

2009 Annual State Report to the Southern Region SARE Program

DATE:	20 January 2010
STATE SUBCONTRACT NUMBER:	
STATE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE COORDINATOR, NAME:	Dr. Owusu Bandele / Dr. Chris Robichaux
Institution/Organization	Southern University Agricultural Center
Address	114 Courthouse Street
City, State, Zip	Breaux Bridge, LA 70517
Phone, Fax	Phone: 337-332-2181; Fax 337-332-2870
Email	Email: <a href="mailto:chris_robichaux@suagcenter.com">chris_robichaux@suagcenter.com</a>
STATE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE COORDINATOR, NAME:	Dr. Carl Motsenbocker
Institution/Organization	Louisiana State University AgCenter
Address	SPESS, 137 Julian Miller Hall
City, State, Zip	Baton Rouge, LA 70803
Phone, Fax	Phone: 225 578 1036; FAX: 225 578 1068
Email	<a href="mailto:cmotsenbocker@agcenter.lsu.edu">cmotsenbocker@agcenter.lsu.edu</a>
CURRENT REPORTING PERIOD:	January 2009 to December 2009
SSARE FUNDING AMOUNT:	\$ 40,000

**2009 Annual SARE State Report to the Southern Region SARE Program  
Submitted: January, 2009**

**Project Directors:**

Southern University Agricultural Center: Dr. Owusu Bandele / Dr. Chris Robichaux  
Louisiana State University Ag Center: Dr. Carl Motsenbocker

**Sustainable Agriculture State Coordinators:**

Southern University Agricultural Center:

Dr. Owusu Bandele / Dr. Chris Robichaux  
Southern University AgCenter  
114 Courthouse Street  
Breaux Bridge, LA 70517  
Phone: 337-332-2181; Fax 337-332-2870  
Email: [chris\\_robichaux@suagcenter.com](mailto:chris_robichaux@suagcenter.com)

Louisiana State University AgCenter:

Dr. Carl Motsenbocker  
School of Plant, Environmental, and Soil Sciences,  
137 Julian Miller Hall  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
Phone: (225) 578-1036 Fax (225) 578-1068  
Email: [cmotsenbocker@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:cmotsenbocker@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**Sustainable Agriculture Program Assistant:**

Ms. Emily Neustrom  
School of Plant, Environmental, and Soil Sciences,  
137 Julian Miller Hall  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
Phone: (225) 578-1037 Fax (225) 578-1068  
Email: [eneustrom@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:eneustrom@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**Louisiana Sustainable Agriculture Program Website:** [www.lasare.agcenter.lsu.edu](http://www.lasare.agcenter.lsu.edu)

**Current Reporting Period: January 2009 -December 31, 2009**

**SARE Funding Amount: \$40,000 (\$20,000 for model program plus \$10,000 each to LSU and SU).**

## II Abstract

Last year's Louisiana SARE PDP included the following highlights:

- Our annual attendance at the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group Conference in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Scholarships were provided to growers, county agents and other agricultural professionals.
- A Management Intensive Grazing workshop was held in Baton Rouge, Louisiana on Wednesday, May 27, 2009.
- Our Annual Sustainable Agriculture Workshop and Field Day was canceled due to excessive rain in the fall.
- The Deep South Fruit and Vegetable Conference and Trade Show was not held due to the downturn in the economy.
- The Louisiana SARE PDP program was awarded a competitive enhancement grant for statewide programming in sustainable agriculture.

In addition, both universities were involved in several other sustainable training activities for farmers and agricultural professionals. Plans for the future include intensification of training initiatives.

## III. Louisiana SARE PDP Annual Report, 2009

**Objectives:** The overall objectives of the Louisiana State Plan of Work were to:

- Increase expertise of agricultural professionals in the area of sustainable agriculture.
- Provide training for agricultural professionals and model contact farmers in sustainable agriculture production and marketing strategies.
- Maintain the state sustainable agriculture website.
- Engage the Advisory Board in order to get greater buy in and feedback from a cross section of agricultural professionals and producers.
- Promote the SARE programs, resources, and grant opportunities in Louisiana

### Highlights

#### Southern SAWG Conference

The first major undertaking was the bus tour to the Annual Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group Conference held in Chattanooga, Tennessee. In part due to Southern SARE support, we were able to bring 53 participants to the conference, of which 29 were agricultural professionals including 5 county agents from LSUAC and 3 from SUAC. The project received funding from SARE for 18 farmer scholarships to attend SSAWG. The SU Ag Center covered the cost of the field tours for the farmers, because they were not covered by the scholarships. The SU Ag Center also presented a poster highlighting sustainable ag programs at the university. The conference is a great training opportunity that features a wide range of sustainable practices for both crops and livestock. Attendance at the conferences has led to changes in behavior for both producers and agricultural professionals. Several agents expressed increased confidence in recommending sustainable practices and have encouraged their stakeholders to interact

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with model contact sustainable agriculture farmers as well as attend sustainable agriculture workshops and meetings.

A husband and wife farm couple who attended the SSAWG in 2008, Joel and Sharon Leleu of New Renaissance Gardens, in Jackson, Louisiana started a CSA to provide organic vegetables to 25 local consumers. The couple attributed the SSAWG conference to assisting them in the start up of their CSA and production in the field and high tunnels. Two young growers who attended the SSAWG in 2008, Nicholas Usner and John Bartlett, expanded their production of organic vegetables and have relied on experience received from the Louisiana sustainable agriculture program. At SSAWG, both growers visited growers with high tunnels on the field trips. Mr. Usner has since purchased a high tunnel and Mr. Bartlett will purchase his first high tunnel in the near future. A father and son (Bart and John Shoop) who participated in SSAWG in 2008 have since worked closely with another grower (Luther Johannmeir) who participated in LaSARE programming in 2007. The Shoops have since purchased a high tunnel for field production. In addition, Yasin and Elaine Muhaimin have become model farmers in pastured poultry and organic vegetable production thanks in large part to the knowledge obtained from the SSAWG conferences coupled with technical support from the universities.

### **Management Intensive Grazing Workshop**

A Management Intensive Grazing Workshop was held in Baton Rouge, Louisiana on Wednesday, May 27, 2009 at the Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center. The total attendance was 52 with extension agents and research staff, as well as, 20 progressive farmers (including at least two who are undertaking the Master Farmer Program. One LSU AgCenter county agent found the workshop useful in his service to farmers/producers and plans to use the training to share information on, "how to set up an intensive grazing system". West & Marguerite Constantine of WesMar Dairy Farm in Moreauville, LA, said, "The Grazing Workshop held on Wednesday May 27, 2009 was one of the better workshops we have attended. The speaker was knowledgeable and effective. As a small dairy, we are faced with challenges of maintaining a healthy herd with peak production. As a result of attending, we realize that we, ourselves, need to develop our own plan with the guidance of experts. We now have a broad idea of what our ultimate goals are and the steps we need to take in order to implement an effective practice of rotational grazing." The morning sessions included field tours to the Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center Experiment Station Mixed Grazing Project, Jim McNitt's Farm, and Ashford Cattle Company run by Don Ashford. The main presenter in the afternoon was Dr. Ron Morrow of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Arkansas who presented on the methods and benefits of management intensive grazing. Dr. Morrow is also a rancher and has 40 acres of intensively managed cattle on his operation near Little Rock, Arkansas.

### **Annual Sustainable Ag Field Day**

The annual sustainable agriculture field day is normally held in the fall was canceled due to high rainfall that was experienced during the fall 2009.

**Organic Session at the Deep South Fruit and Vegetable Conference and Trade Show**  
The Deep South Meeting this year was canceled due to the economic downturn.

### **Other Activities**

**The SU Ag Center also conducted several other sustainable agricultural workshops and activities for agricultural professionals and farmers. These include:**

- Continuation of a minigrant funded by the SU Ag Center resulting in establishing and maintaining community gardens in Opelousas and Baton Rouge.
- Sustainable vegetable production presentation to Iberia/St. Martin Parish Master Gardeners.
- Provided technical assistance to minority farmers in the state.
- Sustaining a farmers market in New Iberia.
- Provided technical assistance for pastured poultry and goat producers.
- Researchers worked with hibiscus as an alternative crop and value added product. Conducted two hibiscus workshops with interested producers in St. Landry and St. Martin Parishes.
- Provided technical support to the Magnaville organic project, a settlement of hurricane evacuees that includes an organic farm.
- Participated in the New Iberia Cleanest City Advisory Committee.
- Assisted in establishing Sugarland Elementary School Garden in New Iberia, LA.
- Garden presentation to Parks Primary School and Cecilia Primary School in St. Martin Parish.
- Provided sustainable vegetable production technical support to the Iberia Parish Sheriff staff.
- Seminar presentation to the SU Ag Center faculty regarding the SARE grant opportunities.
- Submitted a Sustainable Community Innovation Grant to SARE.

**The LSU Ag Center has been involved in:**

- Sustaining a farmers market in a low income area of Baton Rouge during the summer months.
- Conducting an 8-week summer horticulture, nutrition and cooking, and leadership program for at-risk youth in the inner city of Baton Rouge.
- Organic production and marketing presentations for public audiences (Baton Rouge, Hammond) as well as Louisiana Master Gardener trainings (Tangipahoa, Washington, St. Tammany, and Orleans Parishes).
- Participating in the New Orleans City Council Food Policy Advisory Committee. One of the results of the advisory committee was recommendations to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables and the Healthy Food Retail Study Group of the Louisiana State Senate.

- A service-learning organic gardening class assisted in the maintenance and harvest of the vegetable crops plots at the LSU Horticulture Hill Farm Teaching Facility as well as developing a kitchen/herb garden and fruit tree site at the Charlie Thomas Head Start Garden. The class also made garden beds, filled with compost, and planted herbs at the Old South Baton Rouge Community Garden. Several students also volunteered at the Saturday Red Stick Farmers Market with children's garden activities. Students and faculty assisted the McKinley High School Garden Club and several classes in maintaining and planting existing garden plots as well as creating a new garden bed.
- The Hill Farm Community Garden at LSU has provided an opportunity for students and community members to grow their own food as well as growing vegetables and herbs to donate to local soup kitchens at Missionaries of Charity and St. Vincent de Paul.
- Providing technical support to the Mary Queen of Vietnam Church and the Latino Farmers Cooperative of Louisiana projects in New Orleans.
- Providing technical assistance to farmers in the state and region.

In addition to the projects mentioned above the SU and LSU Ag Centers continue to cooperate on a range of sustainable agriculture projects within the state and region:

- Both institutions are active in the enhancement of the Red Stick Farmers' Market and have members serving on the BREADA Board.
- Both have been active in planning the annual Deep South Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference.
- Both state coordinators have been involved in regional sustainable agricultural initiatives.

**Training Outcomes: The LA SARE PDP initiative has led to:**

- Increased collaboration and networking among university agricultural professionals and farmers in sponsoring and participating in sustainable agricultural training sessions within the state
- Increased LA participation in the Southern SAWG conferences from 17 in 2006 to over 60 in 2007 through 2009.
- Increased collaboration between SARE PDP state coordinators resulting in several regional collaborative efforts including the submission of a research and education SARE proposals with scientists from neighboring states.
- Greater acceptability of sustainable practices by agricultural professionals and greater utilization of these practices by growers.
- An increase in the number of producers in LA and the region who have submitted applications for organic certification.

**3. Expectations for future sustainable agriculture training events.**

The activities that are planned for the coming year will increase participation of extension personnel and collaborating farmers in sustainable agriculture programs and practices. A tour bus will be traveling from LA to the Southern SAWG meeting in January, 2010. Participants will include county agents, other agriculture professionals and farmers. We

will have workshops on 3 topics this year: fruit production and propagation; livestock harvesting and marketing, and a sustainable local food roundtable. For farm tours this year we plan to focus on successful sustainable agriculture farms in Louisiana, thus increasing knowledge and appreciation of sustainable agriculture locally. An annual sustainable agriculture field day will be held in the fall. The state SARE website that has been established previously and we will use the site to promote sustainable agriculture training events and funding opportunities in the state. This coming year we will be working with the Southern SARE office on training and review of the Louisiana SARE program as well as SARE grant writing and grant support.

**Southern Region SARE Professional Development Program  
2009 Photo Identification Form for SARE State Activities**

(make as many copies of this blank form as needed before listing photos)

<b>Photo 1</b>
Photographer's name: Carl Motsenbocker
Date: May 27, 2009
Location: Williams Hall at Southern University AgCenter, Baton Rouge, LA
Subject and activity: Dr. Ron Morrow of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (Arkansas) and a rancher presenting during lecture portion of the Management Intensive Grazing Workshop
<b>Photo 2</b>
Photographer's name: Carl Motsenbocker
Date: May 27, 2009
Location: Ashford Cattle Farm
Subject and activity: Mr. Don Ashford of Ashford Cattle Farm detailing his experience with management intensive grazing.

**Photo 3**

Photographer's name: Carl Motsenbocker

Date: May 27, 2009

Location: Ashford Cattle Farm

Subject and activity: Mr. Don Ashford of Ashford Cattle Farm (center facing audience) explaining management intensive grazing in his pastures (Dr. Morrow is to the left).

Photo 1



Louisiana

Photo 2



Louisiana

Photo 3



Louisiana