Pulses (grain legumes) are gluten free, low in fat, and high in fiber and protein, and they play an important role in crop diversification. But with almost 14 percent of the U.S. eating dry edible beans daily, there is a lack of locally produced pulses to supply domestic demand. “Currently, the market for organic edible beans is often supplied by imports from other countries, despite the fact that Minnesota and North Dakota are leading edible-bean-producing areas in the U.S.,” explained Craig Sheaffer, an agronomist at University of Minnesota. “This signals a market opportunity for locally grown organic legumes in the upper Midwest.”

With that in mind, Sheaffer procured a SARE grant to bring more agronomic and marketing resources to organic, edible legumes to stimulate both the production and consumption of grain legumes. Sheaffer and his team worked with local growers to examine the performance of several edible bean varieties, compare the agroecological value of edible beans and peas grown in rotation with other crops, and evaluate the effect of winter cover crops on yield and weed control in field beans. Their findings show that there is great promise and potential profitability for Minnesotan farmers in growing and selling organic dry beans, including heirloom varieties for market differentiation.

The team also looked into optimal crop rotations and developed an “Organic Dry Bean Enterprise Budget,” a tool for producers that is available online.

For more information on this project, see www.sare.org/projects, and search for project number LNC11-336.
SARE Grants in Minnesota

SARE has awarded a total of 300 grants in Minnesota since 1988.

- 131 Farmer/Rancher Grants
- 75 Research & Education Grants
- 36 Graduate Student Grants
- 32 Professional Development Grants
- 36 Graduate Student Grants
- 9 Youth Educator Grants
- 8 Youth Grants
- 9 On-Farm Research Grants

SARE’s Impact

- 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.

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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.northcentralsare.org/minnesota to learn more.

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