



Profile from the Field

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The Fruit and Nut Compass: Developing a Tool and Guiding Principles for Diversified Farms

Project Titles: The Fruit and Nut Compass: Developing a Tool and Guiding Principles for Diversified Farms

Coordinators: Michael Bell

Location: University of Wisconsin, WI

SARE Grants: \$199,246

Duration: 2016-2018

To read the full project reports, go to www.sare.org/projects and search for project number LNC16-376.

As interest in diversified perennial production grows, farmers across the region have been searching for sustainable ways to battle pests, tap into lucrative markets, and increase yields as they work to develop biodiverse agricultural ecosystems. Building on the concept of their Veggie Compass project, and the desire to develop whole farm profit management tools and workshops for perennial systems, in 2016, Michael Bell and Leah Potter-Weight with the University of Wisconsin's Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems (CIAS) applied for and received a \$199,246 NCR-SARE Research and Education grant to develop a similar tool called the Fruit and Nut Compass.

“The idea for the project came from farmers who saw a need for more informed decision-making in diversified perennial systems,” explained Bell. “By meeting this need, the combined outputs of the project strengthen grassroots enterprise development. Our goal is to provide farmers with a Fruit and Nut Compass that will point in a general direction for making diversified farms more socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable.”

The project is ongoing, but using the Veggie Compass as a guide, they have commenced developing The Fruit and Nut Compass using a participatory approach

drawing on the knowledge, experience, and lessons of producers. Outreach will include a combination of in-person trainings, field days, and online content featuring a downloadable tool, videos, and a user's manual.

“Diverse crops and varieties can spread labor needs across the growing season and increase profitability by spreading risk,” said Potter-Weight. “This project helps farmers take advantage of the positive aspects of diversification while avoiding its potential pitfalls.”

For more information on Bell's NCR-SARE Farmer Rancher grant project, visit the SARE project reporting website. Simply search by the project number, LNC16-376, at www.mysare.sare.org, or contact the NCR-SARE office.

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