

2009 Annual State Report to the Southern Region SARE  
Program

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Tennessee

## II. Abstract

Tennessee's Model SARE Program addresses all parts of the SARE program with an initial emphasis on improved communications and increased awareness of opportunities provided by the SARE program. Our goal is to enhance educational programming with traditional audiences, while reaching out to new audiences. One hundred and forty-nine (149) Extension agents and specialists participated in five different intensive training topics including farm succession and alternative enterprises. For 2010 - 2011, training will be conducted with Extension agents in alternative enterprises, renewable energy and farm succession training follow-up workshops.

## III. 3-Page Report (This entire report will be posted on our Web site soon after you submit it)

### 1. How Training Efforts Have Addressed Objectives In Tennessee's State Strategic Plan For Sustainable Agriculture

Tennessee's Model SARE Program addresses all parts of the SARE program with an initial emphasis on improved communications and increased awareness of opportunities provided by the SARE program. Our goal is to enhance educational programming with traditional audiences, while reaching out to new audiences. In the Model program, special efforts were also made to strengthen working relationships between and within the universities. The SARE calls for various grant proposals were distributed within the universities and to other appropriate parties. Department heads and other administrators were requested to

encourage potential participants to evaluate and, if appropriate, submit a high-quality grant proposal.

In September 2009, a team of seven (7) presenters conducted Extension agent training sessions in Crossville and Dickson. Forty-eight (48) professionals participated in the two-day training. In post-training evaluations, agents provided very positive evaluations of the training. Quality of instruction rated over 9 (on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 the highest). "Excellent use of multiple speakers", "very informative and well organized training" and "very relevant" were cited as some of the best parts of the training. The sessions provided detailed training on estate planning, retirement planning and the farm succession process.

Eighty-two (82) Extension agents participated in a risk management training program in three regions of Tennessee. The training agenda was modified to address unique issues and opportunities for the specific region. Topics included renewable energy and value added enterprises. The training was well received and agents were provided valuable teaching materials to teach them to teach others.

Tennessee SARE Coordinators supported the annual meeting of the state-wide Tennessee Organic Growers Association. Approximately 85 individuals participated in the conference held at Tennessee State University. Individuals asked questions about SARE program grant opportunities and resources, as well as general sustainable agriculture issues.

Over 400 farmers, Extension agents, other professional agricultural workers and farmers participated in the "Third

Friday" and Small Farms Expo training programs. Sessions focused on topics ranging from alternative enterprises, organic production and other training topics identified as critical subject matter in the SARE Model Program.

Tennessee's SARE Web site is being used to market the SARE program and provide educational support to sustainable agriculture. We continue to refine and update the website.

## **2. Bullet Statements of Training Outcomes**

Approximately 85 individuals participated in the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual State-Wide Tennessee Organic Growers Association Annual Meeting. The SARE Coordinators help communicate program benefits and opportunities to the membership.

Twenty-six (26) Extension professionals are better prepared to provide educational support to current and potential producers considering alternative enterprises and use of renewable energy in the production process. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the highest, the participants rated the overall training a score of 8.9.

Fifteen area and state specialists participated in a three-day training event held May 5-7, 2009 concerning financial and production risk management. The training was very interactive and well received by the participants.

Twenty-two (22) Extension agents and area specialists participated in a 3-day training. The program involved on-site training on nine (9) nursery and greenhouse

operations. They gained a better understanding of best management practices and improved marketing strategies. Participants indicated they gained knowledge to help producers in managing their business in the future. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the highest, they rated usefulness of the training at 8.6. The on-site training sessions were the most effective teaching tools used in the training. Presentations by growers was often cited as a training highlight.

Extension agents are better prepared to conduct farm succession workshops and work one-on-one with farm families. They gained information or knowledge to teach farm families to constructively communicate with family members regarding succession planning.

### **3. Expectations for Future Sustainable Agriculture Training Events**

Tennessee's Model State SARE Program will strengthen existing linkages with NGO's and other partners, and provide an opportunity to identify and work with new partners. Training events will involve them in program development and delivery. SARE State Co-ordinators will also be involved in the partners' annual meetings and other events. For 2010, emphasis will be placed on planning, conducting, evaluating and following up on training addressing renewable energy, alternative enterprises including the Green Industry, risk management and biofuels feedstock. This training seeks to expose agents to issues and information that will enhance their response to local inquiries regarding these

subject matter areas.

Tennessee expects to address needs identified in the Model State Program. Renewable energy, alternative enterprises and farm succession planning have been identified as priority areas for training. The future overall training program will be the results of numerous collaborative efforts with farmers, NGO's, NRCS and others.