

# SARE: Advancing the Frontier of Sustainable Agriculture in...

# South Carolina

## Project Highlight: *Fruit Bagging Reduce Reliances on Pesticides*

When Clemson University fruit specialist Juan Carlos Melgar suggested putting a paper bag over a peach to detract insects and diseases during production, farmers laughed. But when his SARE-funded trials showed that the technique protects the fruit from devastating brown rot, marauding insects like plum curculio and even hungry birds, producers and backyard growers started paying attention.

Researchers found that bagging peaches between petal fall and harvest reduces pesticide use while increasing yields and maintaining flavor. Even though it involves more labor, Melgar estimated that bagging can increase revenue by \$95 per tree in an organic system when the fruit is sold directly to consumers. “We’ve gotten a lot of positive responses from farmers all over

the country as a result of the research study,” said Melgar.

Fruit bagging for protection is a common strategy in Asia. With South Carolina ranked second in the nation behind California in peach production at 77,000 tons, researchers at Clemson felt that applying the technique to orchards was a worthwhile endeavor because peach growers in the southeastern U.S. face very high pest and disease pressures. Melgar is taking this research to a regional level with a newly acquired \$1 million USDA-NIFA grant, applying the technique to more orchards in South Carolina, Georgia and Florida.

For more information on this project, see [www.sare.org/projects](http://www.sare.org/projects), and search for project number OS16-094.

## SARE in South Carolina

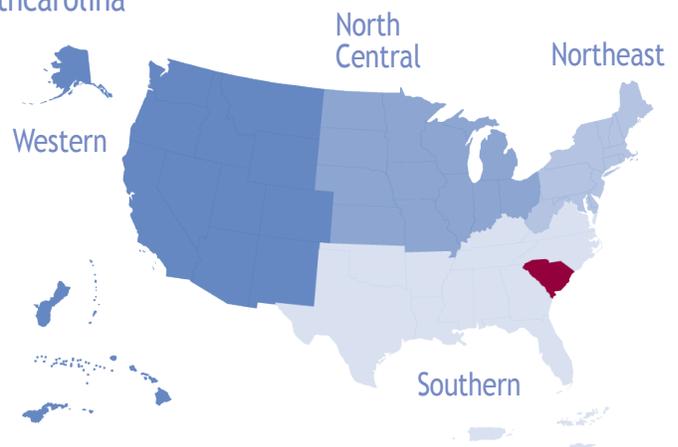
[www.southernsare.org/southcarolina](http://www.southernsare.org/southcarolina)

**\$2.6 million in total funding**

**61 grant projects**

(since 1988)

For a complete list of grant projects state by state, go to [www.sare.org/state-summaries](http://www.sare.org/state-summaries)



SARE's four regional programs and outreach office work to advance sustainable innovations to the whole of American agriculture.

## What is SARE?

Since 1988, the Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) program has been the go-to USDA grants and outreach program for farmers, ranchers, researchers and educators who want to develop innovations that improve farm profitability, protect water and land, and revitalize communities. To date, SARE has awarded over \$287 million to more than 7,000 initiatives.

### SARE is grassroots with far-reaching impact

Four regional councils of expert practitioners set priorities and make grants in every state and island protectorate.

### SARE communicates results

SARE shares project results by requiring grantees to conduct outreach and grower engagement; and by maintaining the SARE Learning Center—a library of practical publications, grantee-produced information products and other educational materials.

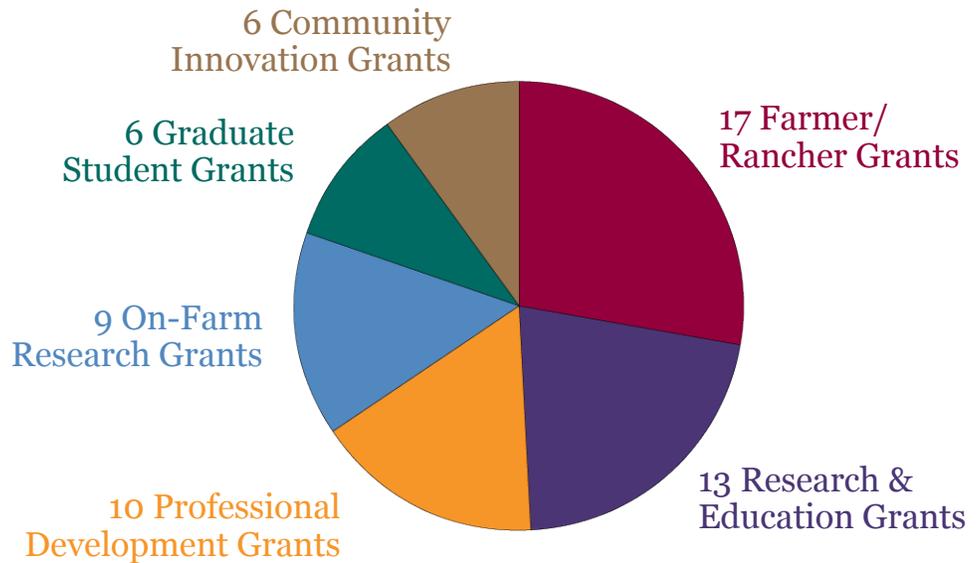


**Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education**

[www.sare.org](http://www.sare.org)

# SARE Grants in South Carolina

SARE has awarded a total of **61 grants** in South Carolina since 1988



## SARE's Impact



**53 percent** of producers report using a new production technique after reading a SARE publication.

**79 percent** of producers said they improved soil quality through their SARE project.

**64 percent** of producers said their SARE project helped them achieve higher sales.

## Contact Your SARE State Coordinator

SARE sustainable ag coordinators run state-level educational programs for Extension and other ag professionals, and many help grant applicants and recipients with planning and outreach. Visit [www.southernsare.org/southcarolina](http://www.southernsare.org/southcarolina) to learn more.

Kelly Gilkerson  
Clemson University  
(864) 656-5057  
kgilker@clemson.edu

Edoe Agbodjan  
South Carolina State Univ.  
(803) 707-2112  
eagbodjan@scsu.edu

Matt Smith  
Clemson Pee Dee Research and  
Education Center  
(843) 519-0464  
mcs5@clemson.edu



SARE is funded by the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

For detailed information on SARE projects, go to

[www.SARE.org](http://www.SARE.org)