



Western SARE

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Western SARE Grant Categories

- Research & Education
- Professional Development
- Farmer/Rancher
- Professional + Producer
- Graduate Student
- Sustainable Farm Tours

Go to <http://wsare.usu.edu>
Click on: Apply for a Grant

CLASS ON A LOPEZ ISLAND FARM

On Lopez Island, in the Puget Sound of northwest Washington, Henning Sehmsdorf and Elizabeth Simpson have created a veritable campus of research, education and extension for sustainable agriculture.

Farmer/Rancher Grants

Title: Sustainable Small-Scale Grain Raising

Project Number: FW01-081

Project Coordinator:
Henning Sehmsdorf
Lopez Island, Washington

Technical Advisor:
Tom Schultz
WSU Extension

Amount Funded: \$2,040

Title: Agricultural Science
Class: Principles of Ecological Food Production

Project Number: FW04-006

Project Coordinator:
Henning Sehmsdorf

Technical Advisor:
Carol Miles
WSU Ag Systems Specialist

Amount Funded: \$7,441

Professional + Producer Grant

Project Title: Bio-Intensive Forage and Hay Production

Project Number: FW04-305

Project Coordinator:
Steve Fransen
WSU Extension Agronomist

Farmer Advisor:
Henning Sehmsdorf

Amount Funded: \$7,499

Their 50-acre diversified crop and livestock operation, S&S Homestead Farm, has been transformed into S&S Center for Sustainable Agriculture. It provides practical education in farming and nutrition to interns, students and island residents. It's become a thriving research laboratory delving into the nuances and impacts of ecological farming. And it hosts a variety of seminars and workshops on sustainability.

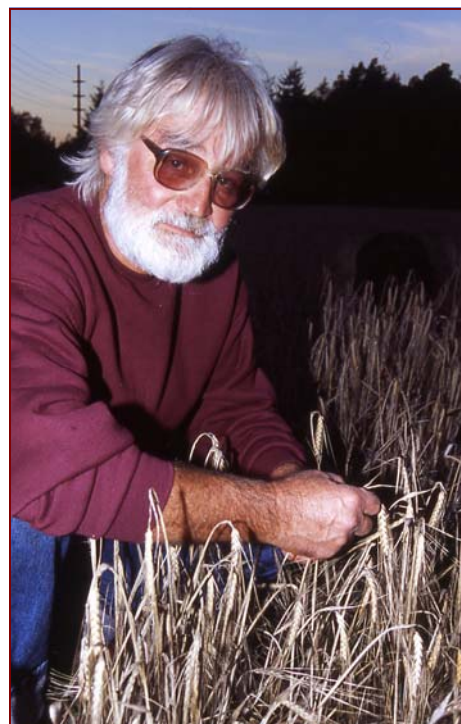
While Sehmsdorf and Simpson have been fashioning their model of sustainable farming and living since 1970, Sehmsdorf says Farmer/Rancher grants from Western SARE have brought focus to priorities.

"The grants helped me articulate, in objective terms, the goals and mission of this farm, which is ecological food production and education in sustainable living," said Sehmsdorf. "The grants have helped us solve specific problems on the production side of our farm and, at the same time, strengthened our educational outreach."

S&S Homestead Farm, with 15 acres owned and 35 leased from neighbors, produces beef, pork, lamb,

chicken, eggs, dairy products, fruit and vegetables as well as animal feed and local fertility.

In all, Sehmsdorf has been involved in three Western SARE grants, two he coordinated and another on which



Henning Sehmsdorf inspects the barley.

he served as a farmer advisor.

The first SARE grant, conducted in 2001 and 2002, tested grain on a small scale. The idea was to find a crop – in this case barley – that could capture and recycle excess soil nutrients from a field used for wintering beef cows, preventing pollution and reducing farm inputs.



SARE's mission is to advance—to the whole of American agriculture—innovations that improve profitability, stewardship, and quality of life by investing in groundbreaking research and education.

The Western Region, one of four SARE regions nationwide, is administered through Utah State University.

Western SARE:

<http://wsare.usu.edu>

National SARE

www.sare.org

CLASS ON A LOPEZ ISLAND FARM

As a result of the project, the farm saves money to buy straw it uses to mulch fruits and vegetables (it typically costs \$7 a bale from the local feed store). The grain fed to cattle, sheep, pigs and chickens promotes their health by guaranteeing a clean, organic feed source. And the barley takes up nutrients that otherwise might pollute ground or surface waters.

A second SARE-funded project, Bio-Intensive Forage Production, completed in 2007, is testing whether farm-produced biodynamic soil stimulants are a viable substitute for lime applications in modifying soil acidity. S&S is collaborating on the project with Washington State University research and extension faculty, including a forage specialist, microbiologist and soil scientist. Preliminary assessments indicated that the biodynamic preparations performed at least as well as the lime application, if not better.

"If final analysis bears this out, we will have achieved our goal, which is to maximize protein production in the form of harvestable forage, meat and dairy products," says Sehmsdorf. "That will increase overall farm production while maintaining ecological balance by reducing the consumption of non-renewable fossil fuels and other resources."

The third SARE project supports the mission of S&S Homestead farm to provide education in ecological food production and sustainable living. In 2004, Sehmsdorf and Simpson received a SARE grant to develop a farm-to-



Elizabeth Simpson at work.

school program the two had developed two years earlier to teach local public school students and supply fresh produce to the local school cafeteria.

The farm built a 45-foot by 12-foot hoophouse in which to grow vegetables during the winter, and a Washington State University plant specialist provided guidance for two-year bean trials in which students could participate for science credit.

Beyond instilling a better understanding about nutrition in the island community, Sehmsdorf acknowledges that the work evolving from the SARE grants has had several ripple effects, among them:

- The school board has officially sanctioned the farm-to-school project in support of the state mandated Wellness Policy.
- An island donor contributed a large hoophouse now installed on S&S Homestead Farm for instruction and vegetable production for the school cafeteria.
- The school cafeteria has

committed to maximize access to locally grown, organic food (within current school budget limits), and the chef and kitchen staff have undergone extensive training to redirect the delivery of school lunch.

- The San Juan Conservation District and the Lopez Island Farm Education Program jointly applied for two years of funding under the Agriculture Pilot Project Initiative supported by Washington's Gov. Gregoire; if successful, the grant will double the food budget of the school cafeteria to demonstrate impacts on student health and academic performance, at the same time supporting local agriculture.

Sehmsdorf says the S&S Center for Sustainable Agriculture hopes to obtain grant funding that will continue the center's work to promote sustainability into the foreseeable future – beyond the time when he and his wife can carry out the work.

He says agricultural sustainability is possible only in the context of soils, plants, animals, community and landscape, all of which are local concerns with global implications. He adds that the current industrial global food system, predicated on diminishing fossil energy and waste sinks, is not sustainable.

"Agriculture can be sustainable," says Sehmsdorf, "only if it cultivates perennial, pastoral, polycultural, biological and diverse systems based on renewable solar energy harvested directly through plants and animals."

For more information, see: <http://csanr.wsu.edu/DemoFarms/Brochure04.pdf>