

# Simply Sustainable

quarterly newsletter  
from Western SARE

working to sustain western agriculture

December 2007

Volume 2, Issue 1

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## SARE COLLABORATION IN THE PACIFIC

Nearly 100 representatives from American-affiliated Pacific islands gathered in Guam October 16-18 for a look at the future of sustainable agriculture. The results were overwhelming. "You have so exceeded what I thought was possible," Jerry Dewitt, conference moderator and director of the Leopold Center for Sustain-

able Agriculture in Iowa, told participants.

"Never have we put on a conference where so many attendees stayed through the whole thing," said Phil Rasmussen, coordinator of the Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program, the conference sponsor.

"The best conference I've ever attended," said Bob Barber, Guam SARE coordinator and one of the conference organizers.

The conference, "Sustaining Tropical Pacific Island Agriculture: Counting Our Success, Charting Our Future," was the first of half a dozen subregional confer-

*continued on page 4*



Pacific island participants pose for a conference-ending photograph by Craig Elevitch of Kona, Hawaii.

## Happy Holidays!

from  
Western SARE

Holiday greetings from the staff of the Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program.

In Logan, Utah

- Phil Rasmussen, Regional Coordinator & USU Center Director
- Bob Newhall, Deputy Coordinator
- Kristi Jensen, Contracts and Grants Manager

- Jolyn Keck, Staff Assistant
- Tammy Neilson, Staff Assistant
- Kristin de la Houssaye, Student Intern
- Tameka Parish, Student Intern
- Stephannie Andersen, Student Intern
- Dan Judd, Evaluation Specialist
- Ron Daines, Communication Specialist

In Lingle, Wyoming

- Jim Freeburn, PDP Coordinator
- Kelly Greenwald, Administrative Assistant

In Laramie, Wyoming

- Joleen Pantier, PDP Contracts and Grants Manager

In Helena, Montana

- Al Kurki, PDP Associate Coordinator



## WESTERN SARE VISITS COLORADO

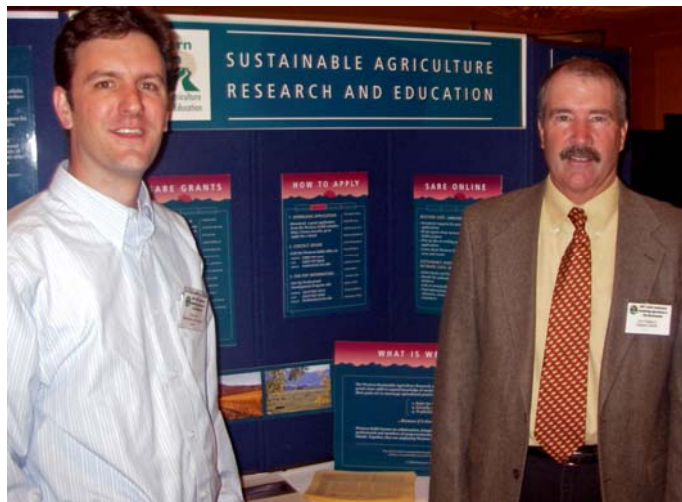
Jim Freeburn, Western SARE Professional Development Program training coordinator, traveled to Colorado Springs in November to make a presentation on sustainable agriculture during the annual meeting of the Colorado Association of Conservation Districts.

Freeburn spoke during a breakout session to 25 enthusiastic people who remained engaged and curious until his time ran out.

"I would anticipate that we'll get a few FRG applications this fall from the Colorado group and perhaps some P+P and PDP applications next year," he said.

In addition to his presentation, Freeburn said the Western SARE display was well received, with many of the meeting's 250-300 attendees stopping to visit and pick up SARE material. All of the 100 Farmer/Rancher Grant applications were taken as were most of the 100 Professional + Producer applications. The Sustainable Agriculture Network's new publications on rangeland management and wise water use were also well received.

Freeburn said many of the issues addressed by the conservation districts were similar to those tackled by Western SARE and the land grant universities.



Tony Frank of the Rocky Mountain Farmers Union stops by the Western SARE display to visit with Jim Freeburn, in tie.

"We have a lot in common with groups like this," he said.

Conference attendees discussed several issues facing Colorado, perhaps the most pressing being the dwindling water resources available for agriculture.

Freeburn noted that Colorado has compacts (and associated lawsuits) on at least four major rivers: Republican, Arkansas, Rio Grande and Colorado. What's more, Colorado allows the transfer of water from ag use to municipal/industrial uses, so cities and industries are buying a significant portion of the water once used for agriculture.

On the Republican River, more than 30,000 acres of

irrigated lands have been lost (given up) in the past two years. And on the Rio Grande, one of the 14 irrigation districts in the San Luis Valley is giving up 40,000 acres of irrigated land owing to a compact with New Mexico, Texas and Mexico.

Freeburn said energy development is wreaking havoc in much of western Colorado, as it is in Wyoming.

"I visited with several folks from Meeker, Grand Junction and elsewhere who are very concerned about the long-term impacts of gas and oil development on the fragile sagebrush ecosystem and agriculture in general."

*"Western SARE and the land grant universities have a lot in common with groups like the Colorado Association of Conservation Districts."*

*- Jim Freeburn,  
Western SARE  
PDP Training Coordinator*

## ALTERNATIVE CROPS WORKSHOP IN NEW MEXICO

Don Bustos, Western SARE Administrative Council member and an organic farmer from Espanola, N.M., was slated as the opening speaker for the 4th annual Western SARE workshop, "Alternative Crops for New Mexico," Dec. 11 in Santa Fe.

The conference is being organized by Stephanie Walker, Western SARE coordinator for New Mexico, along

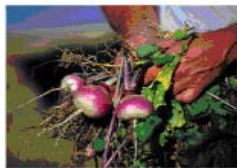
with Jeanine Castillo, workshop coordinator.

"The future of sustainable agriculture has never looked more promising or more challenging," says the conference brochure. Topics included alternative crops, creative marketing, berry production, successful grant writing and funding through Western SARE, vegetable varieties for organic production, canola production

and tree nut crop care and production.

In addition to Bustos, Western SARE was being represented on the agenda by Jim Freeburn, PDP coordinator at the University of Wyoming Sustainable Agriculture Research and Extension Center, speaking on "Alternative Crops and Creative Marketing: Like Western SARE — Not Business as Usual."

SARE's  
20th  
anniversary



## SIGN UP NOW FOR SARE'S 20TH

Registration is now open for the national conference celebrating SARE's 20th year of promoting sustainable agriculture.

Titled "New American Farm Conference: Advancing the Frontier of Sustainable Agriculture," the conference will be in Kansas City March 25-27 at the Westin Crown Center.

To register and learn more, go to the Sustainable Agriculture Network website, [www.sare.org](http://www.sare.org), and click on SARE's 20th Anniversary Conference.

Western SARE will be well represented in Kansas City, with up to 25 posters showing examples of funded grant success as well as several Western experts speaking in plenary and breakout sessions.

Karl Kupers, Western SARE Administrative Council chair, will speak in a plenary session, "Innovations for Farm, Ranch and Market," discussing experience with Shepherd's Grain from idea to reality.

Breakout sessions include a wide range of topics related to sustainability with experienced speakers from around the country. Speakers from the West, many recipients of Western SARE grants, are:

- Organic 101: Soil Management, Craig Cogger, Washington State University Puyallup R&E Center
- Agritourism: Bringing Tourists to the Farm, Dawn Thilmany, Colorado State University
- Riparian Friendly Cattle Grazing, Richard Collins, Arizona rancher, Jay Davison, Nevada Cooperative Extension and Ken Tate, University of California
- Helping Entrepreneurs, Jerry Allen, Utah State University, Western Rural Development Center
- Tapping Organic Markets: Local to Global, Jim Dyer, Southwest Marketing Network, Colorado
- Beekeeping: Controlling Pests Sustainably, Melanie Kirby, Zia Queenbee Co. New Mexico
- Systems Research in Action: Steve Temple, University of California
- Success with Renewable Energy, Don Bustos, Santa Cruz Farms, New Mexico
- Reaching Minority Farmers, Staci Emm, Nevada Cooperative Extension
- Meat Marketing, Dawn Thilmany, CSU
- Where Are We in Organics? Rex Dufour, National Center for Appropriate Technology, California
- Bio-Based Disease Management, Kris O'Conner, Central Coast Vineyard Team
- Grow Your State Program, Chris Feise, Washington State University
- Reaching out to the Mainstream, Dale Gies, Gies Farms, Washington, and Andy McGuire, Washington State University
- Farmscaping to Manage Insects, Gwendolyn Ellen, Oregon State University
- Food, Culture and Community, Teresa Showa, Ganado Family Farm, Arizona, and Terry Bryant, Eco-Chef, Author and Food Justice Activist, California
- Adding Value to What You Grow, Dan and Jeanne Carver, Imperial Stock Ranch, Oregon, and Karl Kupers
- Charting SARE's Role in Organic: Jonathan Landeck, Organic Farming Research Foundation, California
- Fighting Crop Disease: Soil Amendments and Biofumigation, Dale Gies, Washington
- Keeping a Farm a Farm, Steve Schwartz, Farm Link, California



John Allen



Steve Schwartz

### *In Kansas City:*

- *Learn the ins and outs of marketing and production*
- *Tour local farms to see sustainable agriculture at work*
- *Talk with state-of-the-art researchers and innovators*
- *Explore SARE grant opportunities*
- *Help chart a course for 20 more years of SARE success*

## SARE COLLABORATION IN THE PACIFIC

...from page 1

ences the Western SARE administrative council initiated in 2007. The goal is to assess SARE since it began providing competitive grants in 1988 and to chart the course for future grants and activities.

"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," said the charge for developing the conference. "Western SARE turns once again to its customers to reflect on its past and shape its future."

The Pacific island customers, including producers, non-profit organizations, ag professionals and government agency employees, were invited as key stakeholders by organizers of the conference, Bob Barber and veterinarian Manny Duguies, both with the University of Guam.

Conference moderator Jerry Dewitt, a three-time interim head of the National SARE program, set the tone for the conference.

"We are here to listen," he told participants. "We need your ideas for planning the future of Western SARE. Yours is the first of our subregional conferences, and we're going to listen to meet your needs as a grower, as a researcher, as a nonprofit.

"We're going to start with

your ideas and we're going to build on that," Dewitt added.

The conference organizers had set the sustainable table by asking invited participants to mull over and prepare responses to five key questions that asked things like what will be needed to create stronger local food systems, what are local food production trends, is SARE disseminating its research results, what types of research, education and development are needed and what projects would you emphasize if SARE had more money.

As the conference evolved, participants were broken into several groups for tabletop discussions to refine the issues they deemed important for their respective island groups. Many continued their conversations through the breaks and deep into lunch.

Surveys taken on the go

reflected their dedication. After the first tabletop discussion, 96 percent of participants agreed it was useful, 79 percent said it all made sense and 94 percent said they had a chance to participate. An evaluation of a second tabletop session showed declining but still high numbers: 81 percent agreed that the discussion was useful, 75 percent found that it made sense and 86 percent said they had a chance to be involved. (There were no negative responses to either survey.)

The conference also included 3-foot by 4-foot posters of 20 of the nearly 80 projects Western SARE has funded in the Pacific island protectorates over the past 20 years. Each poster came with a handout for participants.

*continued on page 5*



*"We are here to listen.  
We need your ideas for  
planning the future of  
Western SARE."*

*- Jerry Dewitt, Pacific  
Subregional Conference  
moderator*



Participants engaged in lively dialogue throughout the conference.

## EVALUATION EFFORTS GAUGE PARTICIPANT RESPONSES

Western SARE is funding projects that will improve farming practices and it is reasonably effective at distributing the results of the projects. Those are among the opinions learned from an evaluation survey conducted during the Pacific Subregional Conference held Oct. 16-18 in Guam.

The evaluation instrument, crafted by Dan Judd, Western SARE evaluation specialist, was administered near the end of the conference.

Other findings showed that of the 49 participants who filled out the survey, 41, or 84 percent, said they would be interested in applying for a SARE grant. 98 percent said

they learned more about what grant recipients had done, and 98 percent said it was valuable to talk with other participants. Every one of the survey respondents said that attending the conference was a worthwhile use of their time, and all said they felt that Western SARE heard their suggestions.



Western SARE AC members , seated from left, Stacie Clary, Rick Melnicoe, Cindy Lair and Chuck Boerner listen to comments from conference participants as Phil Rasmussen, left, and Jerry Dewitt look on.

...from page 4

After the first day of discussions and the poster session, moderator Dewitt took the pulse of the conference, noting a lively engagement from participants and offering these observations:

- Presentations from seven island groups were well organized, thoughtful and candid.
  - People were deeply engaged in the tabletop discussions. "People are paying attention," said Dewitt. "I can tell by the body language."
  - The poster session was a dynamic event.
  - Participants showed an eagerness to move forward in "this whole thing called sustainability."
  - Everyone is dedicated to a new agriculture that embraces health, diet and nutrition, "a full package looked at holistically."
- Feedback from tabletop discussions showed a number of common threads among the islands:
- livestock genetics and feedstocks
  - local food systems, including health, nutrition, self-sufficiency and links to culture
  - youth, women and retiree involvement in ag
  - overcoming limited personnel and geographic distance and enhancing technical assistance
  - the need for increased networking
  - certification programs, including organic
  - distance and undergraduate education
  - marketing
  - quality of life
  - decisions on appropriate land use
  - enterprise diversity
- "We all have similar challenges and opportunities," said Dewitt. "They're similar in Iowa and the islands, and there's 80 percent continuity between where you're at and where you are with your neighboring island communi-

ties."

Cross-pollination among participants was deemed a big plus of the conference, drawing together Pacific islanders whose great distances from one another can inhibit interaction. As a result of the conference, Guam, which has no organic certification, will work with Western SARE Administrative Council member Chuck Boerner, a certified organic farmer from Hana, Maui. The goal is to get a certification team from Hawaii to visit Guam and teach producers and ag professionals about developing a certification program.

Ken Love, a fruit grower from Kona, praised networking as a key element of the conference.

"I'm hearing a lot of the same ideas," said Love. "I'd like to see SARE find some way to continue this kind of dialogue, some kind of website, for example, to share this kind of information so we can all keep in touch with one another."



*"This is the best conference I've ever attended."*

*- Bob Barber, University of Guam extension economist*



Moderator Jerry Dewitt engages attendees during the Pacific Subregional Conference at the Guam Hilton.

## SUSTAINABLE AG IN THE NEWS

At the Hillsdale Farmers Market in southwest Portland, customers have been able to find produce year round since 2004, thanks in part to a grant from Western SARE (FW04-108, Hillsdale Winter Harvest Farmers Market, \$14,950).

A Nov. 2 article in the *Capital Press* notes that the start-up season was covered by a Western SARE grant that **Aaron and Kimberly Bolster** of Deep Roots Farm received to promote the market.

"The grant was for operations, evaluation and education," said Bolster in the article. "Our first season went well. The weather worked in our favor. Since we were only open once a month November through March there was a lot of pent-up demand."

The winter market has now expanded to twice a month November through April and is self-sustaining with attendance of about 1,500 a week, compared with 2,500 in the summer.

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The Washington State University Graduate School will offer a certificate in sustainable agriculture to graduate students who want to research the viability of the environment in relation to food production. *The Daily Evergreen*, the student newspaper of Washington State, reported Nov. 7 that the faculty senate approved the certificate in October to improve ag program options. "We had a lot of requests from graduate students who wanted more programs in sustainable agriculture," said **Lynn Carpenter-Boggs**, WSU Biologically Intensive Agriculture and Organic Farming coordinator.

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**Janie Burns** of Nampa, Idaho, a Western SARE Farmer/Rancher grant recipient (FW95-046, Developing

### Reports on SARE and Ag Sustainability



Janie Burns of Meadowlark Farm in Nampa west of Boise.

an Idaho-based Marketing Cooperative for Sustainability and Locally Grown Produce, \$4,622), is quoted in a recent column on localizing how west-erners eat. The article, in the weekly *Spade and Spoon* column of the *New West* website, discusses how sprawling development creates both a problem and a boon for producers, and how Burns, a certified organic farmer raising lamb, poultry and eggs for local markets, is behind an effort to form the Treasure Valley Food Coalition to foster a sustainable local food system.

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The 10th anniversary of Shepherd's Grain, a cooperative begun in 1997 that now originates 350,000 bushels of grain a year from 12 direct seed growers, was the focus of a feature article Nov. 16 in *Capital Press*. Shepherd's

Grain was started by **Kent Fleming** and **Karl Kupers**, the chair of Western SARE's Administrative Council.

"The word 'sustainable' dominates the food industry today across the nation," Kupers said in the article. "People want to know where their food comes from and how it is being raised."

The article notes that Shepherd's Grain flour, already used in high-end restaurants, bakeries, pizza parlors, colleges and universities, is now finding shelf space in supermarkets around the country.

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The Organic Seed Alliance, recipient of a Western SARE Research and Education Grant to promote organic seed production (SW04-114, Producing Organic Vegetable Seed — Farmer Education Project), is featured in an Oct. 12



Participants in a field day conducted by the Organic Seed Alliance select for spinach seed.

article in *Capital Press*. **Matthew Dillon** is principal investigator and founder of the Organic Seed Alliance in Port Townsend, Wash., which developed through the SARE grant three crop-specific seed production manuals. Additionally, more than 20 outreach events reached over 400 participants in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico and Colorado.

*"The word 'sustainable' dominates the food industry today across the nation. People want to know where their food comes from and how it is being raised."*

*- Karl Kupers,  
marketing director,  
Shepherd's Grain*

## AG IN THE GOOD HUMUS CLASSROOM

When Annie Main decided she wanted to showcase her Capay Valley farm for grade school educational visits, husband Jeff said he'd support the idea on one condition: The visits must not interfere with the day-to-day activities of producing food.

"Production is the base," says Jeff Main. "This can't be a show farm if it's not producing. I always want to be able to say that we're a farm and we're feeding people. Production has to be the main focus."

Annie took Jeff's point. Her "Good Humus Farm to School Project," developed with the assistance of a 2000 Western SARE Farmer/Rancher grant (FW00-299, \$5,300), teaches kids about the biological cycles found on a farm. It puts them to work with a few simple projects that reinforce the lessons.

"In the beginning, I ask them if they are willing to do some work, and at the end I thank them for what they've done and open up to them the idea that farming is something they can do. As an occupation, we need more young farmers," says Annie Main. "The feedback we get is that this is a unique tour and that the kids are surprised at how much fun they can have working and doing things that really interest them."

The Mains, both graduates of the University of California, Davis, began Good Humus Produce 25 miles northwest of Davis in 1976 on 20 acres that grew "a lovely patch of weeds and two leftover olive trees." They planted 600 Casuarinas trees and native trees, grasses and flowering shrubs to create "a blooming, buzzing, flowering, fruiting, diverse community that scientists call an 'agroecosystem.'"

Today, in addition to a diversity of plant, animal and insect life, the certified or-



Annie and Jeff Main of Good Humus Farm in California.

### A Western SARE Grant Profile

ganic farm produces 10 different fruits – mainly peaches – and 60 different vegetable crops. Their markets: the Davis Farmers Market, local restaurants, the Davis and Sacramento food cooperatives and a CSA with 100 customers in Sacramento and 60 in San Francisco.



The on-farm education was borne when Annie Main received a Kellogg Foundation grant to have inner-city youth spend 10 days at the farm as part of a month-long learning experience. A friend observed that Annie "came alive" during the farm presentations, so she brainstormed a program well integrated into the farm.

"If it's not on a working farm, you lose the realness of the farm," she said. "The kids see through it – you can't

pretend."

Main crafted an educational program that started with two visits a month in the summer and fall for optimum weather and timing with farm activities. The idea has taken hold, and the visits continue with about eight a year, each with 20 or so 2<sup>nd</sup> graders. Good Humus also hosts overnight stays for grade school kids and multiple-night stays for inner-city teens. She charges \$10 a student for daytime visits and \$25 for overnights. "We have to get paid for our time," says Main.

To continue producing food and educating kids, Annie and Jeff Main are working to finalize a conservation easement with Equity Trust that will allow them or anyone who buys them out to farm in perpetuity. They've held several fundraisers and hope to complete the easement this year.

"It's kind of like hitting the save button on the computer," says Main. "It's a conservation easement and more: The land has to be farmed; half of the income must come from the farm; you have to live on the farm; and it has to be farmed using sustainable practices. It's a new concept across the board."

For more about Good Humus, including its educational opportunities and preservation efforts, visit their website, [www.goodhumus.com](http://www.goodhumus.com).

*"The feedback we get is that this is a unique tour and that the kids are surprised at how much fun they can have working doing things that really interest them."*

*- Annie Main, Good Humus Produce*



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Western Sustainable  
Agriculture, Research, and  
Education Program

## PIZZA THAT CAME FROM A FARMER/RANCHER GRANT

As Congress continues to mull the budget, the SARE Operations Committee prepared three budgets pending funding action for fiscal year 2008: Level funding at \$12.28 million under a “continuing resolution”; House funding at \$14 million, up 14%; or Senate funding at \$15 million, up 22.2%.

“Of course, we are hoping for the additional four million dollars that the Senate version inserts into SARE,” said Phil Rasmussen, Western SARE coordinator.

Rasmussen noted that SARE’s image was polished during the Operations Committee meetings in Washington when he and Karl Kupers, Western SARE AC chair, were able to attend a meeting arranged by SARE Director Jill Auburn with Ralph Otto and Colien Hefferan of CSREES. In addition to providing Hefferan with a copy of Western SARE Research and Education pro-

gram evaluation, which she received enthusiastically, Kupers was able to relate that the pizza she and other members of the USDA-REE undersecretary’s office had consumed recently at the University of California Davis cafeteria came from Shepherd’s Grain flour.

Kupers, a partner in Shepherd’s Grain, then related how the thriving operation all came about because of a SARE Farmer/Rancher grant, said Rasmussen.

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A three-time Western SARE grant recipient and a former Western SARE Administrative Council member have been asked to serve on a new committee of the National Research Council to study the impacts of sustainable ag.

The two are Henning Sehmsdorf of Lopez Island, Wash., who has received three Farmer/Rancher Grants to assess sustainability on his S&S Homestead Farm, and

former AC member Ann Thrupp, director of sustainability at Fetzer Vineyards in California.

The NRC Committee on 21st Century Systems Agriculture will conduct a study to identify the scientific foundations of sustainable farming systems and management practices and the social, economic and political factors that influence their use and wide scale adoption in the United States and abroad.

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Al Kurki, Western SARE assistant PDP coordinator, is representing the program during the Federal Recognized Tribes Extension Program meeting Dec. 10 in Las Vegas. Kurki is on a panel that will discuss expanding collaboration in Indian country. He will also sit in on meetings of the 1994 LGU tribal colleges, Indian Nations Conservation Alliance and the Intertribal Ag Council.