

2009 Annual State Report to the Southern Region SARE Program

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CURRENT REPORTING PERIOD:	January 2009 to December 2009
SSARE FUNDING AMOUNT:	\$20,000

Virgin Islands SARE MSP Annual Report 2009 – Abstract

As the US economy continues to become more unstable, the agriculture community will continue to seek the advice of ag-professionals for information on alternative ways to stabilize losses and increase on farm income. Training in the fundamentals of beekeeping sustainable, orchard management and value added principles is part of the state plan to build sufficient capacity in these areas. Within 1-2 years the agricultural community should have a cadre of trained professional and farm leaders to provide guidance and direction. The VI MSP continues to meet the challenge of developing local capacity for agriculture sustainability.

SARE State Annual Report 2009

The 2009 professional development training year continued the focus on alternatives farm enterprises as a means of preparing the farming community for the potential down turn in the economy that is currently sweeping across the nation. As the economy continues to become more unstable, the agriculture community has been and will continue to seek the advice of ag-professionals and farm leaders for information on alternative ways to increase on farm income.

During 2009, another series of introduction to business of beekeeping classes was held on all three of the US Virgin Islands. This training was designed to instruct ag- professionals, ag-organizational leaders, and selected interested persons from the community in the fundamentals of the beekeeping business. Three 12 week classes were conducted during the calendar year. Ninety-five percent (95%) of the participants have had no beekeeping experience. Travel for advanced level training for four (4) experienced beekeepers who served as trainers was also supported by SARE funding.

Outcomes

Eighty percent (80%) of participants have successfully completed the theoretical and a portion of the practical aspects of beekeeping. Some of the graduates from previous classes have also been used to make formal and informal presentations to the recently graduated trainees.

Future plans include advanced level training for ag-professionals and experienced beekeepers in queen rearing which is a potential high income enterprise for farmers.

Past SARE funding supported the training of farm leaders and ag-professionals in one aspect of orchard management and that is manipulating mango flowering for increased production. Building capacity in this area is vital as new and existing farmers have learned that the hospitality industry is an untapped market for locally grown tropical fruits and vegetables. The 2008 seminar had generated a high level of interest amongst the participants as it provided the theoretical concept of mango flowering manipulation. However, there was no practical component included. Post seminar evaluations revealed that ninety-nine percent of participants would seek more information on the subject and that a practical application workshop is necessary in order to reinforce the concepts learned.

Outcome:

Six demonstration sites were selected between St. Thomas and St. Croix. One formal theoretical seminar was conducted for ag-professionals, farm leaders and other interested persons who missed that 2008 seminar.

Professor Dr. Thomas Davenport of the University of the Florida IFAS research center in Homestead Florida provided the instruction in the first of three phases of the demonstration which involved severely pruning and shaping existing mango trees. At least two (2) follow up visits by Dr. Davenport may be necessary in order to ensure that the instruction given for certain practices and procedures taught in the seminar will be followed correctly. Some supplies and literature will also be needed in order to ensure the success of the practice.

Adding value to the products has been one of the most beneficial means of reducing waste and increasing profits. However, because of the multi-cropping system used by most farmers, some crops are converted into valued added items while others are discarded. Mango Mele and World Food Day are two of the events used to demonstrate how processing a crop in various ways can be profitable. World Food Day is an opportunity for Extension Service staff and local chefs and experienced cooks to give demonstrations of converting unsold commodities into high value niche market products. Breadfruit, beets and goat were the featured commodities this year.

Virgin Islands

Outcome

Participants learned new ways of converting beets and breadfruit, into cookies, cakes, breads and even drinks. These demonstrations and seminars have been drawing not only ag-professionals and farm leaders but interested individuals that realize the potential for entrepreneurial opportunities individually or by partnering with a local producer. Approximately 70% of participants requested recipes and additional information on the processing and/or production of selected commodities.

Future Training Events

- Continue with the next phase of development of the demonstration and training sites for orchard management of mangoes
- Partner with University of Florida for a post harvest short course
- Support on island training of ag-professionals and experienced beekeepers in the next level of apiculture which will be queen rearing
- Partner with experiment station aquaculture research staff to set up demonstrations of the Quick Tank technology for increasing water storage capacity and/or raising fish.
- Support off - island professional development opportunities at Southern SAWG, Caribbean Food Crop Society, and other sustainable agriculture meetings, conferences

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)

Photo # 1
Photographer's name: Monica Altamirano
Date: November 2009
Location: St. John U.S. Virgin Islands
Subject and activity: Trainees examine a frame that bees have built honey combs in without the typical foundation base.
Photo # 2
Photographer's name: Carlos Robles
Date: November 2009
Location: St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands
Subject and activity: Marketing Bee Products- Daniel Stanley Marketing director of the VI Department of Agriculture describes some of the various products that can come from a bee hive as trainees sample items.

Photo Number 1



Photo Number 2



Virgin Islands

Photo #3



Photo # 4

Virgin Islands



Virgin Islands

Photo # 3

Photographer's name: Dara Cooper

Date: October 2009

Location: St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands

Subject and activity: World Food Day- Breadfruit Production Seminar. Errol Chichester displays a mature breadfruit.

Photo # 4

Photographer's name: Carlos Robles

Date: August 2009

Location St. Thomas U.S. Virgin Islands

Subject and activity: Experienced beekeeper Elridge Thomas brushes bees off a frame that is capped and full of honey. This was part of a honey extraction class.