

2007 Annual State Report to the Southern Region SARE Program

South Carolina

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II. Abstract

2007 marked the second full year of operation for the South Carolina SARE PDP Model State Program (MSP). The MSP Assistant position has greatly facilitated statewide training program efforts in collaboration with SC State (1890) Extension, the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association (CFSA) and the state Department of Agriculture. We have increased the number and diversity of stakeholders who provide input into the planning process for statewide training. This has been done through a combination of statewide and regional stakeholder and advisory group planning meetings. We have expanded training opportunities for extension agents and other agriculture professionals by organizing educational/training events on specific topics related to stakeholder-identified training needs, and by providing travel scholarships to agriculture professionals for participation in additional local and regional training events. Highlights of 2007 activities included a 2-day workshop series on farm business planning and management, comprehensive training on direct marketing offered through a "Marketing 101" training course, a successful Harvest Festival event to showcase sustainable agriculture and local foods, and a series of on-farm demonstrations, farm tours and workshops for limited resource and minority farmers on sustainable vegetable production and marketing practices. Specific training activities for 2008 will focus on organic farm certification, good agricultural practices (GAP), small livestock production and marketing, oil seed crops and biodiesel production, and development of community food systems..

III. Summary Report

1. Briefly describe how your training efforts have addressed objectives in your state's implementation plan for sustainable agriculture.

(a) Expand the existing strategic planning process for statewide sustainable agriculture development. We have continued to expand the role of stakeholders with program planning. First, an "Open Forum" public meeting was held in early 2007 where participants discussed key issues and needs related to sustainable agriculture development in the state. The outcome of this meeting is a list of issues/needs and recommendations. Second, we have formed two local advisory groups, one in lowcountry South Carolina and one in upstate South Carolina. These groups meet regularly to discuss local issues and the group chairs make recommendations for training activities to the MSP Assistant and Co-Coordination. Thirdly, State Sustainable Agriculture Advisory Committee (AC) members attend the Open Forum meeting, and met the next morning to prioritize issues and to plan training/education activities for the year. We are also increasing our involvement with local community organizations and assist them with local sustainable agriculture development efforts.

(b) Encourage Extension agents, NRCS, FSA and state Department of Agriculture staff and other sustainable agriculture educators to participate in the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association (CFSA) Annual Conference and other Professional Development Opportunities. We provided travel scholarships for 6 extension agents and farmer-educators to attend the 2007 CFSA Conference in Durham, North Carolina and to participate in Conference workshops and farm tours. This not only provided an opportunity for participants to gain knowledge and competency in sustainable agriculture, but also facilitated interactions and established relationships between agriculture professionals and farmers. In addition, approximately 20 limited resource farmers and farmer-educators from South Carolina attended the January Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group Conference (made possible by a special grant from SR SARE). In addition, we provide travel scholarships for extension agents and other agriculture professionals to attend all SC SARE training events.

(c) Continue to provide support for the CFSA Annual Conference. We provided \$500 to CFSA to support participation of Conference speakers who contributed expertise and information on topics relevant to the sustainable agriculture community in South Carolina.

(d) Establish a process to recognize SC cooperative extension personnel for excellence in sustainable agriculture outreach. Extension agents who exemplify outstanding dedication to the promotion of sustainable agriculture received travel scholarships to a sustainable agriculture event of their choice.

(e) Organize and conduct in-service training opportunities for Extension agents, NRCS, FSA and state Department of Agriculture personnel, agricultural educators, and for other interested persons as space permits. Training events were held throughout 2007 according to priority needs identified at the January AC meeting (see training outcome summary under section 2 below).

- **(f) Enhance professional development opportunities for extension agents.** A total of 36 travel scholarships were provided for extension agents and other agriculture professionals to attend the SC SARE training events listed in #2 below, and also to attend the CFSA Sustainable Agriculture Conference in Durham, NC, and the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Workers Conference in Louisville, KY.

2. Provide bullet statements of training outcomes

The following training/educational events were organized and conducted during 2007:

- February 11. *Open Forum on Sustainable Agriculture*, Columbia, SC. 68 stakeholders (including farmers, agriculture professionals and state agriculture officials) discussed issues related to sustainable agriculture development in South Carolina, and identified critical needs. The meeting enhanced communication and interaction among diverse groups, and identified areas of common interest.
- February 12. *State Sustainable Agriculture Advisory Committee Annual Planning Meeting*, Columbia, SC. Advisory Committee members discussed stakeholder input from the Open Forum meeting and prioritized issues to be addressed. Top priority was given to helping beginning farmers with farm business planning and with effective marketing strategies..
- February 6: *Planning a Community Supported Agriculture Program*, Beaufort, SC. Taught by Judy Lessler with Durham Farmer’s Market CSA.. A group of 29 extension agents and farmers learned how to plan and operate a CSA program.
- March 27: *Organic Certification Short Course*, Whole Foods Market, Greenville, SC. Taught by Geoff Zehnder, and attended by 18 market employees who learned about certified organic farming methods in order to better communicate with customers.
- April /9: *Organic Vegetable Short Course*, Spartanburg, SC. Taught by Alex Hitt and attended by 68 extension agents and farmer educators. The day-long workshop provided information on planning, production and marketing.
- April 15: *Sustainable Agriculture Panel, Earth Day Event*, Greenville, SC. Geoff Zehnder participated in a panel discussion on sustainable agriculture development; Approximately 50 people in attendance.
- April 20. *SC SARE Upstate Advisory Group meeting*, Clemson Student Organic Farm, Clemson, SC. Meeting to discuss critical local issues related to sustainable agriculture, attended by 24 members.
- May 24 and June 28: *Goat Cheese Workshops*, EarthFare Market, Charleston, SC. Both workshops taught by Casey Price with Jeremiah Farm & Goat Dairy. The workshops were organized by the SC SARE Lowcountry Advisory Group and attended by 24 extension agents, farmers and landowners.
- August 7: *Passive Solar Greenhouse Workshop*, Johns Island, SC. The workshop was instructed by Dr. Terry Carroll with Appalachian State University. Organized by the SC SARE Lowcountry Advisory Group and attended by 27 extension agents, farmers and landowners.
- August 23: *Biodiesel Workshop*, Broken Wing Farm, Honea Path, SC. Taught by ; Piedmont Biofuels and organized by the SC SARE Upstate Advisory Group, Attended by 15 extension agents and farmer educators.
- August 28: *Farmers Marketing 101*, Sandhill Research & Education Center, Columbia, SC. A comprehensive workshop with presentations by successful market managers, farmers and SC Department of Agriculture market specialists. Attended by 65 extension agents, farmer educators and farmers.
- September 5: *“All About Honey” Workshop*, EarthFare Market, Charleston; SC. Taught by beekeeper Larry Sexton and organized by the SC SARE Lowcountry Advisory Group, Attended by 15 extension agents, farmers and landowners.
- October 13: *Harvest Festival*, Clemson University Heirloom Vegetable Garden. A family fun and educational event to showcase sustainable and local food systems. Attended by over 450 people including extension agents and federal and state agriculture professionals

- October 13 and 14. Host for the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association Upstate Farm Tours at the Clemson Student Organic Farm and the Heirloom Vegetable Garden. Approximately 120 people participated in the tour including extension agents and other agriculture professionals
- October 29: Farm *Business Planning Workshop I*, Sandhill REC, Columbia, SC. Participants in the two workshop series learned strategies for developing a comprehensive farm business plan. Attended by 40 extension agents, farmer educators and landowners. ;
- November 14: Farm Business Planning Workshop II, Sandhill REC, Columbia, SC. Attended by 40 extension agents, farmer educators and landowners.
- *Sustainable Vegetable Production for Limited Resource and Minority Farmers, July through November, Hampton, Allendale, Beaufort, Colleton and Jasper Counties, SC*. This involved the second year of a comprehensive training project organized by 1890 Extension. The goal of the training is to increase awareness and competency in sustainable vegetable production and marketing practices for approximately 20 limited resource and minority farmer-educators who participated. Training activities included a series of on-farm demonstrations, farm tours, workshops, and production and marketing meetings on the following topics; Soil and Nutrient Management, Low-Input Production Practices for High Value Vegetables, Risk Management and Recordkeeping, and Post-harvest Handling and Marketing.
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3. Briefly describe expectations for future sustainable agriculture training events: The SC SARE Advisory Committee met with stakeholders in Columbia, SC on January 13 and 14 to identify and prioritize training needs, and to schedule training events for 2008. Based on stakeholder input, it is likely that 2008 training events will focus on organic farm certification, good agricultural practices (GAP), small livestock production and marketing, oil seed crops and biodiesel production, and development of community food systems.