

## 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:	\$40,000.00

### ABSTRACT

The Texas Sustainable Agriculture Advisory Committee (AC) conducted their annual meeting in College Station on 15 January, 2009 to plan training opportunities in sustainability. The Texas AC sponsored training Texas

activities related to the USDA-SARE program, grant opportunities, organic vegetable production and marketing, and sustainable systems for 162 agents.

Emphasis was also placed in outreach efforts to increase awareness of Texas SARE. These included partnering with the Texas Department of Agriculture and the Texas Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association in setting up and maintaining an educational booth at the State Fair of Texas that reached 1.5 million people, and a display at San Antonio Livestock Exposition that reached 130,422 people. Our outreach efforts are also enhanced by maintenance of the Texas SARE program website. In 2009, some 11,647 visits were logged. The Texas SARE website can be found at <http://sare.tamu.edu>.

## Texas SARE 2009 Annual Report

The Texas SARE program for 2009 focused on two major efforts. These included: 1) training in sustainable practices and 2) developing a network for enhancing outreach efforts.

The 2009 Texas SARE year began with the Advisory Council meeting held in College Station on January 15, 2009. Fifteen Representatives from across Texas Sustainable Agriculture were present to evaluate programming efforts of 2008 and to develop the 2009 plan of work. Organic and Sustainable producers, Texas Organic Farmer Gardener President and Board members, a producer serving as a Chairman of a local county Extension Sustainable Agriculture program area committee, and Cooperative Extension Program and Texas Agri Life Extension Agents and Specialist discussed 2009 plan of work needs and ideas.

**Regarding training, 162 Extension employees** received training in the USDA SARE educational programs, Southern SARE funding opportunities, and sustainable production systems and practices. These included:

- 1.) Jan. 20-24, 2009, 7 Extension Agents and 2 producers attended the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group Conference. They attended sessions on a range of sustainable agriculture areas from Pasture Beef, Pasture Poultry, Hoop-house Vegetable production, and Cut Flowers. As a result of this conference, agents attending have been able to better advise producers regarding sustainable production practices. Additionally, one of the producers attending has added cut flowers to his operation. The other producer, in attendance, has adopted intensive grazing practices to his beef operation.
- 2.) February 19, 2009, 15 Extension Agents received SARE training in San Antonio. The extension Agents were given additional information on Sustainable production, locally grown, and SARE grant and educational opportunities that exist
- 3.) April 23, 2009, 27 Extension Agents were given an introductory training to the SARE program during New Employee Orientation.
- 4.) April 28, 2009, Texas SARE hosted a Regional Training for Extension Agents in Organic Gardening & Small Farming -**33 Extension Agents** gained training in Organics, licensing, marketing of organic produce, and sustainable production. An evaluation on % knowledge gained was conducted. The results of this evaluation appear below:

### EVALUATION RESULTS

Statements	Before Training	After Training	Difference	Percent Change
1. My knowledge level of organic vegetable gardening	2.8	3.7	.9	23%
2. My knowledge level of using raised beds in gardening.	3.4	3.9	.5	13%
3. My expertise about organic pesticides.	2.2	3.3	1.1	28%
4. My knowledge level of organic products available in the market place.	2.7	3.7	1.0	25%
5. My ability to provide direction to clientele about the organic certification process.	2.3	3.4	1.1	28%
6. My knowledge of the Texas Organic Farmer Gardener Association.	2.1	3.3	1.2	30%
7. My knowledge of Heifer International.	2.0	3.5	1.5	38%
2. My. Knowledge level of organic herb gardening.	2.4	2.9	.5	13%
9. My knowledge level of SARE.	2.6	3.7	1.1	28%
10. My knowledge if where to find resources for organic gardening/small farming.	2.7	3.9	1.2	30%

Texas

- 5.) September 15-17, 2009, **7 Extension Agents** attended the 5th National Small Farm Conference in Springfield, IL. Extension Agents attended this conference focusing on training in sustainable agriculture. This conference provided our agents and staff with an excellent opportunity to network with Extension staff from across the country.
- 6.) September 28-Oct 2, 2009, **13 Extension Agents** attended an In-Service Sustainable Agriculture Training in Oklahoma. Agents and staff received training in sustainable agriculture while visiting The Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Lane Ag Center and The Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation. Agents and staff divided into three teams to develop reports on each site. A number of sustainable practices were identified in the agent's home counties.
- 7.) October 22, 2009, **28 Extension Agents** attending the Extension Foundations session and received training on SARE grant programs and educational opportunities.
- 8.) November 11, 2009, **32 Extension Employees** from District 11 were trained on SARE grant and educational opportunities.

Texas SARE is assisting in the printing of an Organic Vegetable Production publication. This publication was used during agent training and will serve as the basis of a Texas AgriLife Extension publication on this topic to be produced at a future time.

Barbara Storz, Texas AC member and Hidalgo County Extension Horticulture agent, developed a program of intensive training for minority families to increase family income and family access to nutritional produce entitled, "Grow'n Growers". Through this program, a group of small plot producers have developed a monthly organic farmer's market that produces and sells organically grown produce in the Rio Grande Valley. Participating families reported an average monthly increase in family income of \$75.00 to \$200.00 and a weekly grocery bill savings of \$10.00 to \$20.00 through participating in Grow'n Growers.

On January 30 and 31, 2009, a sustainable production conference and tour were held in the Rio Grande Valley. This conference focused on several sustainable production topics such as composting, alternative fertilizers, non-chemical pest control, and organic production. Evaluations from program participants reflected 94% were mostly or completely satisfied with the information being what they expected and easy to understand. Furthermore, program participants showed a 82% increase in knowledge and understanding in sustainable practices and that information presented was excellent and very informative. 58% of the program participants thought they would implement one of the sustainable practices demonstrated on their own farm.

On Sept. 12, 2009 a mini workshop for producers was held by the Cooperative Extension Program. With the assistance of the Landowner Association of Texas, producers learned how to interact with various USDA Agencies to improve their operations. Topics covered were 2008 Farm Bill; Farm Service Agency- How to Establish a Farm Record with FSA; Natural Resources Conservation Service – What NRCS Can Do for You: and Rural Development "Rural Development in Your Community". Twenty-four producers attended the meeting. Producers report that this was one of the most informative meetings of this type they have attended.

In September, a meeting was held in Hidalgo County on the EQIP Program for 57 organic producers. The event garnered excellent media coverage and lots of inquires from organic growers who did not realize financial assistance was available through the farm bill to assist their operations. 90% indicated they would apply for EQIP funding in the Farm Bill for their individual operation.

The Texas SARE web site ( located at <http://sare.tamu.edu>) has provided 11,647 requests for 2009, which is over twice the number of requests received in 2008. Our “Find CSA Farms and Market” section provides additional information to help people locate local CSA’s and locally-grown markets in Texas.

**SARE Outreach efforts for 2009:**

**Jan.** - Educational booth setup at the 8th Annual Sustainable Organic Small Farmers Conference in Rio Grande Valley - with 250 attending.

**Feb.** - Educational booth setup at the Texas Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (TOFGA) State Conference with 300 attending.

**Feb.** - Display San Antonio Livestock Exposition on Sustainable Agriculture Production-130, 422 viewed

**April** – Regional Training Organic Vegetable Production -34 participants

August – Educational booth setup at the State beef cattle short course with 1,460 attending.

**Sept. - Oct.** – Texas SARE and Texas Department of Agriculture, partnered to set-up an educational display for Sustainable Agriculture at the State Fair of Texas.

Monty Dozier serves on the TDA’s “Texas Organic Agricultural Industry Advisory Board”. Board is designed to enhance organic agricultural production, marketing, and distribution in Texas. Dozier is also serving on the National Center for Appropriate Technology Southern Region “Energy Training for Agriculture Professionals” committee. This committee, working with a Southern SARE grant, provided training for 26 Extension professionals from 12 southern states. Texas had two Extension agents and one Extension Specialist attend the training and these individuals are currently developing and delivering sustainable energy educational programs in their home counties.

## 2009 Photo Identification Form for SARE State Activities



### Photo # 1 John Musser Tilapia Production

Photographer's name: John Smith

Date: Nov. 24, 2009

Location: Plano, Texas

Subject and activity: John Smith Providing Sustainable Farming input to Texas Tilapia / Sustainable Vegetable Producer

Picture shows John Musser, Greenhouse used to raise the Tilapia fingerlings. They are then transferred into larger containers. Producer was interested in marketing input. Brought Extension Agents to view production system for use in 2010 San Antonio Livestock Exposition (130,000 people expected).



<b>Photo # 2 SARE Booth at Texas Organic Farmer Gardener Conference</b>
Photographer's name: John Smith
Date: Feb. 7, 2009
Location: Killeen, Texas
Subject and activity: SARE Booth at Texas Organic Farmer Gardener Conference