

## **FY-2006 Northeast SARE Professional Development Program Annual Report**

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- 1. State:** Vermont
- 2. Land Grant Inst:** University of Vermont
- 3. Report Period:** May 1, 2005 to April 30, 2006
- 4. Title:** Sustainable Agriculture Professional Development in Vermont
- 5. Project Contact:**

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### **6. Project Narrative**

The Center for Sustainable Agriculture <http://www.uvm.edu/sustainableagriculture/> at the University of Vermont provides programs and training opportunities to improve agricultural sustainability. Since its inception in 1994, the Center has worked to plan and implement collaborative programs among farmers, public agencies and private organizations.

Vermont's Sustainable Agriculture Council is chaired by the Center's Director. This Council includes several farmers, Vermont's Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, UVM Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, UVM's Director of Extension and numerous leaders from sustainable agriculture organizations across the state. Center staff provides staff support to the Council in addressing research and education priorities within Vermont's strategic plan for sustainable agriculture.

The Center maintains a calendar of events and workshops that can be accessed at <http://www.uvm.edu/~susagctr/?Page=sp99calendar.html>

Our newsletter "**Cultivating Connections**", conferences, workshops, tours and seminars promote Vermont's sustainable agriculture education and information network. Program details and updated "Calendar of Events" are listed on the web at [www.uvm.edu/sustainableagriculture](http://www.uvm.edu/sustainableagriculture)

Information on our primary programs can be found at:

Land Link VT.

<http://www.uvm.edu/landlinkvt/>

Small Ruminant Dairies

<http://www.uvm.edu/~susagctr/?Page=smallrumi.html>

New Farmer Network

<http://www.vermontagriculture.com/newfarm.htm>

Sustainable Horticulture

<http://www.uvm.edu/~susagctr/?Page=sustainablehort.html>

Vermont Pasture Network

<http://www.uvm.edu/~susagctr/?Page=pasture.html>

Alternative Enterprises

<http://www.uvm.edu/%7Esusagctr/?Page=AlternativeEnterprises.html>

UVM Extension links

<http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmext/links.htm>

USDA- NRCS – Vermont

[www.vt.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.vt.nrcs.usda.gov)

The Center's maintains a calendar of events and workshops that can be accessed at:

<http://www.uvm.edu/~susagctr/?Page=sp99calendar.html>

## **7. Current Northeast SARE-funded Activities**

On-going collaborative activities funded through NE SARE PDP for 2005-06 include:

- Implementing goat nutrition programs for improvement of farm sustainability – NE SARE
- A Legal Guide to the Business of Farming in Vermont – NE SARE
- Completion of the 2004 SARE Partnership grant: on-farm demonstrations of grass-based farms
- Advising Vital Communities SARE grant with Dartmouth College's "Local Food" Initiative
- Promotion and support for SARE Farmer/Grower Grant projects
- 17 R&E and PDP preproposals submitted to NE SARE with advisors from UVM
- Partnering with NOFA's Integrated Learning Courses for Livestock Production – NE SARE
- Partnering with the Northern New England Beginning Farmers Conference
- Publication and distribution of our newsletter "Cultivating Connections"
- SARE –PDP funded 35 scholarships for participants to attend workshops in 2005

## **8. Recent Sustainable Publications/ Educational Materials and Products**

All of our publication materials as well as all of our other videos, materials and fact sheets can be ordered by contacting Candice Huber at the UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture at (802) 656-5459 or on the web at <http://www.uvm.edu/~susagctr/?Page=publications.html>

Some of the more recent publications include:

- Wealth from the Land – report from Vermont's Sustainable Agriculture Council
- 2005 Annual Report on VT Sustainable Agriculture
- 2006 Sustainable Agriculture Council Report & Recommendations
- Publication – "2005 Directory of Grass-fed Products for Sale"

Other recent publications available through the Center include:

- Publication – “New England Dairy/ Meat Goat and Directory
- Publication - “Vermont’s Resource Guide for New and Aspiring Farmers” – and its related website available on-line at [www.vermontagriculture.com/newfarm](http://www.vermontagriculture.com/newfarm)

## 9. Performance Targets

1) The Center will coordinate a variety of workshops and conferences that promote sustainable agriculture practices to over 30 Extension faculty and agricultural agency personnel. Evaluations will show that at least 66% of the participants gain practical skills and knowledge which they intend to use in promoting successful farming operations over the next year.

(2) At least two forums on “Farm Labor Issues” will be held in conjunction with conference activities which produce specific recommendations for further training to be presented to the UVM Extension faculty and staff.

## Milestones

- Professional development training on Managed Intensive Grazing will be offered for farmers, NRCS, Extension, FSA, etc. at the 2006 Grazing Conference for at least 20 persons.
- A Northern New England New Farmer Forum involving at least 10 Extension and agricultural professionals will be offered in collaboration with Beginning Farmers of New Hampshire.
- The 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Great Lakes Sheep Symposium is attended by 10 Extension, USDA, and NRCS staff in collaboration with Small Ruminant Dairy Initiative.
- At least 15 Extension and NRCS staff will attend the Women’s Agricultural Conference.
- The Sustainable Agriculture Council will present research priorities for our strategic plan to VT Legislature and UVM Deans by spring, 2006.
- At least 30 unduplicated Extension and other agricultural professionals will register for the above events and complete evaluations that will show an increase practical skills and knowledge which they intend to use in their work plans over the next year.

## 10. Accomplishments

This section lists accomplishments related to each Milestone, with an overall summary related to the Performance Target as the conclusion.

**\* Professional development training on Managed Intensive Grazing will be offered for farmers, NRCS, Extension, FSA, etc. at the 2006 Grazing Conference for at least 20 persons.**

The Vermont Pasture Network staff organized the 10th Annual Grazing Conference, with the advice, support, and active participation of the Vermont Grass Farmers Association steering committee. Specialized trainings on Management Intensive Grazing and grazing plans were conducted for NRCS, Extension and agricultural professionals. For the first time, college students could attend the conference, and receive 1 hour of college credit under the supervision of Dr. Sid Bosworth. There were more than 314 attendees. Evaluation responses were highly favorable, with 93% of evaluation responders rating the Conference as either “very good” or “excellent”.

3 scholarships were provided.

**\* A Northern New England New Farmer Forum involving at least 10 Extension and agricultural professionals will be offered in collaboration with Beginning Farmers of N.H.**

The 2005 Northern New England Small and Beginning Farmer Conference welcomed approximately 210 participants to this two day conference. At least 25 Extension faculty, staff and other agricultural professional from Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont joined small and beginning farmers from the Northeast for numerous workshops, including a forum with keynoter Joel Salatin. The overall evaluations were extremely positive with attendees unanimously ready to begin planning the 2007 Conference in a greater partnership with Vermont and Maine.

9 scholarships were provided.

**\* The 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Great Lakes Sheep Symposium is attended by 10 Extension, USDA, and NRCS staff in collaboration with Small Ruminant Dairy Initiative.**

An international audience gathered in Vermont for the tenth annual Great Lakes Sheep Symposium. 121 registered participants attended, including at least 38 researchers, Extension and other agricultural professionals. Participants were especially impressed by the research based information presented, and in particular, the presentations on feeding information and parlor design. Evaluations commented that the information presented will help them advise other farmers better, improve animal selection for replacements, help to manage my pastures better, and help with overall management. A special workshop focusing on farm labor issues, supported by SARE- PDP funds was designed one of the workshops during this conference.

9 scholarships were provided.

**\* At least 15 Extension and NRCS staff will attend the Women’s Agricultural Conference.**

The 2005 Women in Sustainable Agriculture Conference was held in Burlington, Vermont. This national, 2.5 day event brought together over 425 women involved in sustainable agriculture to expand the success of women farmers over the next decade.

A special workshop focusing on farm labor issues, supported by SARE- PDP funds was one of the workshops during this conference. Participants came from 35 US states, three Canadian provinces and Mexico. Over 130 Vermonters participated. Post-conference evaluations show that the event was overwhelmingly successful, and continues to have an impact in Vermont and across the country.

As a result of attending the conference, 92 percent of (206) respondents said they will do something differently on their farm or in their work with farmers.

Additionally, 90 percent said they gained a better understanding of the needs of women in agriculture; 92 percent felt the conference improved their awareness of resources available to women farmers; and 97 percent reported making new contacts that they will use in the future.

12 scholarships were provided.

**\* 5 new Extension staff will attend NxLevel Business classes and/or Farm Transfer workshops.**

These workshops were developed and promoted through our Land Link Vermont Coordinator before she went on leave. The Workshops were held in late spring, and by all accounts were very well attended and received. A complete evaluation and summary of these events should be available in late summer, 2006.

**\* The Sustainable Agriculture Council will present research priorities for our strategic plan to VT Legislature and UVM Deans by spring, 2006.**

The purpose of the Vermont Sustainable Agriculture Council is to identify needs, set goals, select priorities, and make annual recommendations regarding sustainable agriculture research, demonstration, education and financing. The Council presented their 2006 priority recommendations to the University of Vermont and Vermont Agency of Agriculture.

For 2006, the Council identified two priority areas for research:

- 1) Completing an economic analysis to provide a better understanding of the opportunities and obstacles for strengthening Vermont's agriculture and the local food system
- 2) Enhancing on-farm energy alternatives and related nutrient management practices.

A summary of activities addressing the priority areas, along with an update to the "Wealth of the Land Report" was presented to a joint session of the Senate and House Agricultural Committees. The Council is working toward develop a prediction of the agricultural commodity "landscape" of Vermont farm products projected for 2010 and beyond.

**\* At least 30 unduplicated Extension and other agricultural professionals will register for the above events and complete evaluations that will show an increase practical skills and knowledge which they intend to use in their work plans over the next year.**

In 2005-06, over 1,070 participants registered for conferences in the five program areas identified above. Approximately 222 (21%) extension faculty and staff, researchers and other agricultural professionals attended. Evaluations from each of the various conferences reflect that participants increased their practical skills and gained specific knowledge which they intend to use in their future work. (Copies of sample evaluation results are enclosed with this report.)

**Performance Target Accomplishments:**

- Over 1,070 persons attended the targeted educational conferences with approximately 222 Extension and other agricultural professionals attending. 2005 SARE PDP funds provided 35 scholarships for attendees.
- Farm Labor workshops were held at both the Great Lakes Dairy Sheep Symposium, and the Women in Sustainable Agriculture Conference. In addition, nine UVM Extension

staff and faculty attended a separate workshop in immigrant labor. 100% of the participants responded that the training helped with their understanding of the related issues and recommended that farm labor training be repeated for all UVM Extension.

- Discussions and recommendations have led to collaboration with NOFA-VT, Vermont Farm Bureau and the UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture in planning an on-farm workshop for late summer on **Farm Labor Alternatives: Apprentices, Interns, and Immigrants**.
- Consistent evaluations were not developed for each of the different conferences. We could not identify responses from extension and agricultural professionals as separate from the entire list of attendees. This may be an area for Center staff to discuss in attempting to evaluate overall program impacts in a consistent manner in the future.
- Managing “scholarships” through the Center created a great deal of extra work, and staff have agreed to look scholarships in a different way in the future.

Sample copies of some of the evaluations used to complete this report are attached.

Copies of most of the materials referred to in this report can be found at:  
[www.uvm.edu/sustainableagriculture](http://www.uvm.edu/sustainableagriculture)

**Women in Sustainable Agriculture Conference**  
**Report to Center for Sustainable Agriculture**  
**March 30, 2006**

*“It was inspirational to be with so many women farmers—from all ages, experiences, backgrounds—and each with a passion for working with the land. It was a rare gathering and provided precious motivation.”*

--Marshfield farmer Mimi Arnstein

The 2005 Women in Sustainable Agriculture Conference, held October 21-23, 2005 in Burlington, Vermont. This national, 2.5 day event brought together over 425 women involved in sustainable agriculture to expand the success of women farmers over the next decade.

Participants came from 35 US states, three Canadian provinces and Mexico. Over 130 Vermonters participated.

The conference offered small-group farm tours, intensive skill-building workshops, inspiring keynotes and abundant opportunity for networking and sharing. Participants acquired new production, business and marketing information; honed leadership and advocacy skills; shared educational and organizational strategies; and explored cultural and policy issues that affect the success of women in agriculture.

### **Background**

The number of women farmers is growing. Currently in Vermont there are almost 1000 female principle operators, an additional 2500 women who are legal partners in a farm business and approximately 3000 women working off-farm jobs to provide much needed benefits and supplemental income to a family farm. The profile of women-owned farms indicates that many are small, diversified and financially at-risk: 86 percent report sales under \$25,000; 90 percent are sole proprietorships and 68 percent earn less than 25 percent of their total household income from farming. In general, women farmers do not take advantage of the farm support programs that exist, and they frequently indicate a lack of knowledge about what assistance is available and how to access it. Approximately 65 percent of the individuals who contact WAgN have had no association with any USDA program or agency.

The conference was planned and staffed by women with many years experience both in agriculture and in coaching women. Vermont attendees came from all parts of the state, and represented a wide variety of age and income groups, including young women who are embarking on a career in agriculture, to women who have established farms (alone or in partnerships) to those who have farmed all their lives and are now exploring strategies to pass on the farm to the next generation. Regardless of their background and goals, feedback from the great majority of attendees indicated that participants highly valued the opportunity to share this experience with each other and with women from throughout the country.

### **Impact**

Post-conference evaluations show that the event was overwhelmingly successful, and continues to have an impact in Vermont and across the country. As a result of attending the conference, 92 percent of (206) respondents said they will do something differently on their farm or in their work with farmers.

Additionally, 90 percent said they gained a better understanding of the needs of women in agriculture; 92 percent felt the conference improved their awareness of resources available to women farmers; and 97 percent reported making new contacts that they will use in the future.

Because the conference brought together women from all over the US, it provided Vermont farm women with an unparalleled opportunity to network, share and learn from farm women and agricultural service providers from across the nation.

The conference offered a total of 38 workshops (in four concurrent workshop sessions) over the 2.5 days of the conference. At the end of the conference, all participants were asked to fill out evaluation surveys of the conference. These evaluations asked participants to rate each workshop they attended on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent. A total of 206 people returned the survey. The average workshop rating for all workshops was 4.05.

The evaluation form also asked participants to provide comments about each workshop, and these responses indicate that with a few exceptions, participants left the conference having gained practical skills and usable information. Some quotes follow:

*“This workshop gave information one could take away and work with to create an end result.”*

-- Participant in “Cultivating You”

*“Amy did a fabulous job of energizing the group.”*

*“I came away with more good ideas and presenting techniques.”*

--participants in Ready, Aim, Campaign”

*“Awesome workshop. Inspiring and helpful.”*

*“Connecting on-the-ground with policy! This is one way to increase diversity and change the agenda.”*

-- Participants in “Mobilizing Communities, Changing Policy.”

*“I really enjoyed hearing these women’s stories. They were very interesting and inspiring.*

*“Great ideas for building and sustaining local networks.”*

-- Participants in “Reaching Out: Networking with Women Farmers”

*“Great participation and powerful women.”*

*“It helped me establish the difference between structure vs. individual style.”*

-- Participants in the Round Table on Leadership.

## Farm Labor Issues:

UVM Extension- Center for Sustainable Agriculture  
April 21, 2006

*On a scale of 1 - 5 (1 being Low, and 5 being High), please evaluate this session by circling your choice:*

	LOW	>	>	>	>	HIGH
1. How useful was the information presented?	1	2	3	4	5	
Comments:	-	-	-	33%	66%	

Information is very useful for farm managers  
Excellent!  
Important issue we need to be able to address with clients.

	LOW	>	>	>	>	HIGH
2. How much of an opportunity will you have to use the information presented within the next year?	1	2	3	4	5	
Need for migrant information will increase in years ahead.	-	-	12%	44%	44%	

In interaction with Spanish workers.  
Frequently.  
Often in dealing with public and ag audience, legislators.

	Not at All	>	>	>	A Great Deal
3. How much did this training help with your understanding of the related issues?	1	2	3	4	5
Comments:	-	-	-	-	100%

Need understand cultural traits of importance of families is important to worker retention  
This was a HUGE help. Good discussion. Very useful (mentioned repeatedly)

4. Would you recommend repeating this training for others? If so, for whom?	Yes	100%	No	0
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On-going training & discussion with all Extension, FSA, NRCS lenders working with farmers.  
Anyone working with farmers. Agency of Agriculture, all extension folks.

Do you know anyone who could provide additional training on this topic?  
Rick Levitre - UVM  
Tom Maloney - Cornell  
Erin Shea - UVM

5. What idea(s) do you have for future training needs on this or related issues?

How can apprentices or internships help address farm labor issues?  
Presentations by farmers using apprentices, interns and migrant help.  
General communication and team building  
What about legal immigrant help? How is that arranged by farmers?  
Need to put a source of information on CD for Extension.

6. In which area(s) of your work will this information be most useful?

Community education on complex issues of farm labor.  
On farm visits. Working with farmers to better understand their work force.  
Helping farms understand that proper management of labor can help solve problem of profitability.  
Working with farmers

7. How did you hear about this Forum? (Please check box for all that apply)

Extension  AgReview  Cultivating Connections  Farm Bureau  NOFA   
Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

# 2006 Grazing Conference Evaluation Responses

57 evaluations returned out of 314 attendees (18% response)

(1 = excellent, 5 = poor)

How would you rate the conference?

Avg. 1.79                      93% rated the conference excellent or very good.

Brent & Regina Beidler keynote?                      Avg. 2.08

## Workshop 1 Results

	Average	# responses
<b>Calculating Costs</b>	<b>2.75</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Creative Management</b>	<b>2.21</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Fine Tuning Part 1</b>	<b>3.21</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Grazing Basics</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Parasites &amp; Health</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>7</b>

## Workshop 2 Results

	Average score	Number responses
<b>Farming Everything</b>	<b>2.96</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Fine Tuning Grazing Part 2</b>	<b>2.26</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Grazing Infrastructure</b>	<b>2.83</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Variety in Milking Parlors</b>	<b>2.40</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Viability Enhancement Program</b>	<b>1.75</b>	<b>3</b>

## Workshop 3 Results

	Average score	Number responses
<b>Azuluna Veal</b>	<b>2.56</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Farm Energy</b>	<b>3.05</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Grazing horses</b>	<b>3.75</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Research Results</b>	<b>3.04</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>USDA Programs</b>	<b>2.33</b>	<b>2</b>

% types of farmers responding:

Dairy	Beef Cows	Sheep	Goats	Dairy sheep or goats	Pork	Poultry	Not a farmer	Horses	Other	
Cows	25%	32%	28%	12%	4%	18%	40%	16%	11%	4%

Would you like the option to pay by credit card?    35% yes, 61% no, 4% doesn't matter

Should we include conference fee and membership together, or itemize?

61% include    39% itemize