Onions are a high-value crop, but high fertilizer rates and aggressive use of pesticides to suppress weeds, diseases and insects threaten the sustainability of onion production. In Utah, growers and researchers are working to show how changes in management practices can allow farmers to maintain profitable yields while lowering their use of inputs.

In 2013 a SARE-funded team led by Utah State University’s Diane Alston studied the effect of certain changes on onion yields, in particular fertilization rates and crop rotations. They were following the lead of a small group of onion producers in the state who were finding they could reduce their use of pesticides by lowering their use of fertilizers and still achieve good yields.

The team pursued multiple objectives and developed a body of information that is helping Utah’s producers adopt more sustainable practices. They surveyed nearly 60 farms to better understand production system predictors of pests and yield; conducted field experiments that showed reducing fertilizer rates could reduce pest densities; and created an interactive production modeling tool.

In an assessment of producers conducted near the end of the project, 67 percent said the information they learned would help them diversify their operation, and 80 percent felt it would help them reduce their use of off-farm inputs.

For more information on this project, see www.sare.org/projects, and search for project number SW13-034.

SARE in Utah
www.westernsare.org/utah

$4.4 million in total funding

65 grant projects

(project highlight)

Better Onions, Fewer Inputs

(Since 1988)

For a complete list of grant projects state by state, go to www.sare.org/state-summaries
SARE Grants in Utah

SARE has awarded a total of 65 grants in Utah since 1988.

- 30 Research & Education Grants
- 18 Farmer/Rancher Grants
- 7 Professional Development Grants
- 7 Graduate Student Grants
- 4 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/utah to learn more.

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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.