In the Great Plains region of Colorado, a scarce supply of water is the chief limiting factor in dryland cropping yields. This concern over limited water availability prompts many farmers in the area to adopt a winter wheat-fallow rotation, yet this approach worsens soil productivity over the long term.

Intensifying production and using no-till could actually improve yields and profitability by building up soil health and improving moisture retention. Using a SARE grant, Colorado State University graduate student Steven Rosenzweig set out to both quantify the benefits of reducing fallow frequency and understand the barriers to adoption. He compared different dryland rotation intensities and found that reducing fallow improved soil health, which ultimately allowed farmers to improve grain production with a similar amount of fertilizer.

He also conducted in-depth interviews with 30 farmers, and identified risk, profitability and crop insurance policy as top perceived barriers to reducing fallow frequency. He also identified strategies for helping farmers overcome the barriers, such as changing the way agronomic researchers approach their work to be more inclusive of long-term viewpoints and profitability. The identified benefits, barriers and strategies for change were widely disseminated, including a website, blog and an upcoming film.

For more information on this project, see www.sare.org/projects, and search for project number GW16-020.
SARE Grants in Colorado

SARE has awarded a total of 97 grants in Colorado since 1988.

- 52 Farmer/Rancher Grants
- 17 Research & Education Grants
- 21 Professional Development Grants
- 4 Graduate Student Grants
- 3 On-Farm Research Grants

For detailed information on SARE projects, go to www.sare.org.

Contact Your SARE State Coordinator

SARE sustainable ag coordinators run state-level educational programs for Extension and other ag professionals, and many help grant applicants and recipients with planning and outreach. Visit www.westernsare.org/colorado to learn more.

Bill Noble
Colorado State University Extension
(719) 545-1845
william.nobles@colostate.edu

Steve Newman
Colorado State University
(970) 491-7118
steven.newman@colostate.edu

53 percent of producers report using a new production technique after reading a SARE publication.

79 percent of producers said they improved soil quality through their SARE project.

64 percent of producers said their SARE project helped them achieve higher sales.

USDA
SARE

For detailed information on SARE projects, go to www.SARE.org

SARE is funded by the USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).