

Northeast SARE State Program Report, Funding Year Nov. 2007 – Sept. 2008

- 1. State:** New Jersey
- 2. Land Grant Institution:** Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
- 3. Report Period:** November 1, 2007 to September 30, 2008
- 4. Project Title:** Sustaining Farming on the Urban Fringe
- 5. Project Contact (SARE State Coordinator):**

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6. Summary

SARE funded PDP training in NJ maintains both hands-on training and more traditional classroom/workshop and communications centered components toward achieving goals. New Jersey remains unique in the US. It is small in landmass, the most densely populated and urbanized state (approx. 1,130 residents per square mile compared to approx. 800 in locations like India), while maintaining top 10 national rankings in the production of a variety of specialized horticultural crops.

In the US Census of Agriculture released February 2009, NJ shares the highest improved farmland values per acre with Rhode Island, at about \$16,000 per acre, against an average of approx. \$1,800 per acre nationally. High land values and encroachment contribute to the “Impermanence Syndrome” of even profitable Urban Fringe farming, let alone troubled producers. Extension professionals report being overwhelmed with urban fringe agricultural problems where the Public Interest remains unclear or in conflict. These facts demand specific SARE PDP training and communication targeted to audiences with impact on the conduct, profitability and sustainable viability of urban fringe farming. Where larger states share these agricultural sustainability challenges at the fringes of their cities, New Jersey faces them across the whole state.

7. Performance Targets

We maintain three performance targets: Improving and building capacity for hands-on on-farm research methods supporting alternative/organic farming practices, training on overcoming barriers to sustainability posed by urban fringe farming issues, and educating local urban fringe farming and food issues to a broader public influencing the conduct of farming practices.

8. Milestones

On-Farm Research Methods Training. A major project outcome success was achieved during growing season 2008 in conducting alternative/organic on-farm research methods training and outreach. Extension Specialist, Melvin Henninger, Ph.D. used our NE SARE PDP funded on-farm research plots comparing three alternative organic production practices with conventional potato production. This is the first time in Henninger's career he elected with our support to conduct organic and alternative fertility plot work. One additional County Agent and 3 extension staff all committed 260+ growing season hours achieving project results. Two on-farm field days and other training instructional events were conducted.

Sustaining Farming on the Urban Fringe. During the reporting period, six issues of Sustaining Farming on the Urban Fringe were authored, produced and distributed to target audiences ag professionals, farm policy makers, public officials, and farm operators. Training topics included: Ag professionals' field visit to fertilizer and cold storage food distribution, Participatory grower-directed research: Blueberry industry case study, Animal Waste Management on Small Livestock Farms, Evaluating deer fencing on urban fringe farms, Women in agriculture, and Floriculture growing contribution to NJ urban fringe farming.

What's In Season. Eight issues of What's in Season were prepared and distributed to 250+ internal ag professional, external food industry professionals, and public subscribers. All issues are now located on our website at: <http://www.njfarmfresh.rutgers.edu/archive.html>

Sustaining New Jersey Urban Fringe Farming Web Site. Work remains behind schedule deploying discipline content via the web for ag professionals and farmers on unique production, marketing, risks, and sustainability issues related to profitable NJ urban fringe farming. Unspent SARE funds will be used to complete targeted activity.

The performance target, which remains unfinished at this time, are one stop source for ag professionals on sustainably topics related to Ag Issues. These are urban fringe agricultural problems where the Public Interest remains unclear or in conflict. At Rutgers in New Jersey, these sustainability topics are related to Farmland Tax Assessment, Irrigation water use, Impermanence Syndrome due to high land values, meeting the needs of new/beginning/small alternative farmers.

9. Performance Target Verification

On-Farm Research Methods Training. Publication quality valuable results were achieved in conducting an on-farm training demonstration, using alternative growing practices, in a growing system where achieving competitive, commercial yield, and quality growing potato crops has remained an elusive goal in the region. Two on-farm field days conducted. We educated extension professionals, ag service supplier industry professionals, and farmers, about 54 participants. We were also provided opportunity to present the demonstration results (and SARE PDP) to National Potato Council members from Washington, D.C., including EPA professionals interested in alternative pesticide registrations, growers, and industry professionals (about 24 participants). Subsequently, results were presented at NJ and Pennsylvania grower meetings. Results and observations are posted here (large file),

<http://postit.rutgers.edu/uploads/Organic%5FPotato%5FHenninger%5F2008.ppt> and will be on our web site shortly. Due to the field venues, we are not able to conduct impact surveys, but responses to the work were positive because due to quality of the results providing new information on growing potatoes using alternative practices.

Sustaining Farming on the Urban Fringe. One existing Extension Specialist and one new County Extension Agent we recruited as new authors engaged in training activities on the six topics reported on above in Milestones during the period. Each issue gains more training and subscriber traction with wider audience base. For example, the April 2008 Urban Fringe profiled New Jersey's training conducted on non-lethal high tensile woven steel game exclusion fencing for reducing intolerable damage to urban fringe farms. Survey data presented urban fringe farm crop and income losses before fencing and after.

The report was found on our SARE PDP supported web presence by a leading US wildlife fence manufacturer representative, Steve Sarson, of Bakaert Fence Company in Atlanta Georgia, who is using our report in advising ag professionals, farmers, and farm policy makers on successful cost-effective non-lethal deer control across the region.

Even fence builders and vendors become "sustainability ag professionals" on the Urban Fringe!

The brief SARE PDP supported Urban Fringe Vol. 3 No. 3 report is here:

<http://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/urbanfringe/default.asp?y=2008> and the full farmer survey information is available at:

<http://postit.rutgers.edu/uploads/Deer%5FFence%5FTraining%5FEval%5FReport.pdf>

What's In Season. During the reporting period, producing What's In Season enabled us to link with the Board of Directors of the NJ Restaurant Association (NJRA) on August 4, 2008 in a jointly hosted program promoting local agriculture and food, and overcoming wholesale distribution barriers to the hospitality food service trade. Sixty-four NJRA Directors attended (not including Rutgers and other in-state public agricultural professionals) from of this 6,000 member organization of hospitality food users, food distributors, and chefs. A written survey was conducted (n = 27 useable results) of hospitality food user wholesale distribution requirements and marketing steps needed to overcome barriers. Results will be prepared and distributed ag professionals, farmers, and others in What's in Season and Urban Fringe in 2009.

Sustaining New Jersey Urban Fringe Farming Web Site. As of August 2008, we deployed we have completed making available SARE PDP supported content on vegetable production, soil health, high tunnels, irrigation water conservation, and other topics available here:

<http://njveg.rutgers.edu/html/gc-1intro-growing-crops.html>

IPM and disease resistance management is deployed:

<http://njveg.rutgers.edu/html/cp-intro-controlling-pests.html>

and community farmers market utilization material, marketing, agri-tourism, and partial budgeting options for ag managers is deployed:

<http://njveg.rutgers.edu/html/mf-intro-managing-farms.html>



New Jersey Agricultural
Experiment Station

Our Sustaining Farm on the Urban Fringe training newsletters are now available:

<http://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/urbanfringe/default.asp?y=2009>

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Attachments:

Photographs supporting most program activities available on request.

Materials produced have embedded links in the report above.