

# SARE

## Grants May Fund Research on Your Farm

Tom McConnell, WVU Extension Service, Farm Management Specialist

Nov. 2004

On-farm and community-based research is the focus of one U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) program.

The SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education) program was established by Congress in 1988 to support projects that encourage the economic viability of family farms, promote ecologically sound agricultural practices, and sustain rural communities.

SARE's farmer/grower grants are awarded to local farmers who are willing to study the effects of making small management changes on their farms and to share what they learn with their neighbors.

The farmer/grower grants help farmers explore - on their farms - sustainable production and marketing practices that are profitable, environmentally sound, socially acceptable, and potentially beneficial to the community.

These grants, ranging from \$1,000 to \$10,000 (the average last year was \$5,500), enable farmers to study changes that they feel will make a difference on their farms. The farmer may use the grants to pay for the labor, supplies, or services needed to conduct the research and to publish the results.

A farmer/grower grant does not fund capital expenses (buying land, tractors, stock, or machinery) or long-term improvements (additions, barns, or greenhouses). As a farmer, you may apply for three types of grants - grass roots, agroforestry, and farm trial.

A grass roots grant will help you test new ideas, which should be related to the sustainability of your crops or local products. There are no restrictions on

content - you can experiment with a new crop, develop a machine or tool that does something new, try out a pest control or grazing technique, or explore a new way of direct marketing.

The agroforestry grant is intended to increase innovative trials and demonstrations of agroforestry practices. Among the practices you might explore are alley cropping, cultivating shade-loving crops under a forest canopy, establishing trees along streams to protect water quality, and establishing windbreaks to protect crops or livestock.

The farm trial grant supports the adoption of specific practices; you would field-test production techniques that have been previously researched and gather data about their results and effectiveness. Nobody knows better than you what is important on your farm. And that important something could very well be the subject of a SARE research project. It's very simple to apply for one of the three types of farmer/grower grants. If they are legible, handwritten applications are acceptable.

In 2004, five West Virginia farmers received Northeast SARE grants totaling \$25,923.

The deadline for this year is early December. Detailed information and applications can be found at WVU Extension Service's sustainable agriculture Web site ([www.wvu.edu/agexten/sustanag/grants/index.htm](http://www.wvu.edu/agexten/sustanag/grants/index.htm)).

*Your WVU Extension county agent is a great resource for more details. Or you may contact me at 304-293-6131 or Barbara E. Liedl of West Virginia State University at 304-766-5767.*