

# **2009 Annual SARE Report to the Southern Region SARE Program**

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For the period  
January 2009 through December 2009  
SARE Model State Program: \$40,000

## **ABSTRACT**

The Georgia SARE Model State Program increased participation in sustainable agriculture programming in 2009 as evidenced by the increase in attendance at events, the increase in collaborative events, and more name recognition for SARE. Major events of the year included the use of mini grants to support Extension-sponsored workshops to increase participation by Extension specialists, and the recruiting and first year training of the Sustainable and Organic Production Team (SOPT). We also continued producing stand alone workshops to address specific areas of our LOGIC Model. Other PDP efforts include two collaborative workshops on Selling Direct to Retailers, organizing the organic session at the GA Fruit & Vegetable Growers' annual conference, providing scholarships for several sustainable ag related conferences, hosting the National SARE/NACAA Fellows Tour, the Farmers, Home & Ministers Conference, the Ham & Egg Legislative Breakfast, and continued populating/updating of the sustainable agriculture website.

Georgia

# GEORGIA Model State Program Final Report for Calendar Year 2009

Georgia SARE programming in 2009 showed the results of our work in sustainable agriculture since becoming a SARE Model State Program with more participants, more collaborative events, and more name recognition for SARE. Major events of the year included the use of mini grants to support Extension-sponsored workshops to increase participation by Extension specialists, and the recruiting and first year training of the Sustainable and Organic Production Team (SOPT). We also continued producing stand alone workshops to address specific areas of our LOGIC Model.

The following activities address specific areas of our Georgia SARE Model State Program LOGIC model for 2009:

## Conservation Tillage Systems

- **Conservation Production Systems Training Conference** – Georgia SARE provided scholarships for 10 county agents and other agricultural professionals to attend the Conservation Production Systems Training Conference. This conference provided the 91 registrants with information on water issues, pest management, the farm bill, and economics, all from a conservation tillage systems perspective.
- The Georgia SARE program also supported the 2009 annual meeting of the **Georgia Conservation Tillage Alliance**, the farmer-led organization for promoting conservation tillage systems within Georgia. Thirty one ag professionals and farmers attended this year's conference to gain information on the role of conservation tillage in crop rotation systems, commodity markets, conservation aspects of the Farm Bill, and agricultural aspects of the 2009 Stimulus Package. Support included publicity through the media and mail-outs, meeting registration, and assistance with newsletter production.

## Organic Production

- **Sustainable and Organic Production Team** – Utilizing a separate PDP grant, we assembled a team of 12 Extension agents from UGA and FVSU to receive training on sustainable and organic production. Two trainings were conducted this year: a soils workshop and a summer on-farm experience, pairing agents with successful organic farmers, followed by a Team meeting to report on what they learned.
- **Georgia Organics Annual Conference** - Georgia SARE was a significant sponsor of this annual conference in the form of scholarships for agricultural professionals and farmer mentors. Over 750 bulletins were distributed at the SARE exhibit and the state coordinator gave a presentation on soil fertility. This year's conference, held at Agnes Scott College in Decatur, had a record breaking 1100+ in attendance making this conference the second largest sustainable agriculture event in the Southeast.
- **Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association Organic Session** – The state coordinator organized this session
- Additionally, we recruited 25 scholarship recipients to attend the **2009 Southern SSAWG conference** in Chattanooga, TN, to learn the latest in sustainable and organic production methods.

## Grazing-based Animal Production Systems

- **Sustainable Pasture-Based Livestock Systems in Action: Grazing Dairies** – We provided a mini-grant to support this workshop for 80 participants. The agenda included the rationale and findings from a SARE funded cooperative grant between UGA and UFL as well as tours of two grazing dairies and a panel discussion
- **Adding Value to Beef Cattle Using Sustainable Forage Systems** – This SARE mini-grant funded PDP workshop was held in two locations for a total of 110 participants.

## Direct Marketing

- **Selling Direct to Retailers** – UGA and FVSU collaborated on two workshops to educate a total of 73 agents and other participants on improving opportunities for farmers to develop profitable business relationships with retailers.
- **Opportunities for Sustainable Small Farms** – Provided programming assistance and gave a presentation for this introductory workshop on sustainable agriculture practices.

## Alternative Energy

- **Alternative Energy Educational Training** – We supported the Extension Bioenergy Task Force training workshop series to give all Extension ANR agents a foundation of basic knowledge of the production and current state of bioenergy.

### **Local Food Systems**

- **Cultivating New Farmers: Community, Training, and Land Access** – We provided a mini-grant to support this day long program for beginning sustainable farmers on land trusts and farm transition for 25 participants.

### **OTHER ACTIVITIES**

- SARE co-sponsored the **Farm, Home, & Ministers Conference: The Economics of Home – Families Valuing Strength and Unity** which provided training on state and federal programs such as USDA funded programs for over 300 participants. In addition to presenting the FVSU – Cooperative Extension Program’s Farm Family of the Year Award, the 2009 conference also featured morning educational sessions on improving health, rural and urban community development and outdoor trainings in the afternoon
- In April, Georgia hosted the **National SARE/NACAA Fellows Tour**. Eight SARE Fellows spent 2 1/2 days touring farms in the area and comparing sustainability issues of the farms during extended evening sessions..
- **Fort Valley State University Ham & Egg Breakfast**- Along with several cooperators, SARE produced this annual event to afford participating farmers and families opportunities to receive updates from the district Senator and Legislators on issues facing farmers and agriculture in Georgia for 2009. Training exhibits were on display for participants to view and receive information.
- The state co-coordinator and program assistant attended **Carolina Farm Stewardship Association** conference to network on multi-state educational opportunities.
- Utilizing the College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences sustainable agriculture website, we **publicized over 75 events** of interest to the sustainable agriculture community.
- The assistant attended the **SARE Coordinators Meeting**, Charleston, SC (August)
- We continued increasing the information available on the Sustainable Agriculture website, [www.SustainAgGa.org](http://www.SustainAgGa.org)

### **IMPACTS**

- ✓ At the state networking session at **Southern SAWG**, for the first time, the University of Georgia was cited as a resource to the sustainable agriculture community within the state.
- ✓ SARE bulletins are made available at all conferences and trainings and in response to information requests from individuals. For 2009, over **1000 SARE bulletins were distributed**.
- ✓ Feedback from 2009 **Georgia Organics Conference** scholarship recipient: “Thank you for making it possible for me to attend the GA Organics Conference this weekend. I made some great connections for my Farmers Market, and learned a lot during the classes, too! I couldn’t have attended without your help - I really appreciated the opportunity!”
- ✓ Telephone contact with participants after the **Cultivating New Farmers: Community, Training, and Land** workshop found three participants planning to contact the local land trust regarding small-scale farming within a trust agreement.

### **FUTURE TRAINING EVENTS**