

2009 Annual Report Summary for Vermont

Our Vermont State professional development program is helping Extension, NRCS and other agriculture service providers increase their knowledge about sustainable agriculture tools and techniques, and assisting farmers to implement sustainable agriculture practices. 52 professional waivers were awarded to Vermont service providers, enabling them to attend 5 events, including a national conference on farmland access, tenure, succession and stewardship. One Vermont educator who received a scholarship to the national farmland access, tenure and succession conference integrated what she learned into a beginning farmer course she taught, attended by 32 farmers. In addition, the information she learned helped her formulate a beginning farmer land advisor position as part of a newly funded initiative. Four other scholarship recipients organized a total of 10 workshops or field days attended by a total of 87 farmers and 212 others. Twenty service providers expressed an interest in the creation of a Vermont SARE mini-grants program to conduct an on-farm workshop or research trial on topics including grazing and grain growing systems, monitoring the effectiveness of NRCS practices, energy audits, biofuel from wood, and dairy ration balancing for intensive grazed herds. 35 NRCS personnel participated in a legal training to help them understand farm business entities when creating NRCS conservation program contracts; 83% of respondents said they will better serve farmers as a result of what they learned.

Vermont SARE outreach efforts reached 323 service providers through 15 meetings, conferences or seminars. An All About NE-SARE Grants workshop, offered in May 2009, helped 17 educators, researchers and others better understand the grants programs and 5 said they were more likely to apply for a SARE grant based on what they learned. In addition, 3 Performance Target Practice Sessions, held in June and July 2009, helped 10 participants better understand SARE's outcome funding approach and practice crafting performance targets. 2 Extension educators pursued a SARE Speakers' Fund request; neither were previously aware of the fund before our SARE outreach work began. Seventeen mini-grants applications were submitted by agriculture service providers or farmers for the 2009 grant cycle. More than 80 farmer grant applications and/or more than 250 SARE brochures were distributed at the 27 events attended by 3,021 farmers, educators and others. In sum, Vermont state SARE outreach efforts reached more than 28,000 Vermonters at 38 venues and included a television program that featured the Farmer grants program.