There are many decisions to make before pursuing a small-scale livestock operation, and having realistic budget and profitability expectations are a critical part of that decision-making process. To assist potential producers in making informed choices about their operations, Anna Lee Allcorn, then a graduate student at Purdue University, received a 2010 SARE grant to evaluate the economic returns and business opportunities for alternative sustainable livestock enterprises, and to develop a decision-support tool.

“When decision-makers are able to make better investment decisions, there is a greater chance they will be successful, which in turn has a positive long-term impact on the quality of life of the participants, the economies of the rural communities where they live and the livestock industry overall,” said Allcorn.

The resulting Comparative Decision Support toolkit includes a spreadsheet that allows users to create an operating budget based on their own fixed and variable costs, cash flow and expected revenue. The profit/loss analysis function uses cost and price information to calculate potential earnings from multiple livestock enterprises, including cow-calf, dairy steers, sheep, goats and turkeys. After completing the mini-module, users across the region will have evaluated multiple objectives to make a small-scale livestock enterprise entry decision.

For more information on this project, see www.sare.org/projects, and search for project number GNC10-133.
SARE has awarded a total of 127 grants in Indiana since 1988.

**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.

**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.northcentralsare.org/indiana to learn more.

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