

2009 Annual Report Summary for Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania SARE State program made strong progress towards achieving outcomes in several areas including: 1) Sustainable agriculture professional development for agricultural service providers, 2) a Sustainable Agriculture Seminar Series, 3) Sustainable agriculture publications and marketing and 4) SARE outreach. One hundred and seven (107) ag service providers attended trainings that included workshops at the PASA conference, a cover crop, weed management, and biodiversity field day, and a farm tour of an organic vegetable farm with a diverse crop rotation and innovative use of cover crops. These ag service providers used knowledge and contacts gained at these trainings to develop programs that include a new grazing group, a pastured poultry field day, and newsletter articles on innovative weed management strategies that have reached over 300 farmers. The PA-SARE State Program worked with Penn State's On-Farm research program to engage 11 county extension educators in the design and planting of cover crop demonstration plots across the state. County educators used these demonstration plots as sites for 10 field days held in October and November. A multidisciplinary team is planning a "Reading the Farm" workshop to be held in the summer of 2010 to explore whole-farm interactions on 2 dairy farms.

The PSU Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (PSU-SAWG) is organizing a series of Sustainable Agriculture seminars that will bring academic and farmer leaders in sustainable agriculture to interact with the agricultural community in Pennsylvania. Seventy PSU faculty, students, and staff, non-profit employees and farmers interacted with the first speaker, Dr. Nancy Creamer, Director of the Center for Environmental Farming Systems at North Carolina State University. As a result of the seminar, the dean of the College of Agriculture consulted with SAWG members about creating a research station to model an integrated research and local food production distribution system.

SARE outreach activities included two webinars on SARE grant programs and a talk by Vern Grubinger at the Pennsylvania Association of County Agricultural Agents spring meeting. These outreach activities were attended by 121 farmers and ag service providers. Forty-four of these farmers and ag service providers were moderately likely or very likely to apply for a SARE grant in 2009. Nine issues of the Sustainable Ag News have been published by PSU-SAWG since July 1, 2008, reaching a readership of over 500 ag service providers and farmers. Twenty of the ag service providers used content from the newsletter in their programs, reaching over 3,000 farmers.