

# Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education

# FIELD NOTES

## Developing a Goat Meat Market in the Black Hills of South Dakota

The Newsletter  
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Goat production is a growing enterprise for small-scale and limited resource farmers. Goats can adapt to different production systems and can be raised with relatively few inputs, but they can present production and marketing challenges.

Susan and Tom Barnes live on 120 acres along Pleasant Valley, southwest of Custer, South Dakota. Susan's family homesteaded much of Pleasant Valley, and made a living raising cattle and horses for more than one hundred years. Today, Susan and Tom continue that tradition by raising goats. They maintain Savannah, Spanish, and Boer herds for their cross breeding program.

In 2012, the Barneses received an NCR-SARE Farmer Rancher grant to work on the development of a chevon (goat meat) market in the Black Hills region and educate consumers and producers about meat goats. During the project, they conducted a feeding study and carcass evaluation, visited meat markets, restaurants, and meat processors, conducted taste tests, and developed marketing materials to expand consumer and producer awareness about goat meat.

"This project was extremely interesting because of all its moving parts," said Tom Barnes. "We live in an area where cattle are the main protein source, so to get people to eat and then buy goat is a challenge. We knew that goats are browsers/grazers, which fits well with the Black Hills. There are many small acreages that will not support cattle, but where small ruminants are well suited. We also know that goat meat is very healthy compared to many of the mainstream meats. We emphasized these points."

When the feeding study portion of the grant was completed, they took eight selected goats to a USDA federally inspected facility and had the carcasses evaluated by an experienced meat specialist. They used full blood bucks from each breed to track genetics, and they implemented a cross-breeding program in

order to reduce kid mortality, improve herd health, and maintain high quality meat.

In order to connect with consumers, they served samples at several public events, as well as eight private dinners. They served between 500 and 600 people during the grant period and received 219 feedback surveys. They learned that most people had not cooked goat meat before, most people did not know that about the nutritional value of goat meat, most said that if goat meat were available they would prepare it on occasion, and most would benefit from recipes and preparation instructions.

The Barneses also ran ten small ads in the regional newspaper. Five ads focused on eating goat meat and five ads focused on raising goats as a profitable livestock animal. As a result of the ads, they received more than 40 telephone inquiries. The ads also led to a front-page local newspaper article about their SARE grant and Pleasant Valley Farm.

Pleasant Valley Farm has customers who order small amounts on a weekly basis or whole goats annually, and they also sell to a high-end restaurant in Rapid City. In addition to exceeding their project goal to sell or distribute 1,400 lbs. of goat meat, the Barneses expanded their market; Tom Barnes says they will sell all of their production directly in the Black Hills and will not need to use auctions.



*With SARE support, Susan Barnes and her husband, Tom, are working to expand the goat meat market and goat production in the Black Hills region of South Dakota. Photo by Jean Andreasen.*

"The exposure of goats to the general public through the grant has made a difference to all goat producers in our area," said Tom Barnes. "The SARE grant gave us the opportunity to build a customer base slowly, remain sustainable, and still produce quality meat. Our meat demand far outpaces our supply by at least 3 times. We have more than 30 regular private sale customers and we could be supplying five restaurants if we had the goats."

Because they are interested in helping new goat producers get started, the Barneses organized a seminar this winter to promote goat production. They had 31 attendees from four states, and it generated some new producers. They will also continue performance testing to ensure good bloodlines for sales to other breeders.

For more information on this NCR-SARE Farmer Rancher project, and to see detailed results of the feeding study and carcass evaluation, visit the SARE project reporting website at <http://mysare.sare.org> and search for project number FNC12-846.

# NCR-SARE Awards More than \$3.3 Million in Grants

NCR-SARE is pleased to announce the projects that have been selected for funding for several grant programs. More than one hundred projects were awarded more than \$3.3 million through NCR-SARE grant programs this past year, which offer competitive grants for producers, researchers, students, educators, organizations, and others who are exploring sustainable agriculture in America's Midwest.

The Farmer Rancher Grant Program is a competitive grant program for farmers and ranchers who want to explore sustainable solutions to problems through on-farm research, demonstration, and education projects. 42 grant projects were selected to receive a total of more than \$400,000 through this NCR-SARE grant program.

For the Youth Educator Grant Program, NCR-SARE awarded almost \$23,000 to 12 projects. The Youth Educator Grant Program supports educators who teach young people what sustainable agriculture is and help them explore related career options.

The Graduate Student Grant Program is a competitive grant program to fund graduate student projects that address sustainable agriculture issues. For the Graduate Student program, NCR-SARE awarded more than \$178,000 to 18 projects.

For the Partnership Grant Program, NCR-SARE awarded \$300,000 to 10 projects. The Partnership Grant Program is intended to foster cooperation between agriculture professionals and small groups of farmers and ranchers to catalyze on-farm research, demonstration, and education activities related to sustainable agriculture.

The Research and Education Grant Program is a competitive grant program for researchers and educators involved in projects that explore and promote environmentally sound, profitable, and socially responsible food and/or fiber systems. For the Research and Education program, NCR-SARE awarded more than \$1.8 million to 11 projects.

For the Professional Development Program, NCR-SARE awarded more than \$650,000 to 9 projects. NCR-SARE Professional Development Program grants emphasize training agricultural educators in extension, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, private, and not-for-profit sectors, using farmers as educators and addressing emerging issues in the farm community.

To learn more, visit the NCR-SARE website for lists of funded projects and descriptions of the projects at [www.northcentralsare.org/Grants/Recent-Grant-Projects](http://www.northcentralsare.org/Grants/Recent-Grant-Projects).

To learn about the NCR-SARE grants funded in your state, visit the NCR-SARE website here: [www.northcentralsare.org/grants/Funded-Grants-in-Your-State](http://www.northcentralsare.org/grants/Funded-Grants-in-Your-State), where you can view a portfolio summary and funded grants list for every state and island protectorate.

The focus for each of the NCR-SARE grant programs is on research and education. Funding considerations are based on how well the applicant presents the problem being addressed, the project's relevance to sustainable agriculture in the 12-state North Central region, and how well it aligns with NCR-SARE's goals, among other factors specific to each grant program.

NCR-SARE's Administrative Council (AC) members decide which projects will receive SARE funds. The AC includes a diverse mix of agricultural stakeholders in the region. Council members hail from regional farms and ranches, the Cooperative Extension Service, universities, federal agencies, and nonprofits.

Since 1988, the SARE program has helped advance farming systems that are profitable, environmentally sound, and good for communities through a nationwide research and education grants program. The program, part of USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, funds projects and conducts outreach designed to improve agricultural systems.

## Applying for NCR-SARE Grants

NCR-SARE has online resources to help you learn more about writing proposals for NCR-SARE grant programs. Read tips, tutorials, and watch videos online at [www.northcentralsare.org/Grants/Write-a-Successful-Grant](http://www.northcentralsare.org/Grants/Write-a-Successful-Grant).

### Assistance from SARE State Coordinators

SARE sustainable agriculture coordinators help train agriculture professionals in sustainable practices, share SARE project results, and work with grant applicants. If you have questions about SARE in your state, your SARE State Coordinator can help. Find your State Coordinator and view documents about funded grants in your state by visiting NCR-SARE online at [www.northcentralsare.org/State-Programs](http://www.northcentralsare.org/State-Programs) or contact the NCR-SARE office.

### Michael Fields Grant-Writing Assistance

Did you know that the Michael Fields Agricultural Institute provides free grants advising services with priority to two target groups in the Midwest? While their services are open to all farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs, priority is given as follows:

- In Wisconsin: All new or existing producers and agriculture-related businesses, as well as those working with them. Agriculture includes forestry and fisheries.
- In the Midwest: Beginning farmers, limited-resource farmers, socially disadvantaged farmers and/or military veterans, as well as young organizations working with these farmers.

Contact Deirdre Birmingham for free grant advising from the Michael Fields Institute at (608) 219-4279 or [deirdreb4@gmail.com](mailto:deirdreb4@gmail.com).





# Soil Scientist Makes Case for "Active C" Soil Test

*Researcher Christine Sprunger studies how farmers view soil carbon and the barriers they face when working to improve soil fertility. Photo courtesy of Christine Sprunger.*



It can be somewhat surprising to learn that the largest amount of carbon present on the land is not in the living plants, but in soil organic matter; the carbon stored in all the world's soils is more than three times the amount in the atmosphere. Some farmers are adopting carbon-building management practices in order to reduce carbon loss from soil to the atmosphere as carbon dioxide.

Christine Sprunger, a National Science Foundation post-doctoral fellow at Columbia University, researches soil carbon from both a biophysical and social science perspective, and says that soil carbon (C) is the most important variable in sustaining annual and perennial cropping systems both in terms of increasing crop productivity and enhancing soil health. Sprunger believes the most effective way to simultaneously increase crop productivity while mitigating climate change is through increasing soil carbon cycling.

In 2014, when Sprunger was a graduate student at Michigan State University (MSU), she was curious about the role crop biodiversity could play in increasing soil C in both annual and perennial cropping systems. [She received a \\$6,382 NCR-SARE Graduate Student Grant to examine the role that plant diversity has on root production and soil C dynamics in annual and perennial crops; she also aimed to measure the labile soil C pool on farms and discuss the results with farmers to see if results reflected perceived soil conditions on-farm.](#)

Sprunger wanted to determine the effect that biodiversity has on root production because fine roots significantly contribute to soil C accumulation. Through her research, Sprunger found that increased biodiversity led to increases in root production. In addition, she found substantial differences in active C between annual monoculture and perennial polyculture crops, but not between the annual and perennial monoculture crops. She hopes this work can be used to show that diverse cropping systems can be used as a means to sequester soil C.

After examining the impact of biodiversity on root production and C accumulation, Sprunger collaborated with a fellow NCR-SARE Graduate Student Grant recipient at MSU, Brendan O'Neill, who was working on a grant project to look at farmers' use of soil testing strategies. Together, they looked at how traditional soil tests for C would perform against new soil health tests on farm fields.

Both of the grant recipients wanted to know if soil health testing strongly supported what farmers were experiencing and witnessing in their fields. Working together, they sampled 52 farm fields in Michigan, and compared MSU's total soil organic matter (SOM) test which measures soil weight loss on ignition and correlates it

to oxidizable organic carbon, to the active C test, which assesses active carbon using permanganate oxidation and a portable spectrophotometer. They wanted to determine which test better corroborated farmer perceptions of productivity.

As they worked with farmers and extension workers across the state of Michigan to examine how traditional soil testing would perform against the active C test on actual farmer fields, they found that the SOM test was insufficient at detecting differences between farmer described 'Best' and 'Worst' fields, while the active C test found significant differences. They found that the active C test across the different fields supported farmer descriptions and overall experiences that the farmers had with specific fields. For example, farmers often observed lower yields and poorer soil quality in the Worst field, while yields and soil quality were much better in their Best fields. They reported that the active C test was much more effective at picking up these differences, and in Sprunger's opinion, the active C test should be more widely available and offered at university and commercial soil testing laboratories.

"Farmers invest a lot of time and energy into improving the health of their soils," said Sprunger. "Currently, the soil carbon test that is most available to them (SOM) is insufficient at detecting differences between high yielding and poor yielding fields. We found that farmers often stopped short of adopting sustainable management practices because of soil carbon test results. Since the active C test is more sensitive, farmers can utilize the test to make more informed management decisions regarding soil fertility and nutrient application."

Sprunger said the farmers in the study valued the information gained from the soil health testing, and argues that farmers will be more likely to meet target soil C sequestration goals if active C or other tests that are sensitive to changes in management are more widely available.

"Over 90% of the farmers that we met with wanted to continue soil testing using the soil health metrics that were introduced to them during the study," reported Sprunger. "Our study found that if these soil health tests are made commercially available, then farmers will incorporate the tests as part of their soil testing regimen."

For more information and figures on Sprunger or O'Neill's NCR-SARE Graduate Student projects, visit the SARE project reporting website at <http://mysare.sare.org> and search for project number GNC14-196 or GNC14-192, or contact the NCR-SARE office. An Extension bulletin summarizing these results is projected to be available through Michigan State University Extension later this year.





*Amelia LaMair received an NCR-SARE Youth Educator grant to teach students from Lutie School District about sustainable agriculture in Theodosia, Missouri. Photo by Eric Tumminia.*

# Missouri Youth Gain Hands-On Experience in Sustainable Ag

support from One Garden board members, the Lutie School superintendent, and a couple of teachers, LaMair applied for and received an NCR-SARE Youth Educator \$1,992 grant to help Lutie High School students learn about sustainable agriculture through a farm tour and through hands-on experience in their school garden.

During the grant project, ten students had the opportunity to visit Jeff and Rachel Barry's 17-acre sustainable farm, Stella Luna Farm, which introduced them to practices including no-till vegetable production, cover crops, water conservation, high tunnel management, solar energy, and rotational grazing. After the tour, students gained hands-on experience inoculating white oak logs with shiitake mushroom spawn, making cider from locally grown apples, planting cover crops, harvesting and preparing produce, making salad dressing, and cooking for lunch.

In addition to the farm tour, LaMair's project activities included teaching sustainable agriculture concepts and working with students as they planted crops in the school's newly donated raised beds. She facilitated a classroom presentation by April Wilson, a local NRCS representative who gave a talk about careers in agriculture and the changing demographics of today's farms. LaMair also helped each high school

student research a crop he/she was interested in growing; students developed information pages that included the scientific plant name, planting instructions, harvesting information, and how to prepare the crop for eating.

"The students have been very responsive to this project," said LaMair. "They are now able to articulate how sustainable agriculture can benefit them, their community, and the world, and are also aware of the local and global challenges associated with food production. I think the tour of Stella Luna Farm has had the greatest impact. They really enjoyed interacting with young farmers and observing their way of life first hand. One parent reported that the day after the tour her son declared he was going to become a farmer!"

In pursuance of her goal to educate youth about sustainability, LaMair was recently awarded a second NCR-SARE Youth Educator grant to teach students more about sustainable forestry through a field trip to the Alford Forest, a 3,200 acre forest in the Missouri Ozarks.

For more information on LaMair's NCR-SARE Youth Educator projects, visit the SARE project reporting website at <http://mysare.sare.org> and search for project numbers YENC15-088 and YENC16-099, or contact the NCR-SARE office.

NCR-SARE recognizes that youth programs are a way to introduce new and exciting farming and ranching options to youth, parents, and community members. The Lutie School District in Theodosia, Missouri shares this perspective, where 4th graders measure plant growth in raised beds, kindergarteners have their own "kindergarden," and middle school and high school agriculture classes take field trips to nearby sustainable farms.

In 2015, Amelia LaMair was working for a nonprofit organization called One Garden as an Americorps VISTA worker. One of her goals as a volunteer was to work with local schools to promote gardening and local foods. With



*Lutie School students prepared fresh food and learned how to make cider during a farm tour at Stella Luna Farm in Theodosia, Missouri in association with Amelia LaMair's NCR-SARE Youth Educator grant project. Photos by Rachel Barry.*

# NCR-SARE Heroes: Brad Brummond and Linda Kleinschmit

In 2012, the NCR-SARE Administrative Council created the NCR-SARE Hero Recognition to highlight, recognize, and pay tribute to those who have made significant contributions to NCR-SARE. Coordinated by the NCR-SARE Alumni Organization, this recognition acknowledges the leadership, vision, contributions, and impact that these heroes have made in the field of sustainable agriculture in the region. Brad Brummond of Park River, North Dakota and Linda (Moosman) Kleinschmit of Hartington, Nebraska are being honored as 2016 NCR-SARE Heroes.

## Brad Brummond



*Brad Brummond.  
Photo courtesy of North  
Dakota State University.*

Brad Brummond lives in Park River, North Dakota, and is a North Dakota State University (NDSU) extension agent for Walsh County where he specializes in organic production. He has served as a county agent since 1982, when he graduated from NDSU with degrees

in agricultural education and agricultural extension. For more than 25 years, he has served on the North Dakota State SARE Advisory Committee. Between 1993–2008, Brummond served two terms as an Administrative Council member for NCR-SARE.

During his tenure as an Administrative Council member, Brummond helped form NCR-SARE's Circle Of Sustainability committee, which conducted several listening sessions throughout the region in order to bring together people with differing viewpoints within a community of place to share their perspectives of sustainability and agriculture. Brummond helped organize NCR-SARE's first-ever listening session with seven First Nations in North Dakota and South Dakota, which helped broaden NCR-SARE's understanding of the region's biological and cultural diversity. As an integral organizing

member of 4-H for decades, with two sons and a daughter who have been active in 4-H, Brummond has been a strong advocate for youth in agriculture; he assisted in the development of NCR-SARE's Youth Educator Grant Program.

Brummond has worked with organic and sustainable farmers in North Dakota and South Dakota for more than 25 years. In addition to his role with extension, he currently serves as chair of the North Dakota Organic Advisory Board, is the primary organic contact for NDSU Extension Service, and has served as the president of both the Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society and the North Dakota Association of Extension Agents. A valuable resource for North Dakota producers, Brummond has received the Distinguished Service Award and the Achievement Service Award for North Dakota from the National Association of County Agricultural Agents.

## Linda (Moosman) Kleinschmit



*Linda Kleinschmit.  
Photo by Marie  
Flanagan.*

Linda Kleinschmit is the owner-operator of a 365-acre certified organic rotational grazing, grass-fed beef operation along with her husband, Martin, in Hartington, Nebraska. The Kleinschmits raised five children on the farm,

and have been active in the sustainable agriculture movement for decades. Linda Kleinschmit graduated with a B.S. in Elementary Education from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and taught in local schools for a number of years. In addition to being a farmer, teacher, and mother, she has worked on sustainable agriculture and public policy issues for more than 40 years. Kleinschmit served on NCR-SARE's Administrative Council from 2002–2006, chaired the planning committee to host the national SARE conference in Oconomowoc,

Wisconsin in 2006, and between 2007–2012, she served as both the Associate Coordinator and Interim Coordinator for NCR-SARE's Professional Development Program. She continues to serve on NCR-SARE's Technical Review Committee, Alumni Organization, and Nebraska's State SARE Advisory Committee.

Kleinschmit currently serves on the Nebraska Farm Service Agency (FSA) State Committee, and in the past has served on the State Board of Directors for Nebraska Farmers Union, the Center for Rural Affairs Advisory Board, the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture, the Steering Committee for Ogallala Commons, the state and national steering committee for Kellogg's Integrated Food and Farming System Initiative, and the Community Alliances of Interdependent Agriculture, and was the Coordinator and founder of EQUAL (a local farmwoman's organization), among service to other organizations. The Nebraska Farmers Union recognized Kleinschmit's years of devoted service to sustaining agriculture in Nebraska with a Presidents Award in 2007, and the Northeast Nebraska Experimental Farm Association and the University of Nebraska Research and Extension Center honored her for her Outstanding Contributions to Northeast Nebraska Agriculture. She has been the recipient of numerous grants from organizations including the National Rural Coalition Foundation and W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Read more about the NCR-SARE Heroes and the NCR-SARE Hero Program online at [www.northcentralsare.org/About-Us/Regional-Initiatives/NCR-SARE-Hero-Recognition-Program](http://www.northcentralsare.org/About-Us/Regional-Initiatives/NCR-SARE-Hero-Recognition-Program). Nominations for the NCR-SARE Hero Award may be submitted by anyone. The NCR-SARE Alumni Heroes Committee reviews and recommends candidates to the NCR-SARE Administrative Council.



# New Administrative Council Members for NCR-SARE

**Amber Marlow** and **Shannon Osborne** were recently elected to the NCR-SARE Administrative Council.

**Amber Marlow** has been elected as a 1994 land grant university representative for the NCR-SARE Administrative Council. Marlow is the extension director at the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College (LCOOCC) near Hayward, Wisconsin. Marlow has been with LCOOCC since 2005, and has been the extension director for the past 3 years. She currently oversees all 1994 land grant programs and USDA grants, as well as the 220 acre LCOOCC research station. She has received two SARE grants to engage students and community members in sustainable, traditional food production.

**Shannon Osborne** has been elected as an Agricultural Research Service representative for NCR-SARE's Administrative Council. Osborne is a research agronomist with the USDA - Agricultural Research Service in Brookings, South Dakota. Her research focuses on evaluating the impact of agricultural practices (tillage and residue management, cover crops, soil fertility, and crop rotation) on soil chemical, physical, and biological properties impacting soil health and crop yield and quality.

NCR-SARE would like to extend gratitude to **Doug Karlan** and **Katie Nixon** whose terms on the Administrative Council have come to an end.

## Now Available: Organic Transition Business Planner

The booming profit potential of organic production has farmers, ranchers, and food business owners nationwide

switching to organic production. But successfully managing the risky multiyear transition requires business planning.

SARE's new *Organic*

*Transition: A Business Planner for Farmers, Ranchers and Food Entrepreneurs* is the perfect tool to help business owners develop an actionable organic transition plan suitable for management teams and lenders. The *Organic Transition Planner* explores organic transition strategies and asks critical questions that help you decide whether organic makes sense for your farm or business.

Farmers bring the planning process alive by sharing their personal transition

challenges and the business plans that helped them succeed. Minnesota dairy producers Nate and Angie Walter relate that going organic "was a way for us to remain a family farm. We were considering growing the farm (conventionally); getting bigger in hopes of paying off our debt. We knew that might be a losing proposition."

The *Organic Transition Planner* also includes an overview of certification, helpful worksheets, and AgPlan, a business planning software program that facilitates the business planning process.

The *Organic Transition Planner* can be used as a companion to SARE's popular business planning guide, *Building a Sustainable Business: A Guide to Developing a Business Plan for Farms and Rural Businesses*. Both were written by University of Minnesota Department of Applied Economics Research Fellow Gigi DiGiacomo, University of Minnesota Department of Applied Economics Professor Robert P. King, and Center for Farm Financial Management Associate Director Dale Nordquist.

The *Organic Transition Planner* was developed as part of the Tools for Transition Project, a four-year research program on the economics of organic transition funded by USDA's

## NCR-SARE Grants At-A-Glance

Learn more about exciting SARE-supported projects! Use the project number listed with these projects to find more information at <http://MySARE.sare.org>, or follow NCR-SARE on Facebook or Twitter to receive regular updates like these.

**EarthDance FARMS** is working to improve energy efficiency with benchtop heating in their greenhouse in Ferguson, Missouri. This is SARE project FNC15-999.

With support from SARE, **Troy Salzer** and **Abe Mach** used cover crops to increase forage production and extend the grazing season, while diversifying crop rotations and ground cover for soil and water quality benefits in northeast Minnesota. This is SARE project FNC14-974.

**Shagbark Seed & Mill** received SARE support to create a model staple food system that is bringing local, high-nutrient grains and beans to Ohio. This is SARE project FNC08-730.

With SARE support, **Crystal Powers** is learning more about grazing with low impact crossings in wetlands in Nebraska. This is SARE project FNC15-1012.

**Josh Roe**, a Kansas-based agricultural economist, received a SARE grant to compare the economics of three afterwheat cover cropping scenarios in Kansas (using cover crop mixes without harvesting, grazing cover crops, and haying cover crops); he's helping local farmers quantify the financial risks of adopting cover crops. This is SARE Project FNC14-971.

National Institute of Food and Agriculture, with support from the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture. It was published by SARE.

The *Organic Transition Planner* is available as a free download at [www.sare.org/organic-transition-planner](http://www.sare.org/organic-transition-planner). Print copies can be ordered for \$16 plus shipping and handling. Discounts are available for orders of 10 items or more.

# Nonprofit Works to Protect Farms with Legal Education and Services

*Rachel Armstrong of Farm Commons. Photo by Mark Pennisten.*



When it comes to utilizing legal services, farmers lag behind the typical small business owner. 2010 research showed that just 16% of Illinois family farmers (with gross sales under \$100,000) had ever met with an attorney even though 68% of that group felt they had needed the services of an attorney (Endres, 2010). Yet when it comes to nationwide small business owners, 78% reported using a lawyer within the past three years (NFIB, 2005).

Rachel Armstrong has worked on farms, with farmers, at local food restaurants, and for farm-related nonprofits from the time she graduated from college. Throughout her years of farm-related work, she repeatedly ran into legal questions; they were straightforward questions about forming businesses and hiring people, and she was surprised that she could not find reliable information about these basic issues. Legal advocacy was needed, and Armstrong took action; she enrolled in law school and set out to start a nonprofit organization emphasizing legal education for farmers. Today, her nonprofit organization, Farm Commons, is working to foster the discussions and connections that build a strong legal backbone for farmers and their communities.

In 2013, Armstrong received a \$158,660 NCR-SARE Research and Education grant to work on long-term solutions to address the scarcity of legal services for farmers. Her goals were to raise awareness, increase knowledge, shift attitudes, change legal risk management and behaviors, train attorneys, and make connections between farmers and attorneys.

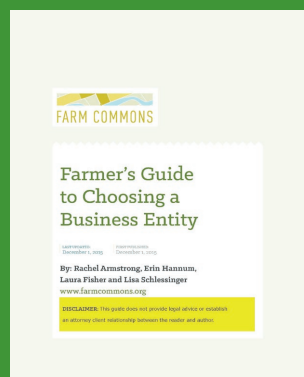
As a result of the project, Armstrong and Farm Commons reached more than 1,100 farmers with eight colorful and comprehensive print resources that use farmer stories to make

the law interesting and understandable. They hosted seven workshops and three webinars, reaching more than 1,300 farmers. They also helped seven regional attorneys develop their knowledge and experience to better serve sustainable farmers. Their pre-eminent publication, a comprehensive guide, *Farmer's Guide to Choosing a Business Entity* helps farmers learn about business entity options including LLC's, C Corporations, S Corporations, Nonprofits, and Co-ops. Through a mix of checklists, flowcharts, sample organizational documents, and more, farmers can break down their options and choose a business entity that is best suited for their unique farm operation.

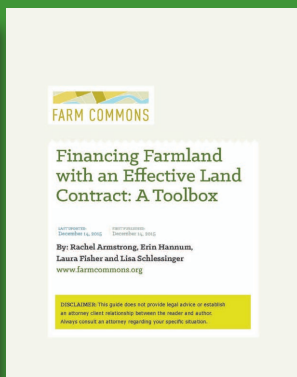
Armstrong is pleased with the progress Farm Commons made through the SARE project. She says the farmers they reached made specific, identifiable changes to their business in the near term; they wrote down verbal contracts, they formed more optimal business entities, and they purchased insurance. She says these are the actions that matter in protecting sustainable farms.

"Ninety percent of the folks who used our resources made a change to their business within 2-3 months!" reported Armstrong. "The truth is that sustainable farms are innovating on many levels—as a result, they are exposed to legal risk. After using our resources, 100% of farmers said they felt more comfortable communicating with accountants, lawyers, and other farmers about the legal issue addressed. I think this is a huge contribution to sustainable agriculture over the long term because we've spurred the conversation. We've given farmers the basic tools to communicate about these issues. Having those tools will result in a lot of action over time—better discussion, better advocacy, and more resolution of the legal barriers that hinder sustainable farmers."

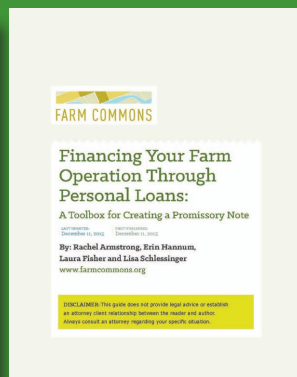
Download Farm Commons' resources at [www.farmcommons.org](http://www.farmcommons.org). Read more about Armstrong's NCR-SARE Research and Education grant on the SARE project reporting website. Simply search by the project number, LNC13-348 at <http://mysare.sare.org>, or contact the NCR-SARE office for more information.



A comprehensive guide to the business entity options available to farmers.



A toolbox for understanding and developing effective land contracts.



A toolbox for creating promissory notes.

Farm Commons produces guides, flowcharts, checklists, and model documents to help farmers take action. Find them online at [www.farmcommons.org](http://www.farmcommons.org).

# UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA



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Did you know NCR-SARE is on YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter?  
Keep track of our grant opportunities, projects, events, and more. Search for North Central Region SARE and follow us!



## ABOUT NCR-SARE

NCR-SARE funds cutting-edge projects every year through competitive grant programs, and has awarded more than \$50 million worth of grants to farmers and ranchers, researchers, students, educators, public and private institutions, nonprofit groups, and others exploring sustainable agriculture in the 12 states of the North Central region.

Are you interested in submitting a proposal for an NCR-SARE grant? Before you write the grant proposal, determine a clear project goal, and engage in sustainable agriculture research on your topic. Need help determining which program is best suited for your project? Go to [www.northcentralsare.org/Grants](http://www.northcentralsare.org/Grants) for more information, or contact the NCR-SARE office.

For more information about any of the NCR-SARE grant programs, go to [www.northcentralsare.org/Grants](http://www.northcentralsare.org/Grants) or contact the NCR-SARE office at 612-626-3113 or [ncrsare@umn.edu](mailto:ncrsare@umn.edu).

Photo Credits for this issue of Field Notes: Jean Andreasen, Rachel Barry, Marie Flanagan, Mark Penisten, Christine Sprunger, Eric Tumminia, and NDSU.

## NCR-SARE GRANT TIMELINES\*

### Farmer Rancher\*

Early August - Call for Proposals Released  
Early December - Proposals Due  
February - Funding Decisions  
Spring - Funds Available to Recipients

### Graduate Student\*

February - Call for Proposals Released  
April - Proposals Due  
Late July - Funding Decisions  
September - Funds Available to Recipients

### Research and Education\*

August - Call for Preproposals Released  
Late October - Preproposals Due  
Late January - Full Proposals Invited  
April - Full Proposals Due  
Late July - Funding Decisions  
Fall - Funds Available to Recipients

### Professional Development Program\*

February - Call for Proposals Released  
Early April - Proposals Due  
August - Funding Decisions  
October - Funds Available to Recipients

### Youth Educator\*

Early August: Call for Proposals Released  
Mid November: Proposals Due  
February: Funding Decisions  
Spring: Funds Available to Recipients

### Partnership\*

Early August: Call for Proposals Released  
Late October: Proposals Due  
February: Funding Decisions  
March: Funds Available to Recipients

\*Timelines are subject to change.

## NORTH CENTRAL REGION SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE RESEARCH AND EDUCATION PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

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*The United Nations declared that 2016 will be the International Year of Pulses. Dried peas, edible beans, lentils, and chickpeas are the most common varieties of pulses. In 1960, the number of farmers raising dry beans in Minnesota and North Dakota could be counted in single digits. Today, the states are leading producers of dry beans with thousands of farmers. Photo by Marie Flanagan.*