticale will reestablish sods in no-corn, conventional-till fields. Four cooperating farmers will plant and harvest various mixes, and the results will be analyzed in terms of production costs, plant success, and milk production.

- Regional compost network. Aaron Gabriel, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Hudson Falls, N.Y. One of the challenges of composting is logistical connecting composters with waste generators, moving organic waste, and developing the community infrastructure needed to make composting viable. The project leader will develop case studies of compost facilities on area farms as well as profiles of waste generators. The leader will also recruit participants for a regional composting network and seek out economical ways for municipalities to transport yard waste and leaves to farms for composting. A directory of composting resources will be developed for the Cornell cooperative extension Website and will also be distributed in printed form.

- Development of improved controlled-atmosphere storage tech-

niques for gooseberries and red currants. Steven McKay, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Hudson, N.Y. Gooseberries and currants have shown promise as alternatives to traditional fruit crops, and can diversify a farm. The project leader will explore how to best use controlled-atmosphere (CA) storage techniques to make the most of the berry crops, and the trials will specifically compare traditional CA pallet-storage to self-conditioning poly bags, which are reusable and require no external machinery. Several varieties of berries will be tested, and the results will be disseminated through extension publications, a farm newsletter, and the Website of the International Ribes Association.

- Grass-based poultry production. Lynn O'Brien, Cornell Cooperative

Extension of Allegany and Cattaraugus Counties, Belmont, N.Y. Consumer preference for quality food is constrained by a lack of local and affordable processing capacity. The project leader will develop and demonstrate, in conjunction with two skilled farmers, a portable poultry processing lab as an education and outreach tool. The goal is to support diversification and competitiveness. Flock management and hands-on processing training will be offered, and the results will be disseminated to extension and directly to farmers.

- Developing successful direct marketing strategies for agricultural producers in Washington County. Paula Schafer, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Washington and Saratoga counties, Hudson Falls, N.Y. Producer interest in direct marketing

is growing, and the project leader will identify and support farmers who are interested in adopting new techniques. Ongoing efforts workshops, a culinary event, and a program for part-time farmers will be supplemented by the creation of a county farm guide that lists farms, products, contact information, and other information for consumers. The publication will be distributed at farmers' markets, festivals, through tourism offices, and electronically. Results will be tracked through changes in sales and farmer feedback, and will be reported in the agricultural media.

Additional information is at (607) 255-7286. For information on other grant opportunities and small farms, visit the Cornell Small Farms Website at www.smallfarms.cornell.edu.

Grumbine Designated Fair Executive

MYERSTOWN (Lebanon Co.) — Dennis L. Grumbine, former executive director of the Pennsylvania Farm Show and Pennsylvania Farm Show Commission, has been designated a Certified Fair Executive (CFE) by the International Association of Fair and Expositions (IAFE).

The certification is based upon a rigid scorecard of management skills, education, and leadership. The award designation was made May 4 in Williamsburg, Va. during the IAFE Annual Spring Management Conference.

Drawing from more than 3,200 organized fairs in the U.S. and Canada, 20 fair executives qualified for the CFE award in 2003.

Dennis L. Grumbine is a native of Myerstown and has been with the Pennsylvania Farm Show since 1978. Previously, he served as a commission member for 17 years.

Grumbine served as executive director during the \$90 million dollar expansion project that was accomplished in 11 months. Under his directing, the annual

Farm Show experienced a 75 percent growth in attendance. Grumbine is well known in the agriculture community and has received numerous awards from major agriculture and livestock organizations. He is also a member of the Pennsylvania Livestock Hall of Fame.



Dennis L. Grumbine, former executive director of the Pennsylvania Farm Show, right, received a special designation from IAFE. At left is Marla Calico, CFE, IAFE board chair.

DEP Kicks Off Watershed Awareness

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) acting secretary Kathleen A. McGinty today joined legislators, educators, students and a host of environmental groups to help declare May as Watershed Awareness Month in Pennsylvania, encouraging residents to learn more about their local watersheds and participate in environmental activities to enhance their natural surroundings and communities.

"Watershed Awareness Month is a unique opportunity for every Pennsylvanian to expand their awareness and appreciation for our valuable water resources through educational activities, watershed hikes and tours throughout the month of May," McGinty said.

Local watershed organizations and schools from across the Commonwealth also joined Acting Secretary McGinty to celebrate the event.

The purpose of Watershed Awareness Month is to promote the importance of watersheds by encouraging and supporting volunteer community organizations, educators and other groups that conduct watershed education and awareness activities throughout the month of May.



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