

Report on North Dakota SARE – 2009

Frank Kutka, North Dakota SARE Coordinator and DREC Assistant Director

All in all 2009 was a very busy and successful year for SARE in the Dakotas. Representatives from SDSU decided to pull out of the two-state arrangement which we have had for many years, so some of the work this year was to help get the South Dakota program up and running and to finish joint efforts for the two states. Here is a list of activities I undertook to promote the SARE Program in the Dakotas in 2009:

Updates of Dakota SARE website

Forwarding SARE news releases across the Dakotas

Answering emails and telephone calls concerning SARE grant and information opportunities

Answering emails and telephone calls concerning SARE grant applications

Monthly SD NRCS professional development program calls

Burleigh County Soil Conservation District Soil Health Workshop

Northern Great Plains Research Laboratory Customer Focus Group Meeting

Booth and programming assistance for NPSAS Winter Conference in Huron, SD

Cover Crops presentation in Williston, ND

Presentation and display at Indigenous Farming Conference in Calloway, MN

Programming assistance for Sitting Bull College Sustainable Agriculture Conference (cancelled due to weather)

Science Fair regional championship judge in Bowman, ND

SARE presentation to west region Extension educators in Dickinson, ND

SARE update for Extension Specialists via IVN from Dickinson, ND

Sustainable Ag and SARE presentation to Farm Business Management program educators in Bismarck, ND

SARE R and E grant discussion in Watertown, SD

North and South Dakota SARE meeting with Gary Lemme, the new SD Coordinator, in Jamestown, ND

SARE display and presentation at Unity Conference in Fort Yates, ND

SARE representative on local food panel in Bismarck, ND

SARE update for SDSU Extension Ag educators in Pierre, SD

SARE Native American Sustainable Agriculture Grant discussion in Bismarck, ND

SARE Native American Sustainable Agriculture Grant discussion in Fort Yates, ND (twice)

SARE Native American Sustainable Agriculture Grant discussion in New Town, ND (twice)

SARE Native American Sustainable Agriculture Grant discussion in Sisseton, SD

SARE Native American Sustainable Agriculture Grant discussion in Belcourt, ND

SARE presentation at NDSU Organic Field Day

SARE representative on NPSAS research and education committee and program committee

SARE presentation at NPSAS/NRCS organic farm tour in Selby, SD

SARE display at Tristate Meat Goat Conference in Fargo, ND

No-till garden presentation at NDSU Extension Conference in Fargo, ND

Sustainable Agriculture presentations at SDSU in Brookings, SD

Youth and Youth Educator Grant Reviewer and Technical Review Panel participant

The SARE Sustainable Agriculture Workshops at Tribal Colleges Initiative did not get as far as desired in 2009 due to bad weather and also staff turnover at NDSU and the Tribal Colleges. Activities are falling into place in 2010 to achieve those goals, but there were some good outcomes already in 2009. Meetings in Fort Yates allowed me to connect NPSAS and SD NRCS with Ron Brown Otter, a successful cattleman who is investigating organic beef and improved forage management in northern South Dakota. He spoke at a tour NPSAS put on for SD NRCS.

Assistance to the Soil Health Workshop for Vo-Ag teachers was in the form of facilitation among speakers and organizers of the Bismarck meetings. Books ordered to be provided as the background for teachers who will be presenting soil health concepts to students will arrive in their hands at their March 2010 conference. An exciting outcome of this effort was both the SARE Youth Educator grant to Marcus Lewton which helped him to organize this program and also the posting of Kris Nichols' soil health activities packet on the

national FFA website. This packet is also the basis for the new 4H Soil Health Activities Trunk that will be presented at the 2010 Extension Spring Conference.

The Organic Agriculture Initiative attracted two educators with travel assistance to attend the NDSU Organic Field Day and they learned a great deal. (Some of the educational materials that would have gone to other attendees have gone to SD NRCS and other NDSU Specialists.) The organic field day July was moved indoors but still brought in 208 attendees from North Dakota and across North America. That was an exceptional turn out and great exposure for both NDSU and the DREC. The organic field day was a joint effort between NDSU, the Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society, and the North Dakota Organic Crop Improvement Association. I facilitated informal programs the evening before and I also spoke about SARE Farmer Rancher Grants during the program. Pat Carr, NDSU, and Marilyn Isaacson, NPSAS, were the critical organizers whom I assisted. Outcomes included discussions on a partnership of a Mexican Maize improvement program with NDSU's Marcelo Carena, new ideas about reduced tillage presented to ND organic farmers, and a greater connection between two NDSU Extension Agents and the organic research community.

The New Audiences Initiative did reach two young educators with funds to attend the CSA and Greenhouse Management Workshop held at FARRMS in Medina in fall of 2009. Remaining funds will be spent on a tour for interns in 2010.

Funds for earlier SARE initiatives funded an amazing amount of work in 2009. Nine mini-grants supported workshops and field days on straw-bale construction, small acreage management, testing forage for nitrate, value added marketing of grains, soil health, winter feeding options for livestock, the place of nutrition in sustainable agriculture discussions, a soil health workshop for agriculture teachers in SW ND, and a gardening/local foods program in NE ND. Travel scholarships covered the travel of twenty six educators to attend programming across a range of topics. Some of these opportunities have already resulted in new regional contacts, the development of new programs, and support of new bulletin development.