

Approved: 2-18-00
Date

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Steve Morris at 10:00 a.m. on February 14, 2000, in Room 423-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except: Senator Christine Downey (E)

Committee staff present: Raney Gilliland, Legislative Research Department
Jill Wolters, Revisor of Statutes
Nancy Kippes, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Mary Fund, Communications Director, Kansas Rural Center
Dr. Joe Hendrixson, Executive Director, Kansas Ecumenical Ministries
Bill Fuller, Associate Director, Public Affairs Division, Kansas Farm Bureau

Others attending: (See Attached)

Continued hearing on:

SB 534 - establishing a center of excellence on sustainable agriculture and alternative crops at Kansas State University

Mary Fund, Communications Director, Kansas Rural Center, testified in support of **SB 534**, stating that although lacking in detail as to how this center would fit into the existing framework of research and education they do support the concept (Attachment 1).

Dr. Joe Hendrixson, Executive Director, Kansas Ecumenical Ministries, testified in support of **SB 534**, stating that there is a need for more research on the ways in which alternative products and methods play out in the characteristic Kansas geography and weather, or in the local, regional, and global food systems (Attachment 2).

Bill Fuller, Associate Director, Public Affairs Division, Kansas Farm Bureau, testified in support of the concept in **SB 534** (Attachment 3). Mr. Fuller made several recommendations that would make the proposal more acceptable to Farm Bureau.

Written testimony was provided by Stanley Larson, President, Kansas Agricultural Alliance, in support of **SB 534** (Attachment 4).

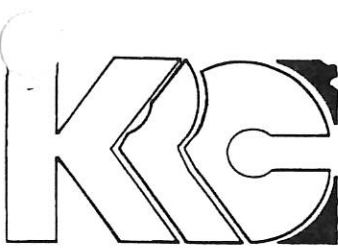
Paul Johnson provided the committee with information requested of him during the hearing on **SB 534** (Attachment 5).

Charles Benjamin, Kansas Natural Resource Council and Kansas Sierra Club, provided written testimony in support of **SB 534** (Attachment 6).

Senator Umbarger handed out some research material concerning **SB 534** (Attachment 7).

The hearing on **SB 534** was closed.

The next meeting will be February 15, 2000.



KANSAS RURAL CENTER

P.O. Box 133

Whiting, Kansas 66552

(785) 873-3431

Senate Agriculture Committee

Testimony on SB 534

February 9, 2000

Submitted by Mary Fund, Communications Director, Kansas Rural Center

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I am Mary Fund, Communications Director for the Kansas Rural Center. I am here today to speak in favor of SB 534, which would establish a center of excellence on sustainable agriculture and alternative crops at Kansas State University. Although we recognize that SB 534 is lacking in detail as to how this center would fit into the existing framework of research and education, we do support the concept. A center would help focus attention on an important and growing segment of agriculture and consumer interest.

The Kansas Rural Center is a non-profit organization that has promoted sustainable agriculture in Kansas over the past twenty years. Sustainable agriculture refers to a system of agriculture that is economically viable, environmentally sound, and socially sustainable. It is important to note that sustainable agriculture is a goal, and not a fixed technology. This is important because sustainable agriculture does not have a particular product to sell, thus we rely heavily on the experiential knowledge of farmers, and on the knowledge and research assistance from the land grant university.

Sustainable agriculture involves a broad range of approaches, most of which work to decrease reliance on purchased inputs and increase reliance on on-farm or renewable resources. The ability to lower production costs is an important key to keeping more of the food dollar in the hands of the farm family and within the community. In recent years developing alternative marketing approaches has become as important to the farmer as lowering production costs.

In our various projects and programs we have worked to provide family farmers with the information that will help them lower production costs, protect soil and water resources, and improve their bottom line. Over time we developed an extensive network of farmers called the Heartland Sustainable Agriculture Network working together and with experts from a variety of sources including Kansas State University research and extension personnel. Currently we are working with 16 clusters of farm families around the state; seven of these are focusing on alternative marketing approaches and new enterprise development on their farms; six are studying how to improve their livestock operations through better grazing and forage management; and two are focusing on cover crop research to conserve soil and water and lower their production costs. My point is that there is a ripe and ready constituency needing information on sustainable farming practices, enterprise development, and marketing alternatives.

There are also research needs that a center could help address. Over the years, we have developed good working relationships with a number of research and extension personnel at KSU. For example we are involved in seven learning teams of KSU and Network farmers cooperating on research questions.

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Attachment 1*

These are small steps. There are more research and education needs, such as cover crop research by regions, extended crop rotations, forages and grazing management by region, co-op and business plan development, marketing development, and economics of sustainable systems.

We believe that establishing a center of excellence on sustainable agriculture and alternative crops would (1) enable the university to better coordinate their existing efforts; 2) focus the university on developing new research efforts for sustainable agriculture and alternative crops; and 3) provide the university a platform for seeking funding from other outside sources interested in these issues.

We are concerned that this proposal involves no new dollars. Even though we recognize the state's current budget restraints, ideally the state should appropriate additional dollars to help KSU set this center up. We would also like to see an advisory board made up of KSU, sustainable agriculture representatives and others to develop and guide this concept into implementation.

Thank you.

Kansas Ecumenical Ministries

Testimony on Senate Bill No. 534

Before the Senate Committee on Agriculture

Date: February 14, 2000

Introduction

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to speak to the Committee today. I am Rev. Dr. Joe Hendrixson, Executive Director of Kansas Ecumenical Ministries. I appreciate the opportunity to share with you and the members of the Committee the perspective of the churches of Kansas on this important issue.

Throughout 1999, the nine member church communions of Kansas Ecumenical Ministries worked together to study the current situation in Kansas agriculture and the vitality of our rural communities. Together, we envisioned an abundant life that can be viable into the distant future for those who work the land and for the communities in which they live. You have just received a summary of our policy recommendations based on that study.

Last Wednesday you heard about some wonderful research in sustainable agriculture and alternative crops conducted by Kansas State University. Today I would like to explain to you why our church communions support that research, urge you to expand it, and believe that giving it "Center of Excellence" status is in the best interests of our state.

The Faith Community's Interest in Agriculture

When I meet with the Bishops and Executive Ministers of the churches of Kansas, their remarks always turn early on to the situation in agriculture and rural communities. Last fall, when we sat together to plan our legislative agenda for this session, family farmers were number one on their list of priorities.

Why? Part of the reason is practical. Family farmers accessed direct assistance funds reserved for them in greatly increased numbers in 1999 (including those of local congregations, Kansas regional church bodies, and clusters of church communions like Kansas Ecumenical Ministries). Most of our congregations are located in rural communities or open country. It is no secret that many of these congregations, members, and communities are hurting. The church leaders of Kansas worry about all those under their care.

However, there is a deeper reason why the Bishops and Executive Ministers of our church communions are concerned about the future of Kansas agriculture and rural communities. The *manner* of farming has *moral* repercussions. The *method* of food production has *meaning*.

The concern of the Church for the land and for the farmers and ranchers who live and work on the land is at the heart of our faith. **We believe that God created the land we**

farm. While God calls all of us to care for the gift of land, **food producers are in a unique position to exercise the stewardship of creation** conferred on humans since the beginning of time.

That is why we continue in our belief that farms and ranches operated full-time by those who live on them constitute the most sustainable, efficient and morally responsible method for connecting with the land and for providing food to the world. We support part-time farmers who also have non-farm jobs in their efforts to earn a living wage and still stay connected to the land. We commend niche market operations that inspire creative, sustainable practices.

Policy Implications

Along with others, the churches have tried to do their share in relieving the burdens of family farmers and rural communities. Kansas churches accomplished nationally recognized work in the 1980s. In the early 1990s, Kansas Ecumenical Ministries received a Lilly Endowment grant for a project on Community Vitalization in rural areas. Throughout those years, we have recognized that economic development was critical to success. Small, niche-market businesses were encouraged and thrived in communities across the state. Nevertheless, the farmer as a small, niche-market businessperson was rarely, if ever, considered for investment by public economic development dollars. We know from our own work that such development can enhance the lives of both the farm family and the community in which they live. Farming should be getting a rightful share of economic development dollars, beginning with the research and marketing assistance this bill provides.

The churches of Kansas want the farmers in their communities to have the opportunity to be what they are uniquely suited to be: land stewards. A growing number of Kansas farmers know that consumer demand is rising for locally grown produce, organic produce, meats raised without factory methods, and other niche markets. A significant number of farmers and ranchers are interested in food production that is particularly suited to small-scale farms, low-input methods, and part-time labor.

However, there is not enough research available to farmers on these issues. In particular, we need more research on the ways in which such products and methods play out in the characteristic Kansas geography and weather, or in the local, regional, and global food systems. We believe that the establishment of a center of excellence on sustainable agriculture and alternative crops is a significant and primary step in making appropriate land stewardship more widely practiced in our state. Furthermore, such a center will be an important contribution to the well being of family farmers and rural communities.

Conclusion

The churches of Kansas stand in support of this bill. We believe that the establishment of a center of excellence on sustainable agriculture and alternative crops reflects the values we teach. We believe it is a good investment in the future of our state and our local communities – a sound investment morally and economically. It is the right thing to do.

Dr. Joe M. Hendrixson, Executive Director
Kansas Ecumenical Ministries
5833 SW 29th Street
Topeka, KS 66614-2499
(785) 272-9531

About Kansas Ecumenical Ministries

Kansas Ecumenical Ministries is commonly known as the state council of churches. It traces its roots through several Kansas ecumenical organizations dating back to 1865. It includes the Kansas congregations of the American Baptist Churches, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Church of the Brethren, the Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the General Conference Mennonite Church, the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., the United Church of Christ, and the United Methodist Church.

Representatives of these communions, including the Executive Minister or Bishop, serve on the Governing Board of Kansas Ecumenical Ministries and guide its work. The church communions covenant to work together on Christian unity and spirituality, justice, and advocacy.

Kansas Interfaith Impact is the advocacy organization of Kansas Ecumenical Ministries and its member Church communions. Public policy positions taken by Kansas Ecumenical Ministries/Kansas Interfaith Impact are approved by the Governing Board and grounded in study of the Scriptures, theology, and the historic writings of the Church. It bases its involvement in specific issues on social statements of the member communions and the mutual concern of Kansas church leaders.

The Rural Concerns Committee of Kansas Ecumenical Ministries leads the member communions in study of rural and agricultural issues, assists with celebrations of rural life, and provides direct assistance to farmers experiencing financial stress.



PUBLIC POLICY STATEMENT

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

RE: SB 534 – Establishing a Center of Excellence on sustainable agriculture and alternative crops at Kansas State University.

**February 9, 2000
Topeka, Kansas**

**Prepared by:
Bill R. Fuller, Associate Director
Public Affairs Division
Kansas Farm Bureau**

Chairman Morris and members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, my name is Bill Fuller. I serve as the Associate Director of the Public Policy Division for Kansas Farm Bureau.

SB 534 proposes to establish a Center of Excellence on sustainable agriculture and alternative crops at K-State. We are here to express support and to suggest improvements for the bill.

The farm and ranch members of Farm Bureau have developed and adopted a number of policy statements that relate to the proposal under consideration by this Committee today:

- *We support increased efforts to develop, promote and utilize traditional and alternative products derived from the crop and livestock production from the state's farms and ranches.*
- *Using agricultural products to produce non-food products provides additional marketing opportunities and the potential for increased prices.*
- *We support additional research and development to find non-traditional farm products that have the potential to become viable enterprises for agricultural producers.*

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Attachment 3*

A review of the bill prompts several recommendations that would make the proposal more acceptable to Farm Bureau. First, section © on lines 37 thru 39 states: *"The funding for the center of excellence shall be redirected funds within the existing budget for the extension systems and agriculture research program at Kansas State University."* We strongly oppose this funding provision. We cannot weaken, or perhaps even destroy, important functions now provided by K-State that are vital to the family farmers and rural communities of the state. We support adequate funding for the research and extension programs that provide technical specialists and county agents that deliver research information and provide instruction to Kansas citizens. Farm Bureau policy calls for increased, not decreased, science-based research that will protect water quality, increase the marketability of farm products, solve environmental concerns and increase net farm income by decreasing input costs and improve product quality.

Lines 17 thru 36 outline the functions and duties of the center of excellence. It is our understanding that K-State is already providing many of these services and functions listed in the bill. We encourage you as members of the Senate Agriculture Committee to examine current K-State activities with those proposed in SB 534 and take action to avoid any wasteful duplication. If you find that most of the functions called for in the bill are already being provided, perhaps a plan that repackages those activities to increase their visibility would achieve the same goal rather than establishing another expensive level of administration.

Farm Bureau policy encourages a strong commitment by the Kansas Legislature, Board of Regents and the K-State administration for the land grant tradition of teaching, research and extension. While we support programs at K-State that promote sustainable agriculture and alternative crops, we must avoid any duplication and continue the current programs Kansas farmers and ranchers have depended upon for the past 50 years that impact their profitability, quality of life and rural communities.

Thank you!

Kansas Agricultural Alliance

Kansas Agricultural Aviation Association

Kansas Agri-Women

Kansas Association of Ag Educators

Kansas Association of Conservation Districts

Kansas Association of Wheat Growers

Kansas Cooperative Council

Kansas Corn Growers Association

Kansas Crop Consultant Association

Kansas Dairy Association

Kansas Ethanol Association

Kansas Farm Bureau

Kansas Fertilizer and Chemical Association

Kansas Grain and Feed Association

Kansas Grain Sorghum Producers Association

Kansas Association of Nurserymen

Kansas Livestock Association

Kansas Seed Industry Association

Kansas Veterinary Medical Association

Kansas Soybean Association

Western Retail Implement and Hardware Association

February 14, 2000

The Honorable Steve Morris
Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee
Statehouse
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear Chairman Morris,

The Kansas Agricultural Alliance is writing in support of SB 534, the bill establishing a center of excellence on sustainable agriculture and alternative crops at Kansas State University. The member organizations of the Ag Alliance, listed on this page, have voted unanimously to endorse and support this legislation with one exception and that is; we do not agree with the requirement of the Dean to redirect existing funds to create such a center. The membership believes that redirection of current funding could (and probably will) be harmful to existing, important agricultural programs at Kansas State University.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Stanley L. Larson
President

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SENATE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 14, 2000
LIST OF CENTERS OF SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AT LAND GRANT UNIVERSITIES
PAUL JOHNSON

This preliminary information came from Elizabeth Bird who has been the director of the Consortium For Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (CSARE). This operation is housed at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and monitors the development of sustainable agriculture programs nationwide. Elizabeth was not aware of a formal listing of the sustainable centers but would help search the literature for such a compilation.

CENTERS OR INSTITUTES OF SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AT LAND GRANT UNIV.

University of Vermont
University of Nebraska
University of Minnesota
University of California at Davis
Iowa State University
University of Missouri
Michigan State University
Cornell University
North Carolina A & T
University of Wisconsin
Washington State University
Ohio State University

I will continue to search the literature on these sustainable agriculture centers and report back to the committee when appropriate. Even at schools that do not have formal centers there are several faculty positions which work in this area. CSARE publishes a quarterly newsletter Inquiry in Action which details the work of the centers and researchers nationwide. The website for CSARE is www.csare.org and the phone number is (608)265-6483.

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University Centers and Programs Relating to Sustainable Agriculture

California

UC-Sustainable Agriculture
Research and Education Program
University of California
Davis, CA 95616
(916) 752-2379

Small Farm Center
University of California
Davis, CA 95616
(916) 757-8910

UC - Center for Agroecology and
Sustainable Food Systems
University of California
1156 High Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95064
(408) 459-4140

Iowa

Leopold Center for Sustainable
Agriculture
209 Curtiss Hall
Iowa State University
Ames, IA 50011
(515) 294-3711

Illinois

Agroecology / Sustainable
Agriculture Program
University of Illinois
Office of Research
1301 West Gregory Drive
Urbana, IL 61801
(217) 333-0240

Indiana

Center for Alternative Agricultural
Systems
Department of Agricultural
Economics
1145 Krannert Bldg.
Purdue University
West Lafayette, IN 47907
(765) 494-9041

Michigan

C.S. Mott Foundation
Chair of Sustainable Agriculture
Department of Crop and Soil
Science
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824
(517) 432-1611

Missouri

Center for Sustainable Agriculture
Systems
University of Missouri
200 Mumford Hall
Columbia, MO 65211
(573) 882-4635

Missouri Alternatives Center
University of Missouri
628 Clark Hall
Columbia, MO 65211
(573) 882-1905

Minnesota

Center for Alternative Plant and
Animal Products
University of Minnesota
Alderman Hall, Room 342
St. Paul, MN 55108
(612) 624-4217

Minnesota Institute for
Sustainable Agriculture
University of Minnesota
411 Borlaug Hall
St. Paul, MN 55108
(612) 625-8235

Nebraska

Center for Sustainable Agricultural
Systems
University of Nebraska
221 Kelm Hall
Lincoln, NE 68583
(402) 472-0917

New Mexico

New Mexico State University
Sustainable Agriculture Science
Center
P.O. Box 159
Alcade, NM 87511
(505) 852-4241

New York

Cornell Farming Alternatives
Program
Cornell University
Dept. of Rural Sociology
Warren Hall
Ithaca, NY 14853
(607) 255-9832

Ohio

Ohio State University Sustainable
Agriculture Center
1735 Neil Ave.
Columbus, OH 43210
(614) 292-3786

Pennsylvania

Sustaining Agriculture and Natural
Resources in Urban Environments
Penn State University
University Park, PA 16802
(814) 863-7235

Vermont

University of Vermont Center for
Sustainable Agriculture
590 Main Street
Burlington, VT 05405
(802) 656-0037

Washington

Washington State University
Center for Sustaining Agriculture
and Natural Resources
403A Hulbert Hall
Washington State University
Pullman, WA 99164-6240
(509) 335-0183

Wisconsin

Center for Integrated Agricultural
Systems
1450 Linden Drive, Room 146
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Madison, WI 53706
(608) 262-5200

NOTE: This listing should be considered a partial list of university programs. Many nonprofit organizations also provide state or regional leadership in sustainable agriculture. Many of these organizations are already listed in the book. To add or update an entry in this list, please contact the national Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) office at (301) 405-5270 or send email to: vberton@wam.umd.edu.

1997 - For more information, contact Andy Clark 301-504-6425
Sustainable Ag Network

Senate Agriculture Committee

Testimony in favor of SB 534

February 9, 2000

submitted by Charles Benjamin, Ph.D., J.D.

On behalf of

The Kansas Natural Resource Council

Kansas Sierra Club

I am here today to speak in favor of SB 534 which would establish a center of excellence on

sustainable agriculture and alternative crops at Kansas State University.

Although SB 534 is lacking in detail as to how this center would fit into the existing framework of research and education the concept is still worth your support. A center would help focus attention on an important and growing segment of agriculture and consumer interest.

The Kansas Natural Resource Council and Kansas Sierra Club are strongly in favor of an agricultural system in Kansas and elsewhere that is "sustainable." By that we mean a system of agriculture that is viable economically, environmentally and socially. Sustainable agriculture relies heavily on the experiential knowledge of farmers, and on the knowledge and research assistance from land grant universities. Sustainable agriculture involves a broad range of approaches, most of which work to decrease reliance on purchased inputs and increase reliance on on-farm or renewable resources. The ability to lower production costs is an important key to keeping more of the food dollar in the hands of the farm family and within the community. In recent years developing alternative marketing approaches has become as important to the farmer as lowering production costs. There is already in place constituency needing information on sustainable farming practices, enterprise development, and marketing alternatives.

Establishing a center of excellence on sustainable agriculture and alternative crops would serve several useful public policy purposes. First, it would enable the university to better coordinate their existing efforts. Second, it would focus the university on developing new research efforts for sustainable agriculture and alternative crops. Finally, it would provide the university a platform for seeking funding from outside sources interested in these issues.

Even though there are budget constraints for the state at this time, ideally the state should appropriate additional dollars to help KSU set up this center. We also support an advisory board made up of KSU, sustainable agriculture representatives and others to develop and guide this concept into implementation.

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Attachment 6



The Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program

Working Toward an Enduring American Agriculture

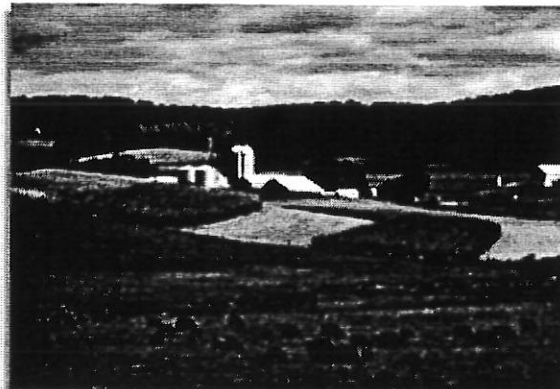


"Sustainable agriculture is the future of all agriculture, being all-inclusive and incorporating the most modern technologies as well as simple lessons learned from backyard gardening. Sustainable agriculture will continue to revive and revise past farming practices. These concepts allow us to comprehend the complexity of agriculture and the integration of our food and farming systems."

- Tom Guthrie, a Michigan farmer involved in SARE planning and leadership

Sustainable Agriculture refers to an agricultural production and distribution system that:

- Achieves the integration of natural biological cycles and controls,
- Protects and renews soil fertility and the natural resource base,
- Optimizes the management and use of on-farm resources,
- Reduces the use of nonrenewable resources and purchased production inputs,
- Provides an adequate and dependable farm income,
- Promotes opportunity in family farming and farm communities, and
- Minimizes adverse impacts on health, safety, wildlife, water quality and the environment.



About the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program

SARE works to increase knowledge about - and help farmers and ranchers adopt - practices that are economically viable, environmentally sound and socially responsible. To

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advance such knowledge nationwide, SARE administers a competitive grants program first funded by Congress in 1988.

Regional administrative councils recommend projects to be funded after proposals go through technical peer review. Regional council representation in the Northeast, South, North Central and West is specified by law, leading to diverse councils of producers, farm consultants, university researchers and administrators, state and federal government agency staff and representatives from nonprofit organizations. The regional councils also provide policy direction and identify information needs for the SARE program.

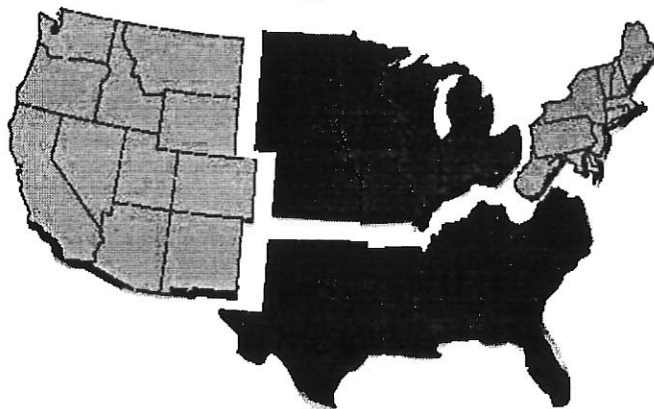
The diversity in membership of the regional administrative councils reflects SARE's commitment to serve the broad spectrum of the agricultural community. SARE's broad representation remains largely unique in federal grant funding for agriculture.

Nationally, SARE devotes significant resources to ongoing outreach projects. SARE's Professional Development Program offers learning opportunities to a variety of agricultural extension and other field agency personnel. SARE's Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN) disseminates information relevant to SARE and sustainable agriculture through electronic and print publications.

How are SARE Projects Funded?

- **Research & Education Grants:** Awarded since 1988, these grants fund projects - generally ranging from \$30,000 to \$200,000 - led by universities or nonprofit organizations in an interdisciplinary approach.
- **SARE Professional Development Program Grants:** First funded in 1994, these grants sponsor professional development in sustainable agriculture concepts and practices, using workshops, tours and meetings for the Cooperative Extension Service, the Natural Resource Conservation Service and other agricultural professionals.
- **Agriculture in Concert with the Environment (ACE):** Established in 1991 in cooperation with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, ACE projects find and expand ways to prevent agriculture-related resource degradation with EPA/SARE matching grants.
- **Producer Grants:** Producers apply for funding of on-farm research or demonstration projects that typically run between \$500 and \$5,000.

SARE Regional Offices



The National Perspective

SARE projects throughout the nation investigate many aspects of sustainable agriculture. The following examples highlight SARE's efforts to bring about farming systems that are more profitable, environmentally sound and supportive of viable local communities.

Boosting Profitability.

Only farmers who maintain a profit will remain sustainable. Hundreds of SARE projects include economic analyses that help farmers become more efficient by reducing production costs or adding value to farm products.

Remaining profitable and environmentally sound while farming erosion-prone soils is a significant challenge for Midwestern producers, many of whom idled production on marginal cropland in the federal Conservation Reserve Program in return for annual payments. A group of Iowa researchers, producers, community leaders and others concerned about what would happen to erosion rates after CRP contracts began expiring in 1996, are seeking profitable alternatives.

After the first five years of a SARE-funded study, the group recommends farmers consider using highly erodible former CRP land for rotational cattle grazing. The project found rotational grazing brought excellent cattle weight gains and lower production costs, translating to greater profits than row crop rotations when averaged over four years.

With another North Central Region SARE grant, researchers are continuing to examine the economics of raising cows and calves or steers on grass - which provides a year-round, stabilizing ground cover - compared to more-intensive grain production. With 1996's high grain prices and low cattle prices, "people are ready to plow up CRP land right and left to plant grain," says Chris Nelson, an Adams County, Iowa, extension agent and one of the project's organizers. "We think a lot of this highly erodible, steep land should have never been in row crops in the first place. We're looking for ways to keep it in grass and still make a profit."

Protecting Natural Resources.

SARE focuses on research and education projects that integrate agricultural practices with the surrounding environment. Encouraging rotational grazing, crop rotation, cover crops, integrated pest management and whole-farm planning, SARE has made great strides toward increasing agriculture's stewardship of natural resources.

Preserving wetlands and improving habitat while producing root vegetables and cereals in pathogen-free soil is the focus of a Western Region SARE/ACE project in northern California's Tulelake Wildlife Refuge. Rotating crops with seasonal marshes, University of California-Davis researchers hope to determine whether periodic flooding - and the resulting early marsh vegetation - will improve wetlands habitat during flood stages while benefiting the soil for agriculture during dry cycles. The project offers a comprehensive approach to reverse declining crop yields, degraded wetlands, poor water quality and fading bird populations in the Tulelake Basin and Refuge. Participants include farmers, federal and state agencies, researchers and area environmental organizations, uniting groups that have often been at odds in California.

"We need to sustain agriculture and improve wildlife habitat," says Carol Shennan, the UC-Davis-based project manager. "One strategy is to flood areas of cropland to create new diverse wetlands and to drain areas to create cropland free of soil-borne pathogens."

Improving Rural Life.

Forging farming systems that support and improve the quality of life for farmers, rural communities and society remains perhaps the most challenging aspect of sustainable agriculture.

A Southern Region SARE project run by a consortium of nonprofit organizations, including Winrock International, Arkansas, offers environmentally sound woodland management strategies to Delta and Ozark landowners while generating more local income. The SARE project focuses on selective timber harvesting that integrates conservation practices, leaving middle-sized trees for greater revenue later.

"Under-management of woodlands is a serious problem in these regions," says Nick Brown, project administrator and a Winrock program officer. "About 75 percent of the forest in the state is owned by small, private forest landowners, and only about one in 10 actively manage their stands, to their - and the community's - financial detriment."

Working with local partners, Winrock formed a bottomland hardwood demonstration forest and established landowner associations that sponsor tours with forestry consultants. The organization hopes to triple the average landowner's rate of return and encourage lucrative enterprises such as shiitake mushroom production and land leasing for hunting and fishing.

Enhancing Communities.

Improving the quality of life for local farm workers, agrarian industry workers and consumers can garner more than farm profits. Tying producers - and their products - to the local community and educating consumers about sustainable agriculture can underscore a farm's vital role in the community, engendering good will toward agriculture in an increasingly suburban society.

New links between fruit and vegetable producers and Hartford, Conn., school children brought direct market opportunities and nutritional education to the nation's eighth-poorest urban area. Project leaders at the nonprofit Hartford Food System worked with school food service administrators and north central Connecticut farmers to organize a Northeast Region SARE-funded pilot project that supplied 75 percent of the fresh fruit and vegetables served in cafeterias to 1,100 Hartford students.

The gains were three-fold. The farmers, who grow apples, pears, broccoli and cauliflower, among other crops, gained a dedicated market. Students not accustomed to fresh produce received some 10 ounces of fruit and vegetables every day. And the city community learned about agriculture, nutrition and the environment at Hartford Food System-organized farm field days and classroom chef demonstrations.

"We wanted to make connections between farmers and inner-city people and, at the same time, reach kids in such a way that they'd be interested in where their food is coming from," says Mark Winne, executive director of Hartford Food System. With a second SARE grant, project organizers plan to expand the program into other area schools.

Developing New Outreach Options

SARE's Professional Development Program provides sustainable agriculture education and outreach strategies for Cooperative Extension Service agents, Natural Resource Conservation Service staff and others who work directly with farmers and ranchers. With its emphasis on teaching the teachers, the Professional Development Program speeds the flow of sustainable agriculture methods and concepts to the field level.

Authorized in the 1990 Farm Bill, (FACTA, Title 19, Subtitle B, Chapter 3), the Professional Development Program has been funded since 1994. Professional Development Program funds have been used for both state-specific planning and competitive grants for learning opportunities. In the first funding cycle, all 50 states and six island protectorates devised strategic plans that outline processes for developing sustainable agriculture instructional activities. In keeping with SARE's inclusive approach, strategic plans were written by diverse groups that included farmers, university extension

and researchers, natural resource professionals, state agencies, farm organizations, commodity groups and environmental organizations. Each year, states submit an annual update of strategies and activities to achieve sustainability goals. Regional funds also are used for competitive grants to sponsor workshops, educational manuals and videos, and on-farm tours and demonstrations.

In SARE's North Central Region, a 12-state "Everyone a Teacher, Everyone a Learner" initiative has focused on annual educational meetings and workshops that attract a mix of extension agents, producers, and representatives from nonprofit organizations and government agencies to explore sustainable agriculture teaching strategies. Future workshops will address knowledge gaps identified by participants: marketing, whole-farm planning, economics, holistic resource management, and livestock and crop integration.

The region-wide approach has worked well in the Midwest, says Jerry DeWitt, an Iowa extension specialist who has been involved in SARE's Professional Development Program since its inception. "It has created a sense of partnership in the region," he says. "The program has really brought a critical mass together and taught us sustainable agriculture teaching strategies that we can take back and use in our states."

The Sustainable Agriculture Network: Spreading the Message

The information gained from SARE projects is only as good as its dissemination. If the latest crop rotation or nitrogen-fixing cover crop is unknown to producers or extension staff, the information can languish on a researcher's bookshelf.

SARE's strong educational component was created to pass on information about sustainable agriculture concepts and the SARE program. The Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN), SARE's publication and information arm, is a cooperative effort of university, government, farm, business and nonprofit organizations dedicated to the exchange of scientific and practical information on sustainable agriculture. SAN determines information gaps and sets priorities for print and electronic products, many of which are posted on the SAN/SARE web site. Visit the web site, or contact the SAN coordinator at san@nal.usda.gov





SARE project database search results

Region: North Central region

Project type: All project types

Search terms: *

Number of projects: 41

- A Consumer Driven System to Natural Beef Marketing
(1998, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Creating Value in Pooled Cull Cow Sales
(1998, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Economically Powered Water Supply Systems for Remote Locations
(1998, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Machinery Link Co.
(1998, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Beef Alliance Association to Develop a Premium Market
(1998, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Interseeding Legumes Into Fescue
(1998, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- County Fair Tomato Cooperative: Developing an Organic Tomato Processing Cooperative
(1998, North Central region, Research and education project)
- Heartland Sustainable Agriculture Network
(1998, North Central region, Research and education project)
- Biological Control of Small Soapweed (Yucca glauca Nutt.)
(1997, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Creating the Link: Cooperative Marketing of Organic (All-Natural) Beef
(1997, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Comparing Controlled Microbial Systems (CMS) Composting to Conventional Composting to Piled Feedlot Manure
(1997, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Machinery Link Co.
(1997, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Tree Filter and Wetland Livestock Waste Management Plan
(1997, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Cluster use of Whole-Farm Planning with Decision Cases and Evaluation
(1997, North Central region, Research and education project)
- Yesterday's Research for Tomorrow's Needs
(1997, North Central region, Research and education project)
- Prairie Hills Marketing Network: Marketing for Producers in Northwest Kansas
(1996, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Bioremediation of Saline Seeps

- (1996, North Central region, Research and education project)
- Farmer Marketing Information Coops
(1996, North Central region, Research and education project)
- Cover Crop Inter-Row Seeder for Row Crops
(1996, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Erosion-Sensitive Farm is Converted to a Clean Water Farm that includes a Management-Intensive Rotational Grazing System and Well-Planned Calving Facility
(1996, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Development of a Rancher Cooperative to Market Grass-Fed Meat
(1995, North Central region, Research and education project)
- Farmer-to-Farmer Cover Crop Network Complementing On-Farm and On-Station Trials
(1995, North Central region, Research and education project)
- Barley Breeding by the Public
(1995, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Revegetation and Succession of Western Kansas Riparian Site
(1994, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Utilizing Native Sandhill Plum as a Income-Producing Windbreak
(1994, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Cooler Development for Organic Meats and Produce
(1994, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Assessing the Potential for Biological Control of Field Bindweed, Convolvulus arvensis, with the Gall Mite Aceria malherbe, and the Moth Tyta luctuosa
(1993, North Central region, Research and education project)
- Soil Conservation and Residue Management Demonstration
(1993, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Non-Chemical Weed Control in Row Crop Production
(1993, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Clear Hilum Organic Soybean Trials
(1993, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Evaluating Various Forage Combinations in a Rotational Grazing System
(1993, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Development of Sustainable Crop Rotation System
(1992, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Comparing Various Rates and Application Methods of Liquid Swine Manure in Grain Sorghum Production
(1992, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Annual Alfalfa and Berseem Clover Interseeded into Winter Wheat for Fall Grazing and Green Manure
(1992, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Comparing Various Grasses and Legumes for Dairy Cattle in a Rotational Grazing System
(1992, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Fall-Sown Rye for Fall and Spring Grazing and Green Manure
(1992, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)

- Evaluation of Rotational Grazing in Established Mixed-Grass Pasture, and Interseeding Legumes into Winter Wheat
(1992, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Intensive Rotational Grazing System in the Flint Hills of Kansas
(1992, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Comparing Broadcasting and No-Till in Legume Establishment and using Beef Tallow for Round Bale Weather Protection
(1992, North Central region, Farmer/rancher project)
- Assessing Soil Phosphorus Availability in Low-Input Systems
(1989, North Central region, Research and education project)
- Synchrony and Contribution of Legume Nitrogen for Grain Production Under Different Tillage Systems
(1989, North Central region, Research and education project)

**FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE**
June 1, 1999

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Usher in the New Millennium with a Sustainable Agriculture Grant from North Central Region SARE

Lincoln, NE – The USDA's North Central Region (NCR) Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program is calling for **innovative researchers, educators, institutions and organizations** to apply for competitive grants that will boost producers' profits, protect the environment and support healthy communities in the new millennium and beyond.

Approximately \$1.3 million will be available in 2000 to fund creative projects addressing long-term enhancement of food and fiber systems in the 12-state region.

"We will enter the year 2000 with our strong vision for the survival of the small- to mid-sized farm, for the protection of our natural resources, and for the improvement of our rural and urban communities," said Alan Schlegel, NCR SARE Administrative Council chair from Kansas State University. "This round of research and education grants will continue to carry out that vision."

Research and Education Priority Areas for 2000 will be outlined in the Call for Preproposals and will contain topics such as diversifying farming systems, sustainable livestock systems, marketing sustainable products, and environmentally sound management practices.

The NCR SARE program encourages preproposals that include holistic approaches, involvement of interdisciplinary teams, meaningful participation of farmers and ranchers, significant outreach, and an eye for measurable results.

Applications are available **July 16, 1999**, by contacting the NCR SARE office at 402-472-7081, 402-472-0280 (fax), or ncrsare@unl.edu. The Call for Preproposals can also be found online on July 16. Preproposals are due on **September 10, 1999**. The Administrative Council will invite project coordinators to develop preproposals into full proposals in December 1999; selected full proposals will be recommended for funding in May 2000, and funds will be available in the fall of 2000 to begin project work.

Applicants must reside in the **North Central Region**: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

The Research and Education Grant Program was first funded by Congress in 1988; nearly 200 research and education grants have been awarded in the NCR since then, worth more than \$13 million.

The national SARE program began with the 1985 Farm Bill. Congress appropriated initial funds in 1988 for grants in sustainable agriculture research, education and demonstration. Funding goes to producers, scientists, educators and public and

private institutions and organizations in three grant programs. The North Central Region, managed by a diverse Administrative Council and directed by two regional coordinators, is one of four regions in the SARE Program.

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