The extensive loss in managed honey-bee hives seen in recent years poses serious challenges to the farmers who grow crops that require pollination. Lower yields and higher pollination costs are the main threats to their businesses. Part of the solution is native bees. Across the country, far-sighted researchers and farmers are recognizing the importance of finding practices that increase native bee populations before a larger crisis hits.

In Georgia, one such farmer, Joe Dickey, has used two SARE grants to study the native bees present in his apple orchards and to establish wildflower plots that support their numbers. The effect on his apple crop was immediate: In 2016, apple production rose 30 percent from the previous two years when the wildflowers were absent from his orchard. Dickey’s next step is to compare annual wildflowers to perennial wildflowers to see which type is best at recruiting native bees.

At the same time, Dickey has been collaborating with Georgia Gwinnett College researcher Mark Schlueter on a series of five SARE grants to identify which native bees are best at pollinating apples. After looking at dozens of species, Schlueter discovered a mining bee that outshines the rest as an apple pollinator which farmers should prioritize.

For more information on these projects, see www.sare.org/projects, and search for project numbers FS16-290 and FS17-296.
SARE Grants in Georgia

SARE has awarded a total of 125 grants in Georgia since 1988.

- 54 Research & Education Grants
- 27 Farmer/Rancher Grants
- 17 Graduate Student Grants
- 10 Community Innovation Grants
- 10 On-Farm Research Grants
- 7 Professional Development Grants

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

Timoth Coolong
University of Georgia
(706) 542-0786
tcoolong@uga.edu

Mark Latimore
Fort Valley State University
(478) 825-6396
latimorm@fvsu.edu

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.southernsare.org/georgia to learn more.

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).