

10-17-07, from Marianas Variety News

Guam holds conference on sustainable agriculture

By Gerardo R. Partido

Variety News Staff

KEY players in the Pacific island agricultural community are meeting at the Guam Hilton to assess the sustainability of tropical island agriculture.

The conference, which will continue through Oct. 18, is sponsored by the Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program, or Western SARE, through a grant. It is being conducted by Bob Barber, agricultural economist, and Manny Duguies, veterinarian, both with the University of Guam.

According to Ron Daines, communications specialist for Western SARE, about 100 key players are participating from the agricultural communities of the U.S.-affiliated Pacific Islands, including a large contingent from Guam and the CNMI.

Daines said 20 posters showcasing success stories of Pacific Island grants from the Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program are being featured in the conference.

The conference, titled "Sustaining Tropical Pacific Island Agriculture: Counting Our Success, Charting Our Future," will provide an overview of the Western SARE grants in the Pacific islands.

Participants will engage in directed discussions to help chart the future of sustainability.

"As Western SARE anticipates the beginning of its third decade, it aims to reflect on what it has accomplished and what challenges it should be addressing in the future," Daines said.

One of SARE's strengths has been its commitment to involve farmers, ranchers and a broad cross-section of other stakeholders in the program's design and delivery and Western SARE is turning once again to its customers to reflect on its past and shape its future.

Since 1988, Western SARE has funded 139 projects for more than \$2 million in the U.S.-affiliated Pacific Islands.

SARE, which began in 1988, provides competitive grants that typically explore, develop or promote some aspects of agricultural sustainability, which embraces profitable farms and ranches, a healthy environment and strong families and communities.

Western SARE, administered through Utah State University, is one of four regions of SARE under the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The Western region includes 13 states and four U.S. Pacific island protectorates.

11-02-07, from Marianas Variety News

NMI farmers attend conference on sustainable agriculture

By Emmanuel T. Erediano

Variety News Staff

CNMI farmers and conservationists attended a conference two weeks ago that discussed sustainable agriculture in the Pacific islands.

The workshop held during the conference also gave participating farmers from Pacific jurisdictions the opportunity to learn about writing federal grants for research and study projects.

Themed "Sustaining Pacific Islands Agriculture, the sub-regional conference was attended by 90 participants from Pacific jurisdictions on Oct. 17 and 18, was conducted by the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program, a U.S. Department of Agriculture organization.

This program, according to Northern Marianas College's Cooperative Research Extension and Education Service agriculture consultant Isidoro T. Cabrera, provides grants for farmers and ranchers.

Each farmer is eligible to apply for between \$10,000 and \$20,000 in grants for research and education projects to take place on the farmer or rancher's premises.

The program can give a farmer an initial \$7,000. The rest of the fund will be given upon the completion of the project.

It was the first time that farmers from all Pacific jurisdictions were gathered together and they were told that the project has been going on for sometime now with an annual budget of \$30 million.

These are competitive grants, Cabrera said, and this year's deadline for applications is on Dec. 7, 2007.

According to Cabrera, some local farmers and ranchers have already successfully applied for federal grants.

These include the coconut crab production ranching project of Henry Atalig on Rota; the sustainable forage and livestock system of Allan Sabaldica on Tinian; the rat control project of Lino Mendiola on Rota; and the Luta windbreak project of Ephraim Taimanao on Rota.