

## **2009 Annual Report Summary for CT, MA and RI Combined Initiative**

The Level II Professional Development Program for The University of Connecticut, University of Massachusetts, and the University of Rhode Island made progress towards achieving outcomes in the areas of livestock grazing, assessing the needs and concerns of Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island meat and poultry producers, and promoting SARE grants and other programs. Activities included five on-farm events and one workshop on rotational grazing and pasture management. Activities for SARE outreach included presenting a fifteen minute overview of SARE grant programs at 2 conferences, a 45 minute presentation at a Farm Bureau event, and five displays featuring SARE materials at agricultural organization events.

On November 19, 2008 the Sustainable Food Working Group met. Eighteen people attended including one Farm Service Agency representative, five Extension Educators, one non-profit representative and eleven producers. The purpose of this meeting was to review the needs of meat producers and to provide feedback on the survey of meat producers. The survey of livestock producers in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island was completed. The survey was sent to 285 farmers and a total of 117 responses were received. The results of this survey are being used to develop programming. For example, the survey indicated that over 3 in 5 producers had an interest in a farmer-owned cooperative. We are currently developing a program for next year on cooperatives. We are also organizing an event in March 2010 with Professor Temple Grandin, a world renowned expert in the area of the humane treatment of meat animals who has worked extensively with meat processors.

As we move into year 2, we recognize the importance of developing strategies to develop the infrastructure needed for businesses to be successful, including the development of cooperating ventures and strategic business plans for producers and their advisors.