

SOUTHERN HARVEST ANNUAL REPORT

The Annual Report of
SARE-funded grant
projects in the
Southern region of the
United States



ABOUT SOUTHERN SARE

Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SSARE) is one of four regional programs within the national SARE initiative funded by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). The Southern region includes **Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia**, along with the U.S. territories of **Puerto Rico** and the **U.S. Virgin Islands** in the Caribbean.

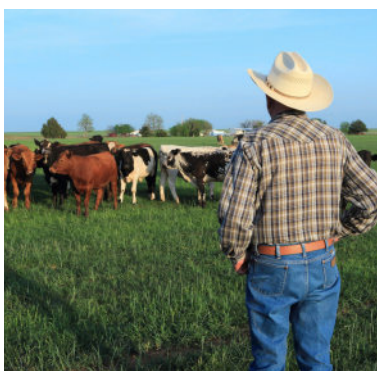
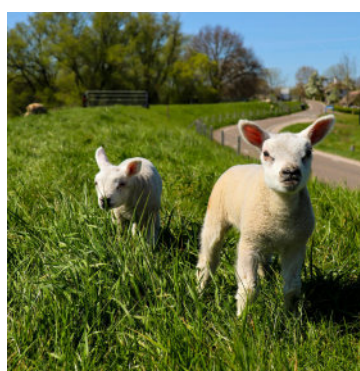
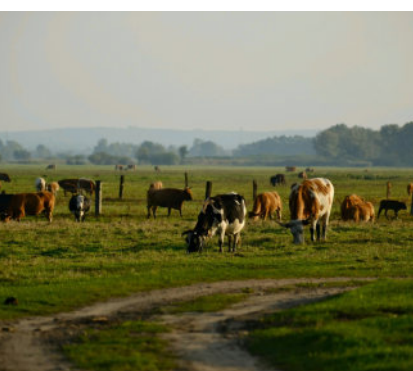
Southern SARE is administered by its host institution, the University of Georgia—an 1862 land-grant university—in partnership with Fort Valley State University, an 1890 land-grant institution, and the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture, a nonprofit organization based in Oklahoma.

Across the United States, SARE's mission is to advance innovations in agriculture that improve profitability, strengthen stewardship of natural resources, and enhance quality of life for farmers, ranchers, and rural communities.

For more than three decades, Southern SARE has supported sustainable agriculture through competitive grant programs that fund farmers and ranchers, researchers, educators, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and graduate students working to address key issues affecting agricultural sustainability throughout the region.

SOUTHERN SARE'S VISION

is an enduring American agriculture of the highest quality. This agriculture is profitable, protects the nation's land and water, and is a force for a rewarding way of life for farmers and ranchers whose quality products and operations sustain their communities and society.



ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

This publication provides a snapshot of recently funded and currently active SSARE projects throughout the Southern region. It includes summaries of competitive grant programs, highlights from non-grant initiatives, and examples of program impacts and educational resources generated through SARE funding.

While the report reflects the most current information available, totals may not include certain grant programs that are no longer offered. For a complete listing of projects funded in each state or territory, visit the Southern SARE website and search the Projects Database.

projects.sare.org/search-projects/



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UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA



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2025 SSARE GRANT FUNDING OVERVIEW

Competitive grant programs are the cornerstone of the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program. Through these investments, SSARE supports farmers, ranchers, researchers, educators, and organizations working to advance innovative practices that strengthen the long-term sustainability of agriculture.

The overall objective of SARE is to position agricultural communities so that the most sustainable approaches available permeate U.S. agriculture. The result is food, fiber, and animal products produced in ways that support healthy environments, thriving communities, and a rewarding future for farmers who are respected, supported, and encouraged to innovate.

To date, the national SARE program has funded approximately **9,965 projects** totaling more than **\$489 million** in support of sustainable agriculture. Between **2023 and 2025 alone, nearly \$23 million** was awarded through **353 grants across the Southern region**. These investments supported projects through Research & Education, Professional Development Program, Graduate Student, On-Farm Research, Producer, and Education grants.

Other opportunities include conference sponsorships, event sponsorships, and travel scholarships. Projects funded by SARE can be searched by commodity or production practice through the program's online database.

2025 By The Numbers

11

Research and Education (R&E) Grants \$4,368,063

Research and Education Grants encourage a systems approach to sustainable agriculture. They are mainly designed for teams of interdisciplinary researchers.

ssare.org/research

9

Professional Development Program (PDP) Grants \$725,151

Professional Development Program Grants further education and outreach strategies for professionals and educators who work directly with farmers and ranchers.

ssare.org/pdp

18

Graduate Student Grants \$386,238

Graduate Student Grants are for Masters and PhD students enrolled in a graduate program at an accredited institution who want to research sustainable agriculture.

ssare.org/graduate

10

On-Farm Research (OFRG) Grants \$296,852

On-Farm Research Grants provide opportunities for agriculture professionals working directly with farmers and ranchers on sustainable agriculture efforts.

ssare.org/onfarm



13

Education Grants

\$639,865

Education Grants allow applicants to conduct education and outreach activities to benefit the greater sustainable agriculture community and promote efforts in farmer innovations, community resilience, business success, diversification, and best management practices.

ssare.org/education

Travel Scholarships

Fund travel to conferences where information may be imparted or gained for sustainable agriculture. Individuals requesting travel scholarship funds for personal attendance to an event to gain knowledge/skill for use in training others.

14

Producer Grants

\$249,106

Producer Grants enable farmers and ranchers to test a sustainable agriculture idea using a field trial, on-farm demonstration, marketing initiative, or other technique.

ssare.org/producer

Other Funding

Event/Conference Sponsorships

Regional sponsorship support for conferences, field days, workshops and other educational events organized by universities, community organizations, NGOs, mentor farmers and other ag professionals. These must take place in the Southern region and the main purpose should be further sustainable agriculture for the benefit of farmers, NGOs, community organizations, researchers and other ag professionals.

ssare.org/sponsorships

Farmer/Rancher

Education Sponsorships

The purpose of the Farmer/Rancher Education Sponsorship Program is to empower farmers and ranchers within the SSARE region to identify and receive targeted skills, information, and training necessary for sustainable farming success. In addition, the program helps participants become resources within their farming communities by fostering advancement and innovation.

southern.sare.org/other-funding/farmer-rancher-education-sponsorship/

HISTORY OF SOUTHERN SARE GRANTS (1988-2025)

Location	R&E	PDP	Graduate	OFRG	Education	Producer
 Alabama \$5,961,581	\$4,153,862 25 Research & Education Grants Funded	\$1,022,657 14 Professional Development Program Grants Funded	\$223,042 16 Graduate Student Grants Funded	\$157,507 11 On-Farm Research Grants Funded	\$149,407 3 Education Grants Funded	\$255,106 25 Graduate Student Grants Funded
 Arkansas \$8,918,942	\$6,601,726 38 Research & Education Grants Funded	\$1,363,212 19 Professional Development Program Grants Funded	\$278,252 23 Graduate Student Grants Funded	\$238,585 14 On-Farm Research Grants Funded	\$331,967 7 Education Grants Funded	\$105,200 10 Producer Grants Funded
 Florida \$10,911,639	\$7,689,427 39 Research & Education Grants Funded	\$810,925 12 Professional Development Program Grants Funded	\$1,186,713 87 Graduate Student Grants Funded	\$622,657 35 On-Farm Research Grants Funded	\$281,962 6 Education Grants Funded	\$319,955 30 Producer Grants Funded
 Georgia \$13,964,204	\$11,476,601 60 Research & Education Grants Funded	\$703,866 10 Professional Development Program Grants Funded	\$421,725 30 Graduate Student Grants Funded	\$284,967 15 On-Farm Research Grants Funded	\$684,441 15 Education Grants Funded	\$392,604 38 Producer Grants Funded
 Kentucky \$5,554,778	\$3,183,749 17 Research & Education Grants Funded	\$1,691,801 25 Professional Development Program Grants Funded	\$79,398 7 Graduate Student Grants Funded	\$216,846 15 On-Farm Research Grants Funded	\$138,038 3 Education Grants Funded	\$244,946 29 Producer Grants Funded
 Louisiana \$1,807,740	\$1,194,833 11 Research & Education Grants Funded	\$271,966 5 Professional Development Program Grants Funded	\$149,557 12 Graduate Student Grants Funded	\$44,177 2 On-Farm Research Grants Funded	\$50,000 1 Education Grants Funded	\$97,207 9 Producer Grants Funded
 Mississippi \$3,412,808	\$1,844,348 11 Research & Education Grants Funded	\$1,196,533 15 Professional Development Program Grants Funded	\$61,754 5 Graduate Student Grants Funded	\$64,775 3 On-Farm Research Grants Funded	\$122,615 3 Education Grants Funded	\$122,783 11 Producer Grants Funded

For more information on these funded projects, visit southernsare.org

Location	R&E	PDP	Graduate	OFRG	Education	Producer
 North Carolina \$16,734,290	\$11,881,107 70 Research & Education Grants Funded	\$2,883,073 37 Professional Development Program Grants Funded	\$480,892 43 Graduate Student Grants Funded	\$312,333 18 On-Farm Research Grants Funded	\$640,619 14 Education Grants Funded	\$536,266 64 Producer Grants Funded
 Oklahoma \$4,524,964	\$3,462,669 16 Research & Education Grants Funded	\$710,963 8 Professional Development Program Grants Funded	\$19,969 2 Graduate Student Grants Funded	\$113,934 8 On-Farm Research Grants Funded	\$50,000 1 Education Grant Funded	\$167,429 15 Producer Grants Funded
 South Carolina \$5,952,222	\$4,466,373 21 Research & Education Grants Funded	\$878,840 14 Professional Development Program Grants Funded	\$131,247 10 Graduate Student Grants Funded	\$142,377 10 On-Farm Research Grants Funded	\$135,500 3 Education Grants Funded	\$197,885 21 Producer Grants Funded
 Tennessee \$4,238,241	\$2,766,379 15 Research & Education Grants Funded	\$589,716 8 Professional Development Program Grants Funded	\$267,802 21 Graduate Student Grants Funded	\$144,745 8 On-Farm Research Grants Funded	\$216,222 5 Education Grants Funded	\$253,377 25 Producer Grants Funded
 Texas \$12,768,882	\$10,136,730 44 Research & Education Grants Funded	\$1,049,272 14 Professional Development Program Grants Funded	\$520,013 37 Graduate Student Grants Funded	\$477,983 25 On-Farm Research Grants Funded	\$277,849 6 Education Grants Funded	\$307,035 29 Producer Grants Funded
 Virginia \$7,269,049	\$4,984,589 24 Research & Education Grants Funded	\$751,022 10 Professional Development Program Grants Funded	\$474,365 34 Graduate Student Grants Funded	\$328,621 20 On-Farm Research Grants Funded	\$149,885 3 Education Grants Funded	\$580,567 56 Producer Grants Funded
 Puerto Rico \$2,152,633	\$1,214,755 7 Research & Education Grants Funded	\$218,683 5 Professional Development Program Grants Funded	\$70,178 4 Graduate Student Grants Funded	\$72,374 4 On-Farm Research Grants Funded	\$440,123 10 Education Grants Funded	\$136,520 12 Producer Grants Funded
 US Virgin Islands \$1,205,437	\$892,423 5 Research & Education Grants Funded	\$87,833 1 Professional Development Program Grant Funded	\$0 Graduate Student Grants Funded	\$64,183 3 On-Farm Research Grants Funded	\$99,999 2 Education Grants Funded	\$60,999 4 Producer Grants Funded

2025 SOUTHERN SARE STATE AWARDS SUMMARY

Location					
 Alabama \$71,680	 Arkansas \$1,007,111	 Florida \$1,122,133	 Georgia \$783,951	 Kentucky \$635,861	 Louisiana \$125,224
\$71,680 was awarded in grants to support 3 projects, including but not limited to: 1 Producer, 1 Graduate Student, and 1 On-Farm Research.	\$1,007,111 was awarded in grants to support 6 projects, including but not limited to: 2 Graduate Student, 1 On-Farm Research, 1 Professional Development Program, and 2 Research and Education.	\$1,122,133 was awarded in grants to support 11 projects, including but not limited to: 2 Education, 1 Producer, 3 Graduate Student, 2 On-Farm Research, 1 Professional Development, and 2 Research and Education.	\$783,951 was awarded in grants to support 11 projects, including but not limited to: 2 Education, 3 Producer, 3 Graduate Student, 1 On-Farm Research, 1 Professional Development, and 1 Research and Education.	\$635,861 was awarded in grants to support 3 projects, including but not limited to: 1 Education, 1 Professional Development, and 1 Research and Education.	\$125,224 was awarded in grants to support 2 projects, including but not limited to: 1 Education and 1 Graduate Student.
 Mississippi \$100,000	 North Carolina \$315,546	 Oklahoma \$125,000	 South Carolina \$475,442	 Tennessee \$237,550	 Texas \$1,084,229
\$100,000 was awarded in grants to support 1 project, including but not limited to: 1 Professional Development Program.	\$315,546 was awarded in grants to support 6 projects, including but not limited to: 2 Education, 3 Producer, 1 Professional Development Program.	\$125,000 was awarded in grants to support 2 projects, including but not limited to: 1 Education and 1 Producer Grant.	\$475,442 was awarded in grants to support 2 projects, including but not limited to: 1 Professional Development Program and 1 Research and Education.	\$237,550 was awarded in grants to support 3 projects, including but not limited to: 1 Graduate Student, 1 On-Farm Research, and 1 Professional Development.	\$1,084,229 was awarded in grants to support 8 projects, including but not limited to: 2 Education, 2 Graduate Student, 1 Producer, 1 Professional Development Program, 2 Research and Education

2025 SOUTHERN SARE STATE/TERRITORY AWARDS SUMMARY



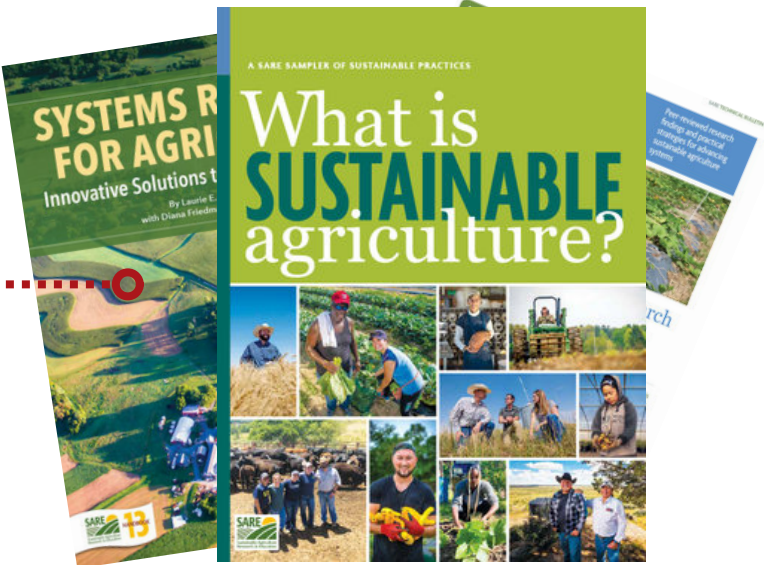
Each location also had non-competitive awards that fund the activities of the SARE state coordinator(s). For a complete list of awards by state, visit: projects.sare.org/state-fact-sheets.

Location		
 Virginia \$600,038	 Puerto Rico \$571,510	 US Virgin Islands \$19,980
was awarded \$600,038 in grants to support 10 projects, including but not limited to: 3 Producer, 4 Graduate Student, and 2 On-Farm Research, 1 R&E.	was awarded \$571,510 in grants to support 6 projects, including but not limited to: 2 Education, 1 Producer, 1 Graduate Student, and 1 On-Farm Research, 1 R&E.	was awarded \$19,980 in grants to support 1 project, including but not limited to: 1 Producer grant.

Resources & Education

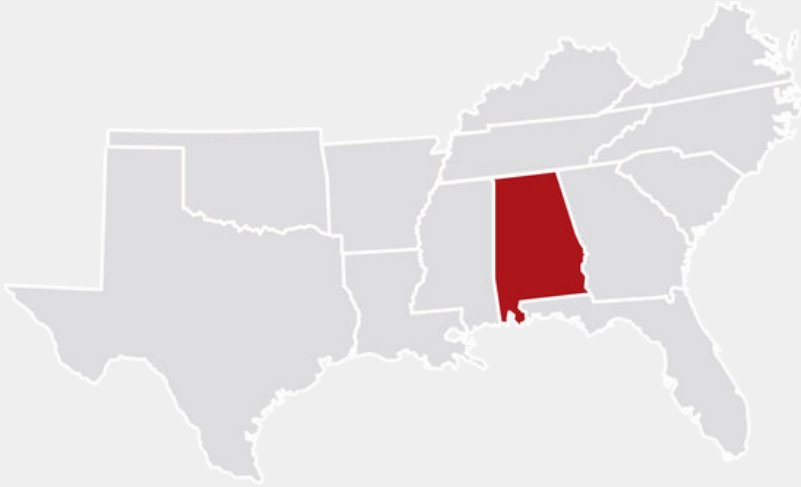
Most SARE Outreach publications including all learning products and those published by grantees are available online as free downloads. Many are also available in print and may be ordered online at sare.org/resources or by telephone at (301) 779-1007. **Free materials (bulletins, topic briefs and promotional materials) are available in quantity at no cost to agricultural educators.**

Discounts are available for books ordered in quantity.



Alabama

\$71,680 Funded Throughout 2025



On-Farm Research Grants

OS25-185 - Statewide Survey of *Leptopilina japonica*, a Previously Unreported Parasitoid of the Invasive Spotted Wing *Drosophila* in Alabama, \$29,728.00, Alabama A & M University

Graduate Student Grants

GS25-319 - Effect of Chitosan from Black Soldier Fly Larvae Pupae Shells against Mycotoxin producing *Aspergillus* sp. \$21,952.00, Auburn University

Producer Grants

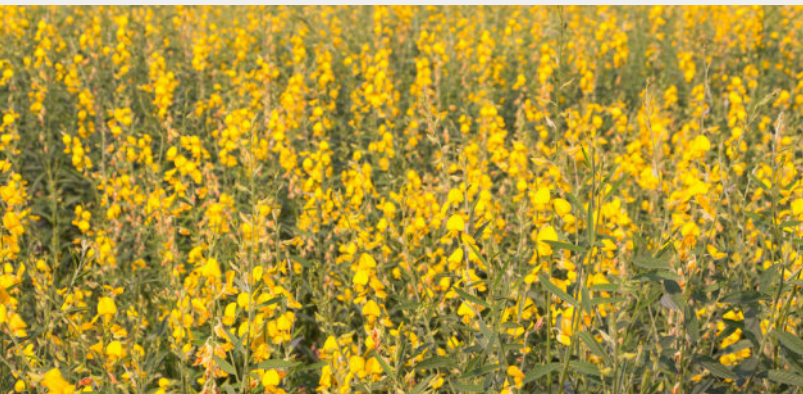
FS25-382 - Growing and Promoting *Hibiscus sabdariffa* (Roselle) as a Cash Crop for the Small-Scale Farmer in Alabama's Black Belt, \$20,000, Tuskegee Honey LLC

For more information on these funded projects, visit southernsare.org



Hibiscus sabdariffa
(Roselle)
Sept 27, 2024

Photo Credit: Jackie Taylor, 2026

**\$6.8***million in total
funding***126***grant projects
funded since 1988*

Project Highlights

Advancing Year-Round Grazing with Sunn Hemp in Alabama

Tuskegee University researchers and Alabama farmers are demonstrating how sunn hemp can strengthen year-round grazing systems while improving both livestock performance and soil health. Through a Southern SARE On-Farm Research Grant (OS22-154), Dr. Byeng Min and his team at the George Washington Carver Agricultural Experiment Station have shown that sunn hemp forage provides higher crude protein, greater dry matter yields, and faster animal growth rates compared to bermudagrass and soybean systems. Goats and cattle grazing on sunn hemp reached market weight more quickly, with average daily gains that were significantly higher than those on traditional forage.

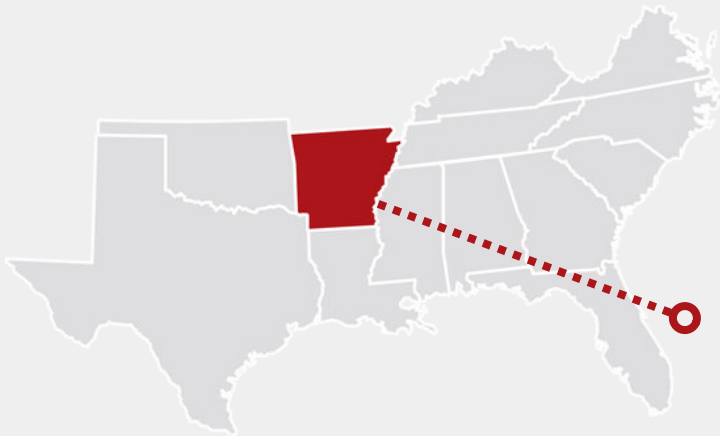
The project also found that sunn hemp contributes nitrogen, calcium, and organic matter back into the soil, reducing the need for additional fertilizer on winter pastures. This soil-building benefit helps lower production costs while sustaining long-term productivity. To ensure the research is practical for producers, two Alabama beef farmers in Lee and Greene counties are serving as mentors, showcasing sunn hemp forage systems on their operations and sharing outcomes with neighboring producers. Their results highlight sunn hemp's value as both a profitable summer forage and a soil-improving cover crop that supports resilient grazing systems across the Southeast.

*Funding totals include
funding outside of Southern
SARE's six grant programs.*

For more information on this project, see projects.sare.org and search for project number **OS22-154**.

Arkansas

\$952,111 Funded Throughout 2025



Sustainable Practices for Strawberry Production Training Program

On-Farm Research Grants

OS25-189 - Impact of Farming Practices and the Diversity and Richness of Bee Populations on Selected Crop in Arkansas Agricultural Farms, \$29,080.00, University of Arkansas Pine Bluff

Professional Development Program

SPDP25-041 - Training county extension agents to assist and educate homesteaders on sustainable agriculture and family and consumer sciences skill sets \$79,814.00, University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture

Graduate Student Grants

GS25-318 - Frass Forward: Transforming Waste into Sustainable Feed and Fertilizer \$21,968.00, University of Arkansas

GS25-329 - Identifying opportunities to expand sustainability potential for Vitis native and hybrid grape production in U.S. Southern regions. \$22,000.00, University of Arkansas

Research & Education

LS25-405 - Thriving through Insect Farming: Advancing Frass Fertilizer to Enhance One-Health in the Southeastern US \$400,000, USDA-ARS

LS25-408 - Hope Islands: Introducing bioactive plant communities to grass pastures to increase the sustainability of small ruminant production. \$399,249.00, University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture

For more information on these funded projects, visit southernsare.org

**\$9.5***million in total
funding***141***grant projects
funded since 1988*

Project Highlights

*Funding totals include
funding outside of Southern
SARE's six grant programs.*

Identifying Opportunities to Expand Sustainability Potential for Native and Hybrid Grape Production in the Southeast

At the University of Arkansas, graduate student Amanda Fleming and her research team are exploring opportunities to strengthen the long-term viability of grape production across the southeastern United States. Through a Southern SARE Graduate Student Grant (GS25-329), the project is examining how native and hybrid grape varieties can support sustainable production systems while expanding economic opportunities for growers.

Native grape species, such as muscadines, and hybrid grape cultivars are often better adapted to the Southeast's growing conditions than traditional wine grape varieties. These cultivars can offer improved resistance to pests and diseases while requiring fewer production inputs. The project aims to identify grower needs, evaluate current production practices, and assess opportunities to expand the adoption of native and hybrid grape varieties throughout the region.

Researchers will work directly with commercial grape growers through surveys, interviews, and on-site visits to better understand production challenges and barriers to adoption. The project will also explore opportunities for diversification and identify strategies that can improve the viability of grape and wine production for both rural and urban markets. Outreach efforts will include the development of educational materials, a Southeast Regional Sustainable Native and Hybrid Grape Production Handbook, and producer workshops. Findings from the project will help provide growers with practical recommendations and technical resources to support successful grape production across the Southern region.

For more information on this project, see projects.sare.org and search for project number **GS25-329**.

Florida

\$1,122,133 Funded Throughout 2025

Professional Development Program

SPDP25-035 - Organic Systems Training for Southern Technical Service Providers and Extension Specialists, \$79,975.00, Organic Farming Research Foundation

On-Farm Research Grants

OS25-183 - Evaluating Edamame as a New Crop for South Florida: On-Farm Trials to Support Adoption and Sustainability, \$29,995.00, University of Florida, Tropical Research and Education Center

OS25-182 - Oyster Domestication and Seed Production to Support the Industry on Florida's East Coast, \$29,995.00, University of Florida

Graduate Student Grants

GS25-317 - Finding the Needle in a Haystack: Creating a qPCR Test to Locate a Threat to Sustainability Hiding Among Symptomless Strawberry Transplants. \$21,997.00, University of Florida

GS25-324 - Optimizing genomic selection for breeding heat-tolerant cultivars in tomato. \$21,939.00, University of Florida

GS25-325 - Unraveling the interplay between host genetics, immunity, and microbiota in gastrointestinal parasite resistance in Florida Native sheep \$21,995.00, University of Florida

For more information on these funded projects, visit southernsare.org



8 Easy Seeds to Save in North Florida

This product is associated with the project "Local Food Needs Local Seed: Increasing Production and Use of Locally Adapted Seed with Farm to Community Network"

Research and Education Grants

LS25-409 - Breeding of companion plants selected for characters improving attraction and survival of beneficial insects, \$397,314.00, University of Florida

LS25-411 - Tree intercropping: An agroecological approach to more resilient and sustainable citrus production, \$399,609.00, University of Florida

Education Grants

EDS25-079 - On-Farm Feed Formulation and Manufacturing Training for Small and Medium-Scale Poultry and Swine Farmers in North Florida, \$49,882.00, Florida A and M University

EDS25-082 - Mobile-Friendly Food Safety Education for Short-term Volunteers in Food and Agricultural Nonprofit Organizations, \$49,812.00, University of Florida

Producer Grants

FS25-383 - Enhancing Pecan Orchard Sustainability Through No-Till Perennial Peanut Establishment and Cattle Grazing Management. \$19,620, Mark Brown

**\$11.4***million in total
funding***238***grant projects
funded since 1988**Funding totals include
funding outside of Southern
SARE's six grant programs.*

Project Highlights

Building a Community Apiary in Jacksonville

White Harvest Farms in Jacksonville's Moncrief Springs neighborhood partnered with The Herban Bee and the Clara White Mission to expand beekeeping education through a Southern SARE Education Grant (EDS22-34). Through this grant, the Community Apiary grew from 15 to 25 hives while training beginning beekeepers through a structured two-year internship program.

Led by beekeeper Mika Hardison, interns received both classroom and hands-on education covering hive establishment, pest and disease management, honey processing, and value-added product development. Participants also learned marketing and business skills to support beekeeping as a sustainable enterprise. By the end of the project, 28 interns had graduated from the program, and more than 60 farmers and community members had engaged in apiary-related education and demonstrations.

This project is rooted in Moncrief Springs, a neighborhood with deep agricultural traditions. White Harvest Farms and The Herban Bee also developed a pollinator crop management plan to support honeybee forage and other beneficial insects throughout the year. Cover crops and habitat plantings were integrated into White Harvest Farms' rotation, showing how beekeeping can be tied to broader sustainable farming practices. This work not only provided new opportunities for small-scale and beginning farmers but also strengthened community connections around food, farming, and entrepreneurship.

For more information on this project, see projects.sare.org and search for project number **EDS22-34**.

Georgia

\$728,951 Funded Throughout 2025

Research and Education Grants

LS25-404 - Evaluation of Ultraviolet Light as a Sustainable Disease Management Strategy for Southeastern Onion Production, \$399,926.00, University of Georgia

Professional Development Program

SPDP25-038 - A S.E.A.T. (Strategic Empowerment of Agriculture Teachers) at the Table with MANRRS, \$79,970.00, Animal and Dairy Sciences Mississippi State University

On-Farm Research Grants

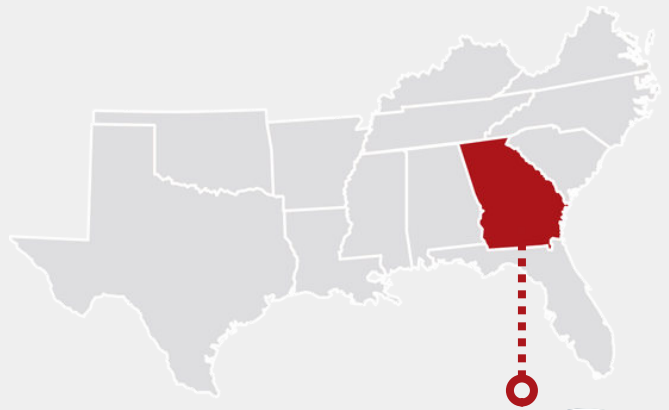
OS25-188 - Sustainable pepper weevil management by integration of kaolin clay and oviposition deterring pheromone, \$29,499.00, University of Florida

Graduate Student Grants

GS25-330 - Advancing Sustainable Agriculture with Mobile Fruit Processing: A Feasibility Study on Upcycling Underutilized Produce in Georgia. \$21,143.00, University of Georgia

GS25-331 - Breeding for Resistance: Genetic Mapping and Identification of Powdery Mildew Resistance in Squash, \$21,683.00, University of Georgia

GS25-332 - Rapid and Non-Destructive Detection of Aflatoxin in Post-harvest Peanuts Using Advanced Imaging Approaches for Enhanced Food Safety, \$22,000.00, University of Georgia



Available Educational Publications

[Tractor Implements Fact Sheet](#)

[Tractor Implements & Soil Prep Handout](#)

[Small Engine Troubleshooting Guide](#)

Education Grants

EDS25-075 - Empowering Rural Georgia: Mental Health Support and Education for Rural Georgia Farmers, \$49,976.00, Mercer University

EDS25-078 - Demonstration of and Education on Small-Scale Biogas Digesters in African-American Communities, \$50,000.00, HBCU Green Fund

Producer Grants

FS25-378 - Evaluating the Viability of Raising Pacific White Shrimp (*Litopenaeus Vannamei*) Aquaponically in Freshwater. \$19,904.00, Pangea Farms LLC

FS25-385 - Small Farms, Premium Products: Testing Medicinal Herb Value-Add Products and Cooperative Marketing Strategies in Georgia. \$20,000.00, Sunbottle Farms LLC

FS25-389 - Investigating the Impact of Biochar Application Rates in Southeastern Forests on Herbaceous Forage Quality and Silvopasture Habitat at Frolona Farm. \$14,850.00, Frolona Farm

For more information on these funded projects, visit southernsare.org

**\$15***million in total
funding***196***grant projects
funded since 1988**Funding totals include
funding outside of Southern
SARE's six grant programs.*

Project Highlights

Research for the Validation of Regenerative Citrus in Georgia

Squeeze Citrus LLC is leading innovative research on how regenerative practices can improve citrus production in Georgia's growing "cold hardy" citrus industry. This work is supported through a Southern SARE Producer Grant (FS23-349). Grower Herb Young is testing soil health strategies and compost-based amendments to build a thriving microbial ecosystem. The goal is to strengthen trees against pests and cold stress while also increasing the nutrient density of fruit.

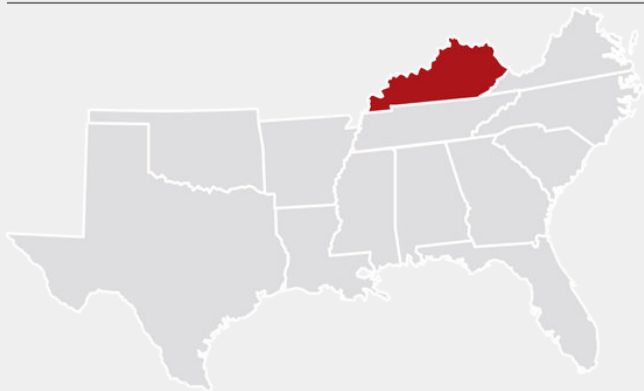
Herb Young's field trials compare regenerative and conventional production systems. His research also evaluates different compost sources and compost teas. Measurements focus on tree growth, leaf flush, and soil biology. Early results show that regenerative practices can raise soil organic matter and improve porosity while supporting fungal diversity. Higher BRIX levels in citrus leaves are also linked to reduced insect feeding and greater freeze protection. These outcomes lower production costs and position regenerative fruit for premium markets such as CSAs, restaurants, and "food as medicine" outlets.

Outreach has been central to the project. Young has presented findings at citrus association meetings and regenerative farming conferences. He has also shared results through Acres Magazine, the Regenerative Agriculture Podcast, and a widely viewed farm tour on YouTube. With interest growing across Georgia and beyond, this work is showing farmers the economic and ecological potential of regenerative practices in perennial fruit systems.

For more information on this project, see projects.sare.org and search for project number **FS23-349**.

Kentucky

\$525,861 Funded Throughout 2025



Urban Agriculture Initiatives in Kentucky: Empowering Communities and Driving Research

“ Providing fresh local produce is so essential to making cities stronger, more sustainable, and more resilient. ”
– Bethany Harris

Research and Education Grants

LS25-401 - Building Foundations for Perennial Grain Agriculture in the Southeast, \$399,781.00, University of Kentucky

Professional Development Program

SPDP25-039 - Creating an Ag Professional Support System for Refugee and Immigrant Farmers, \$77,042.00, University of Kentucky

Education Grants

EDS25-083 - Urban Farmers and Food Systems in Kentucky, \$49,038.00, University of Kentucky

For more information on these funded projects, visit southernsare.org



**\$6.6***million in total
funding***126***grant projects
funded since 1988*

*Funding totals include
funding outside of Southern
SARE's six grant programs.*

Project Highlights

Yaks Add Farm Diversification in Kentucky

Yaks are gaining attention as an alternative livestock option for small farms in Kentucky and the Southeast. Dr. Jeff Lehmkuhler and collaborators at the University of Kentucky are documenting yak performance in forage-based systems through a Southern SARE On-Farm Research Grant (OS22-157). The project is evaluating seasonal growth patterns, winter feeding needs, and meat quality. Results so far show that yaks can thrive in both pasture and hay-based systems. Their meat is lean, protein-rich, and comparable to bison.

On-farm studies have measured weight gains across grazing and hay feeding seasons, tracked forage intake, and compared yak meat to beef and bison for protein and fat content. Chefs who tested yak meat reported positive feedback and interest in adding it to menus, highlighting potential for niche markets. Outreach has included producer consultations, webinars, and the Scientific Knowledge Advancement of Yaks (SKAY) conference, expanding awareness of yak production across the region.

Educational resources developed through this project include recordkeeping guides, enterprise budgets, and husbandry factsheets. Together, these tools provide a practical foundation for U.S. farmers who are exploring yaks as a way to expand their operations and enter specialty meat markets.

For more information on this project, see projects.sare.org and search for project number **OS22-157**.

Louisiana

\$70,224 Funded Throughout 2025



Project Report!

Use of Sunn Hemp as Weed Suppression and Technique for Reducing Tillage to Allow Marketable Summer Crop Production

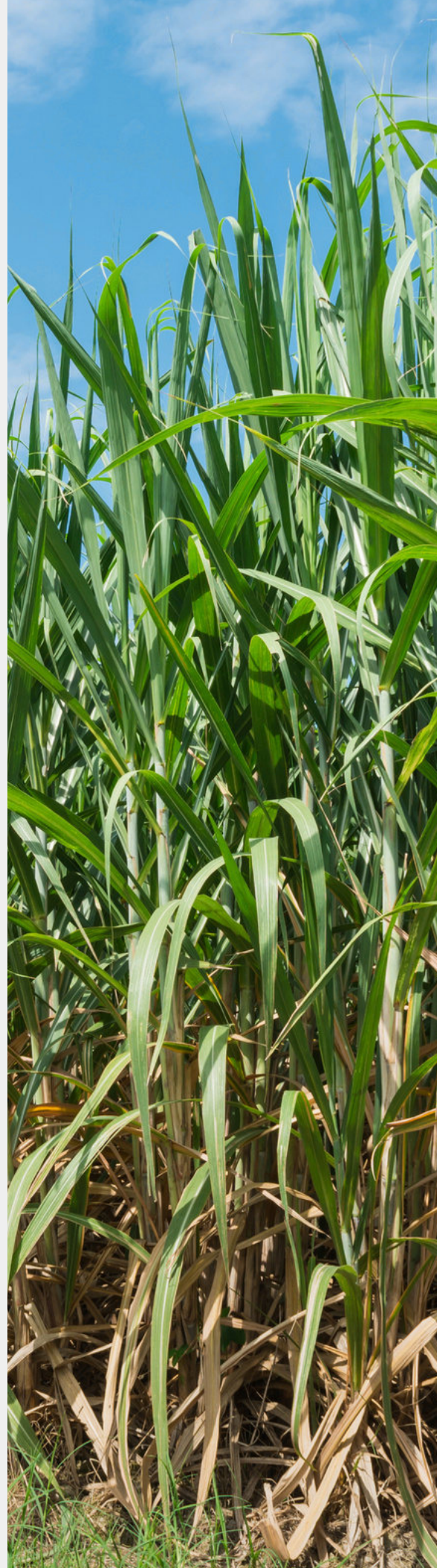
Graduate Student Grants

GS25-321- Quantifying Sugarcane Yellow Leaf Virus Tissue Tropism Patterns and Yield Impacts to Support Sustainable Sugarcane Production in Louisiana, \$20,224.00, Louisiana State University

Education Grants

EDS25-073 - Louisiana Food Systems Fellowship; Preparing Community Leaders for Transformative Food Policy Action \$50,000.00, Louisiana Central

For more information on these funded projects, visit **southernsare.org**



**\$2.3***million in total
funding***64***grant projects
funded since 1988*

Project Highlights

*Funding totals include
funding outside of Southern
SARE's six grant programs.*

Conservation Plantings Support Beneficial Insects in Louisiana Soybeans

At Louisiana State University, graduate researcher Scott Lee studied how conservation plantings influence beneficial and pest insect populations in soybean systems. Through a Southern SARE Graduate Student Grant (**GS21-240**), the project monitored arthropod activity in buffer strips, shelterbelts, and orchards located near soybean fields. One of the sites included a cooperating farm enrolled in USDA's Conservation Stewardship Program.

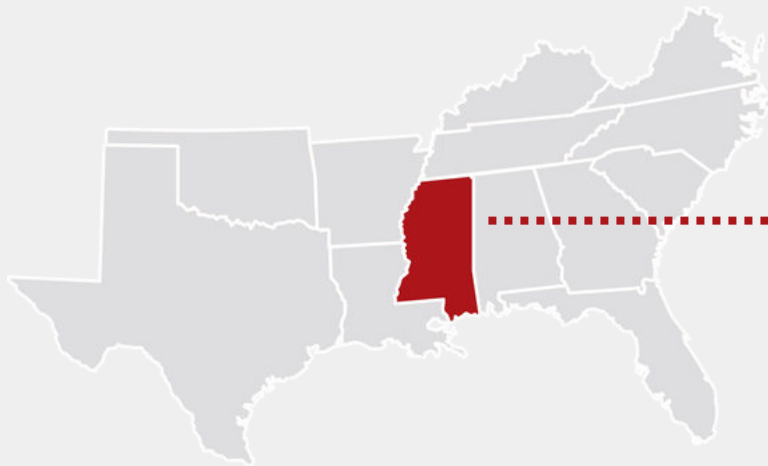
Over two growing seasons, surveys recorded high numbers of beneficial predator groups. These included spiders, ants, and predatory Hemiptera within the conservation plantings. Some soybean pests, including stink bugs were also present. However, their numbers were much lower than natural enemies. Mark-and-capture methods confirmed that more predators than pests moved from conservation areas into adjacent soybean fields. These findings suggest that conservation plantings can serve as important habitat for natural enemies and may provide pest management benefits for Louisiana soybean growers.

Outreach from this project included a published SARE web article, presentations at grower and entomological meetings, and consultations with farmers. Educational resources are helping to show that practices supported through the Conservation Stewardship Program can contribute not only to soil and habitat health but also to more sustainable insect management in large-scale crop systems.

For more information on this project, see projects.sare.org and search for project number GS21-240.

Mississippi

\$80,000 Funded Throughout 2025



Learn More!

A tool for goat breeders to simulate the real-world performance of their animals is helping to strengthen the animal industry, not only in Mississippi, but across the Southeast.

Professional Development Program

SPDP25-033 - Developing a Hydroponic Training Program for Southeastern Extension Agents and Mentor Farmers, \$80,000.00, Mississippi State University



“*The southeastern U.S. faces challenges in horticultural production due to hot, humid, and long summers that exacerbate issues such as severe weed, soil-borne pests, and diseases. Hydroponic cultivation offers a sustainable solution by minimizing pesticide use and facilitating year-round crop production in controlled environments like high tunnels, greenhouses, and indoor spaces.*

This method also extends the growing season beyond traditional periods, reducing market competition and enhancing profitability. However, professional training on hydroponic practices is limited in Mississippi and surrounding states. ”

– Dr. Qianwen Zhang, Principal Investigator
Mississippi State University

For more information on these funded projects, visit southernsare.org

**\$3.9***million in total
funding***73***grant projects
funded since 1988**Funding totals include
funding outside of Southern
SARE's six grant programs.*

Project Highlights

Cover Crops and Soil Carbon in the Mississippi Delta

At Mississippi State University, Dr. Varun Paul is studying how cover crops influence soil health in the Delta. Through a Southern SARE On-Farm Research Grant (OS22-155), the project worked with two farmers in Panola and Bolivar counties. Researchers measured soil organic carbon, microbial biomass, and other indicators of soil health in fields with both long-term and newly adopted cover crop systems.

Over two years, the study compared fields planted with cereal rye, Austrian winter peas, and radish to control plots with no cover crops. Overall, results were mixed. In Panola County, where cover crops have been used for eight years, fields showed slightly higher microbial activity and indicators of biological soil health. In Bolivar County, where cover crops were more recently adopted, soils showed marginally higher levels of soil organic carbon. These findings suggest that long-term adoption may be needed for consistent improvements in soil quality and overall soil function.

The project also engaged farmers through field days and the Master Irrigator Program, reaching more than 90 producers and extension agents. Participants identified soil health, erosion control, and water management as leading reasons to adopt cover crops. They also noted challenges, including extended spring moisture and seed costs. This research highlights both the potential benefits and practical considerations associated with incorporating cover crops into Delta production systems.

For more information on this project, see projects.sare.org and search for project number **OS22-155**.

North Carolina

Funding Highlights

\$240,546 Funded Throughout 2025



Southern SARE Awards Young Scholar Enhancement Grants for 2025

Professional Development Program

SPDP25-037 - Expanding Awareness and Participation in the Eastern North Carolina Aquaculture Industry, \$89,285.00, Carteret Community College

Education Grants

EDS25-076 - Cultivating Resilience - A Holistic Approach to Small-Scale, Sustainable Farm Success, \$50,000.00, Organic Growers School

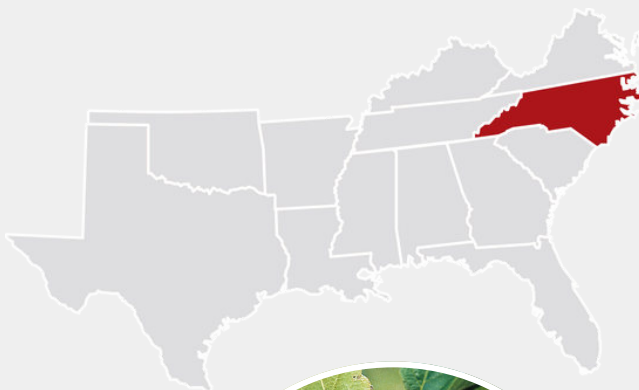
EDS25-084 - Empowering Small Fruit Growers with Educational Tools Against Mite and Thrips Pests, \$41,910.00, North Carolina State University

Producer Grants

FS25-381 - Extending Sustainability and Regenerative Ag Into Traditional Grain and Cash Crop Production. \$19,688.000, Z3 Agriculture LLC

FS25-386 - Mycelium-Driven Soil Recovery: Sustainable Solutions for Post-Disaster Agriculture. \$19,663.00, Black Trumpet Farm

FS25-390 - Evaluation of Bamboo as a Silica-Rich Mulch for Apple Trees, \$20,000.00, Kordick Family Farm



“ We propose the use of locally sourced bamboo as a sustainable mulch for apple trees. In our area there are several stands of bamboo that were planted decades ago which can serve as a renewable source of mulch material.

Bamboo mulch has numerous advantages over hay. First, it degrades much more slowly and, therefore, will require fewer applications which translates to reduced labor and associated costs. ”

– Dr. Dorsey Kordick,
Producer Grant Recipient
Kordick Family Farm

For more information on these funded projects, visit southernsare.org

**\$17.8***million in total
funding***279***grant projects
funded since 1988*

*Funding totals include
funding outside of Southern
SARE's six grant programs.*

Project Highlights

Reviving Chestnuts in North Carolina Through Curing Science

In North Carolina's Blue Ridge Mountains, Mountain Grown Chestnuts is working to improve the consumer experience with this historic crop. Through a Southern SARE Producer Grant (FS23-355), grower Dr. Ronald Fritz is studying how harvest timing, nut size, color, and storage conditions influence the sweetness and moisture of Dunstan chestnuts.

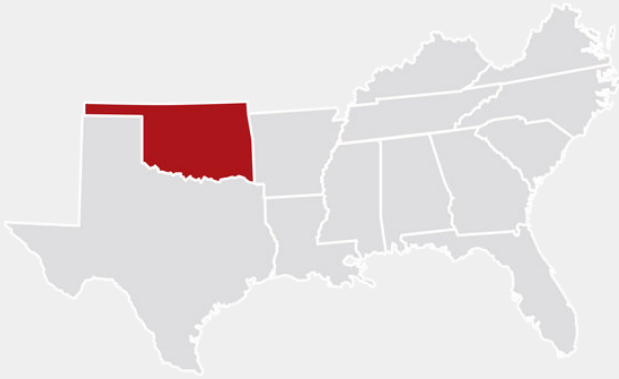
Chestnuts are traditionally cured at cool temperatures and high humidity to preserve quality, but it can be difficult to know when they have reached peak flavor. This project uses controlled experiments and laboratory analysis at NC State University's Plants for Human Health Institute to develop practical guidelines for farmers and consumers. By tracking changes in soluble solids (a measure of sweetness) and moisture content, researchers are creating curing curves that predict when chestnuts will be ready to eat.

The goal is to give growers tools to deliver consistently sweet, high-quality chestnuts to help consumers avoid under-cured nuts that taste bland or over-cured ones that become dry. Findings will be shared through peer-reviewed publications and extension resources. Beyond improving market demand, this work also supports the larger revival of chestnut production in Appalachia. Chestnuts were once a staple of the region before the blight of the early 1900s.

For more information on this project, see projects.sare.org and search for project number **FS23-355**.

Oklahoma

\$70,000 Funded Throughout 2025



Education Grants

EDS25-081 - Sustainable Fruit, Vegetable, and Traditional Indian Crop Production Through Multigenerational Education of Delaware Indian Tribe Members, \$50,000.00, Delaware Tribe of Indians

Producer Grants

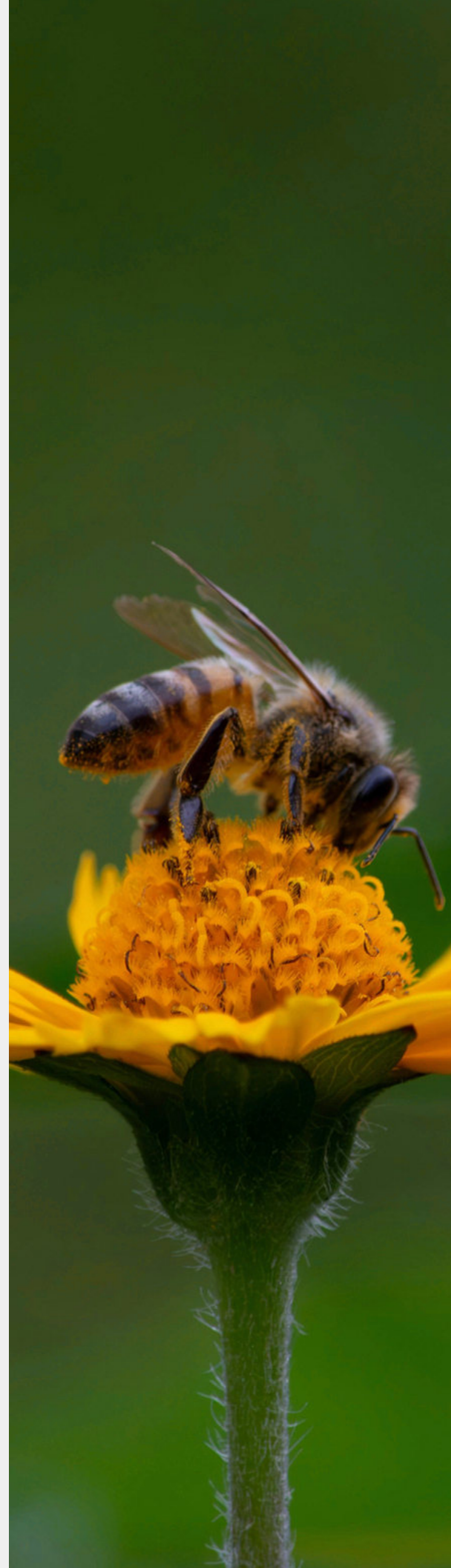
FS25-377 - Understanding the Oklahoma Honeybee Pest and Disease Landscape Through Feral Colony Trapping, \$20,000, John 3:16 Mission

Understanding the Oklahoma Honeybee Pest and Disease Landscape through Feral Colony Trapping

Tulsa beekeeper Hollie Dalenberg is banking on a hunch that feral honeybees – from managed colonies which have escaped or swarmed into the wild, may be more likely to survive high pest and disease loads through natural selection. Those wild colonies may hold the key to better bee health in managed hives.

[Learn More](#)

For more information on these funded projects, visit [**southernsare.org**](https://southernsare.org)



**\$4.9***million in total
funding***64***grant projects
funded since 1988*

*Funding totals include
funding outside of Southern
SARE's six grant programs.*

Project Highlights

Extending Tomato Season with High and Micro-Tunnels

In Oklahoma and South Texas, open-field tomato growers face several major challenges. Late spring frosts, early summer heat, and heavy insect and disease pressure reduce yield and quality. These conditions also shorten the production window, making it hard for local farmers to compete with tomatoes shipped from other regions.

With support from a Southern SARE Research and Education Grant (**LS24-392**), Langston University and Texas A&M AgriLife Research are testing cost-effective high tunnel and micro-tunnel systems to extend the season. These structures allow earlier planting and provide protection from extreme weather. They also make irrigation, mulch use, and fertilization more efficient. By producing high-quality tomatoes up to six weeks earlier than field harvests, farmers may capture premium local prices.

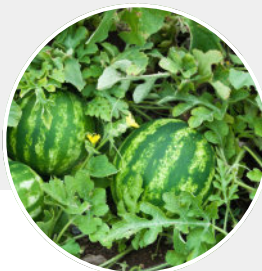
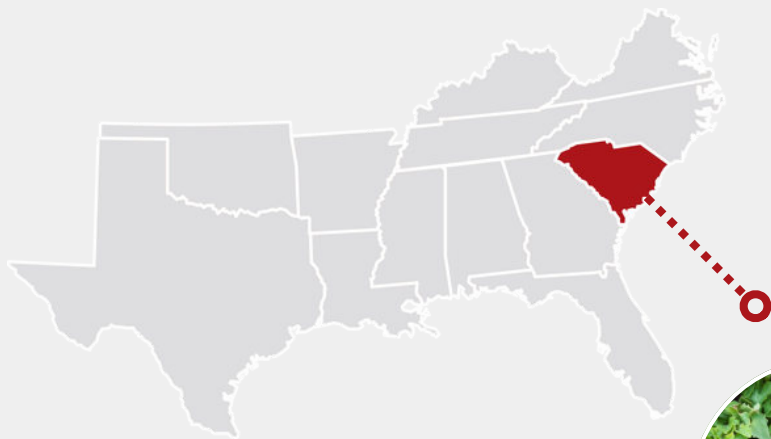
Trials in both Oklahoma and South Texas are evaluating beefsteak and cherry cultivars. Early results show that protected systems boost yields, improve fruit quality, and reduce losses from heat or disease. Field days and workshops are sharing these findings, while economic analyses assess whether tunnel production is financially viable for small and minority farmers.

So far, growers and students involved in the project are gaining hands-on training in tunnel management, irrigation scheduling, and data collection. More than 40 farmers have participated in demonstrations. Many report that the ability to plant earlier, extend harvests, and produce consistently high quality tomatoes could make protected cultivation a profitable option across the region.

For more information on this project, see projects.sare.org and search for project number **LS24-392**.

South Carolina

\$475,442 Funded Throughout 2025



Strengthening the Organic Watermelon Industry in South Carolina

Researchers with Clemson University are seeking to strengthen the organic watermelon industry in South Carolina through a series of studies that focus on weed and soilborne pathogen control, best carbon sources for yields and soil health, and cultivar tolerance to saltwater intrusion.

Research and Education Grants

LS25-403 - Evaluating Forage-Based Strategies to Improve Sustainability and Resilience of Perennial Forage Ecosystems, \$396,277.00, Clemson University

Producer Grants

SPDP25-040 - Building Educational Capacity to Enhance the Implementation of Sustainable Livestock Production Strategies in the Southeast Region, \$79,165.00, Clemson University

For more information on these funded projects, visit [**southernsare.org**](https://southernsare.org)



**\$6.4***million in total
funding***97***grant projects
funded since 1988**Funding totals include
funding outside of Southern
SARE's six grant programs.*

Project Highlights

Training to Prevent Harmful Algae Blooms

In South Carolina, harmful algal blooms (HABs) are becoming a growing concern for livestock producers. Warmer temperatures and changing rainfall patterns now cause blooms to appear earlier and last longer. This creates risks for animal health, water quality, and farm sustainability.

With support from a Southern SARE Professional Development Program Grant (SPDP21-01), Clemson University and South Carolina State University are training Extension agents, NRCS staff, and agricultural advisors on HAB management. The program provides science-based manuals, factsheets, and a pocket field guide to help professionals identify and respond to cyanobacteria in ponds.

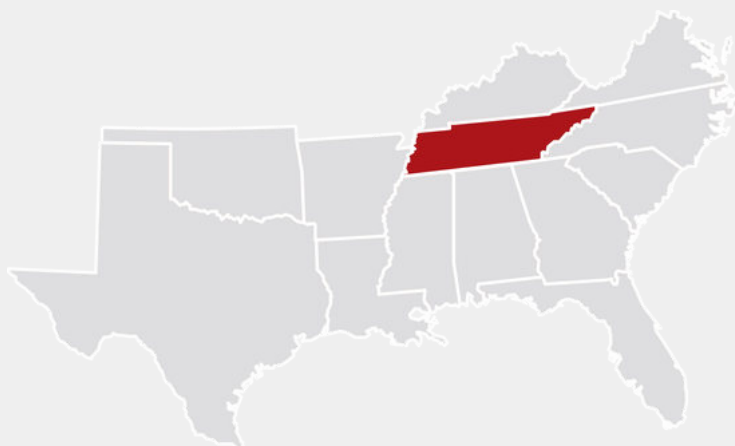
Training includes workshops, webinars, and field demonstrations across the state. More than 75 Extension personnel, agency staff, and farmers have learned how to monitor ponds and recognize bloom conditions. They have also been trained on applying treatment options such as aeration or floating wetlands.

The goal is to ensure agricultural professionals have the knowledge and tools to support farmers in protecting their water sources. Participants report greater confidence in addressing HAB problems, and many already used the materials in their own outreach.

For more information on this project, see projects.sare.org and search for project number **SPDP21-01**.

Tennessee

\$127,550 Funded Throughout 2025



On-Farm Research Grants

OS25-184 - Novel Soil Moisture Sensing and Irrigation Management Robot for Sustainable Strawberry Farming, \$29,973.00, Middle Tennessee State University

“ The smart and integrated smart moisture sensors and robotics platforms are able to provide a cost effective and integrated solution for diversified strawberry farms to manage irrigation effectively with a limited investment. It will save an extensive amount of labor to manage the irrigation for the maximum yield of the strawberry.

– Hongbo Zhang, Principal Investigator
Middle Tennessee State University

Graduate Student Grants

GS25-322 - Assessing Farmland Potential for Regenerative Specialty Crop Production: Developing a Digital Decision-Support Tool, \$17,677.00, University of Memphis-CAESER

Producer Grants

SPDP25-034 - Soil Life/Suelo Vivo: Training Resources for Identifying and Supporting Soil Invertebrates for Soil Health, \$79,900.00, The Xerces Society

For more information on these funded projects, visit southernsare.org



**\$4.8***million in total
funding***105***grant projects
funded since 1988*

*Funding totals include
funding outside of Southern
SARE's six grant programs.*

Project Highlights

Turning Mushroom Waste into New Revenue

In Tennessee, Henosis Farm is finding new value in mushroom production waste. Instead of discarding spent substrate blocks from oyster, shiitake, and lion's mane mushroom production, the farm transforms them into compost and uses the material to grow Almond Portobello mushrooms. With support from a Southern SARE Farmer/Rancher Grant (FS21-331), Henosis evaluated whether this approach could reduce waste while creating new revenue opportunities.

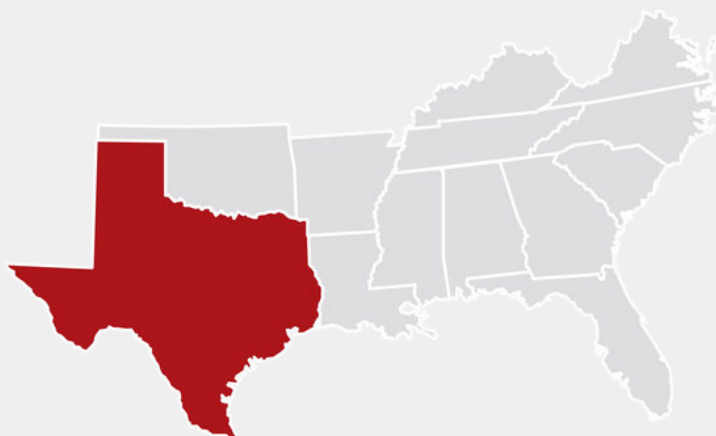
The project demonstrated that spent mushroom substrate can be successfully composted and repurposed for secondary mushroom production. Researchers found that Almond Portobello mushrooms could be cultivated using the recycled material while also producing a nutrient-rich compost that can be used on-farm or sold to other growers. The compost provides an additional product stream while helping farms make better use of existing resources. Economic analysis showed promising results. A 50-block production batch generated approximately 12.5 pounds of mushrooms, producing about \$300 in revenue with labor costs of roughly \$150 per batch.

Additional income could be generated through compost sales, resulting in an estimated profit of \$157 to \$163 per batch. Researchers estimated that farms operating two batches per week could generate more than \$16,000 in annual profit while reducing disposal costs and creating value from production byproducts. Through farm tours, demonstrations, and online outreach, the project shared practical composting and production methods with other specialty mushroom growers. The results highlight how diversified production systems can improve resource efficiency, create new market opportunities, and strengthen farm profitability.

For more information on this project, see projects.sare.org and search for project number **FS21-331**.

Texas

**\$1,029,219 Funded
Throughout 2025**



Professional Development Program

SPDP25-038 - A S.E.A.T. (Strategic Empowerment of Agriculture Teachers) at the Table with MANRRS, \$79,970.00, Animal and Dairy Sciences Mississippi State University

On-Farm Research Grants

OS25-186 - Nutritional Hi-A Corn Tortillas and Chips for Healthy Living and Sustainable Agriculture, \$30,000.00, Texas A&M AgriLife Research

Graduate Student Grants

GS25-323 - Development of Nutrient-Enriched Silage Sorghum Through Strategic Crossbreeding and Marker-Assisted Selection, \$22,000.00, Texas Tech University

GS25-327 - Improvement of Salinity Stress Tolerance in Onion and Watermelon for Resilient Crop Production in Southern United States, \$22,000.00, Texas A&M AgriLife Research



Research and Education Grants

LS25-407 - Diverse, Underutilized Native Legume Ecotypic Seed for Climate-Smart Grasslands in the Southeastern USA, \$376,083.00, Texas A&M AgriLife Research

LS25-410 - Towards Culturally Responsive Disaster Management for Limited Resources Producers: The Role of Person, Place, and Professional Agencies II, \$399,916.00, Prairie View A&M University

Education Grants

EDS25-074 - Empowering Communities with Mushroom-Based Solutions, \$49,250.00, Central Texas Mycological Society

EDS25-077 - Enhancing Educational Opportunities for New American Farmers in Greater Houston, TX, \$50,000.00, Plant It Forward



For more information on these funded projects, visit southernsare.org

**\$13.2***million in total
funding***174***grant projects
funded since 1988**Funding totals include
funding outside of Southern
SARE's six grant programs.*

Project Highlights

Using Moringa to Cut Feed Costs for Lamb

In Texas' Rio Grande Valley, drought and rising feed prices have made it increasingly difficult for small farms to raise lambs sustainably. Padilla Farm is exploring whether *Moringa oleifera*, a drought-tolerant, high-protein plant, can be used as a cost-effective feed supplement. With support from a Southern SARE Producer Grant (FS23-348), the farm compared lambs raised on standard pasture and pellet diets with lambs fed pellets made from Moringa grown on-site.

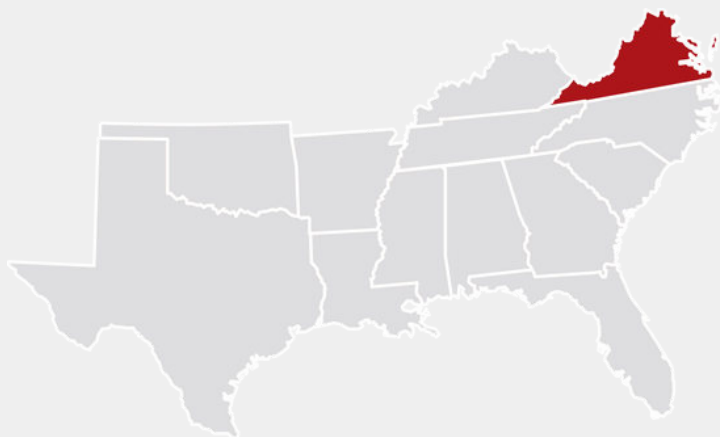
Moringa meal contains protein levels comparable to alfalfa and soy, but it requires less water to grow. Trials tested replacement levels ranging from 15% to 100% of lamb feed. Early results showed that lambs supplemented with Moringa maintain healthy weight gains while reducing overall feed costs. Farmers also reported improved coat and udder health in ewes, with no negative effects on lamb growth or survival.

Cost analyses suggested that incorporating Moringa could reduce feed expenses by nearly one-third. This practice could help small farms remain financially viable during drought while moving closer to organic certification by producing more feed on-farm. Outreach efforts included field demonstrations and a planned community event where farmers, ranchers, and chefs will taste-test lambs raised under different feeding conditions. These activities have helped spread awareness of Moringa's potential as a sustainable feed option across the region.

For more information on this project, see projects.sare.org and search for project number **FS23-348**.

Virginia

**\$600,038 Funded
Throughout 2025**



On-Farm Research Grants

OS25-187 - Creating Sustainable Construction Opportunities Using Virginia Wool, \$29,475.00, Virginia Tech

OS25-190 - Reducing Early Season Cucumber Beetle Pressure with a Semiochemical Augmented Trap-Out Approach, \$29,206.00, Virginia Tech

Producer Grants

FS25-379 - Comparing the Profitability of Five Winter Salad Greens Under Heated, Minimally Heated, and Unheated High Tunnel Conditions. \$16,610.00, Crooked Porch Farm

FS25-384 - Systems Approach to Building Whole Farm Health and Vibrant Agrarian Communities: Viability of Intercropping and Livestock Integration on Southwest VA \$20,000.00, Green Sprig Ag

FS25-387 - Supporting African Crop Growers in Virginia: Cultivating Fresh Vegetables and Accessing Markets, \$18,800.00, Esther Manor Farm

Research and Education Grants

LS25-402 - Living Understories in Apple Orchards for Improved Quality of Fruit, Cider, and Rural Life, \$399,974.00, Virginia Tech

Graduate Student Grants

GS25-320 - The Impacts of Mustard Cover Crops and Seed Meal on Non-Target Soil Arthropods, Microbial Community, and Crop Productivity, \$22,000.00, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

GS25-328 - Quantifying Cattle Surface Water Use in Response to Fescue Toxicosis, \$21,875.00, Virginia Tech

GS25-333 - Alternative Approaches to Diamondback Moth Management: An Analysis of Mating Disruption Techniques in Virginia, \$22,000.00, Virginia Tech

GS25-334 - Sustainable Green Corn Ceremony Restoration Program at a Land Grant Institution (SGCRP), \$20,098.00, Virginia Tech

“ Centered on the Southeastern Woodlands cultures, researchers investigate how cultural connectedness influences engagement in sustainable agricultural practices. The Indigenous Community Garden at Virginia Tech (ICG) is a living site for this work, demonstrating how a land-grant institution can support Indigenous food sovereignty and community ceremony guided by Indigenous seasonal calendars. The project seeks to establish a model that informs curriculum development and institutional practice, fostering deeper respect and integration for TEK within Western academia. ”

For more information on these funded projects, visit southernsare.org

**\$8.2***million in total
funding***169***grant projects
funded since 1988**Funding totals include
funding outside of Southern
SARE's six grant programs.*

Project Highlights

Empowering Farmers, Market Managers, and Volunteers to Safely Address Food Insecurity

In Virginia, many farms and farmers markets face challenges donating surplus produce due to food safety concerns and lack of guidance. With support from a Southern SARE Education Grant (EDS22-37), Virginia Tech and the Society of St. Andrew created training resources to make food recovery safer and easier. The team produced short, practical videos for farmers, farmers market managers, and gleaning volunteers.

More than 500 volunteers have already completed the gleaner training, reporting greater knowledge and confidence in safe practices. Surveys showed increases in understanding of foodborne illness risks, proper handwashing, and clean transport. Farmers and market managers also received resources they can use with staff and vendors to reduce risks and support donations.

By addressing liability concerns and improving food safety awareness, this project is helping more fresh produce reach families in need. It also supports farmers with potential tax benefits, strengthens community connections, and reduces food waste by keeping quality crops in the food system.

For more information on this project, see projects.sare.org and search for project number **EDS22-37**.

Puerto Rico

**\$571,510 Funded
Throughout 2025**



On-Farm Research Grants

OS25-191 - Pole Beans as a Sustainable Alternative to Enhance Farm Productivity and Soil Health, \$29,901.00, Arte-Suelo-Ser

Producer Grants

FS25-380 - Integrating Fermented Organic Solutions and Precision Agriculture for Enhanced Soil Health and Sustainable Cacao Production in Puerto Rico, \$19,991.00, Finca La Providencia LLC



Research and Education Grants

LS25-406 - Building Resilience Through Climate-Adaptive Pest Management Practices Among Underrepresented Vegetable Farmers in Puerto Rico, \$399,934.00, University of Florida

Education Grants

EDS25-072 - Agroforestry and Earthworks Education for Erosion Control and Increased Resiliency in Rural Mountainous Farms of Puerto Rico, \$49,998.00, Plenitud PR

EDS25-080 - Developing Learning Communities of Farmers and Educators to Promote Root and Tuber Crops Cultivation in Response to Food Security and Climate Change, \$49,999.00, University of Puerto Rico Mayaguez Campus

Graduate Student Grants

GS25-326 - Arthropod Communities and Their Role in Litter Decomposition and Soil Fertility in Urban Forest Growing on Artificial Fill Substrates, \$21,687.00, University of Puerto Rico

For more information on these funded projects, visit southernsare.org

**\$2.8***million in total
funding***49***grant projects
funded since 1988**Funding totals include
funding outside of Southern
SARE's six grant programs.*

Project Highlights

An Agro-Ecological Incubator and Educational Programs for Beginner Farmers in Western Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico imports more than 90% of its food, and the average age of farmers in the island's mountainous western region is over 60. With the support from a Southern SARE Education Grant (EDS22-42), Plenitud PR and partners launched an agroecological incubator and training programs to support beginner farmers. The project provided a five-month apprenticeship for 42 participants, a six-month mentorship for four farmers, and internships for eight more. In addition, six farmers joined a small business incubator where they developed crop and business plans, gained market gardening skills, and received legal and financial support.

Education materials were also expanded, including the distribution of more than 1,800 copies of ¡Simbra Boricua!, a Spanish-language sustainable agriculture manual. New crop planning and farm management tools, marketing resources, and outreach campaigns reached more than 17,000 people. As a result, 45 farmers adopted new practices, and the project strengthened collaboration across a growing network of small sustainable farms in western Puerto Rico. By providing mentorship, resources, and consumer education, the program is helping to build the next generation of resilient farmers and increase food security on the island.

For more information on this project, see projects.sare.org and search for project number **EDS22-41**.

U.S. Virgin Islands

\$71,680 Funded Throughout 2025



New! Launching Virtual and Live Youth Sustainable Educational Agriculture Program

Producer Grants

FS25-388 - The Use of Vetiver Grass For Stabilization and Remediation of Farm Ponds, \$19,980, Paradise Farm

“ Vetiver grass (*Chrysopogon zizanioides* L. Roberty) is a tropical, fast-growing perennial bunch grass with a fibrous, dense and deep root system. It has been used for hundreds of years and is capable of surviving for decades. It is noninvasive, as it does not produce fertile seed, nor does it have lateral roots.

Vetiver Grass Technology is the use of vetiver grass to prevent soil erosion, conserve water, manage storm water, prevent landslides, and provide phytoremediation. It is used in over 100 countries worldwide and is promoted by Vetiver Network International. ”

– Dr. Laura Martin,
Producer Grant Recipient
Paradise Farm



For more information on these funded projects, visit southernsare.org

**\$1.5***million in total
funding***26***grant projects
funded since 1988**Funding totals include
funding outside of Southern
SARE's six grant programs.*

Project Highlights

Testing Landscape for Sustainable School Food Production

In the U.S. Virgin Islands, high weed pressure, heavy rains, and intense sun make it difficult for farmers to maintain production without relying on pesticides or heavy labor. With support from a Southern SARE Producer Grant (FS23-354), the Virgin Islands Farmer Alliance is testing landscape fabric as a tool to improve weed control and reduce pesticide use. Landscape fabric blocks sunlight to suppress weeds. It also stabilizes soil moisture by reducing evaporation and protects soil from heavy rainfall. By limiting weed growth, the fabric also helps reduce pest habitat, contributing to more resilient production systems.

The project builds on previous SARE-funded research that identified crop varieties well suited to the subtropical climate. Trials are now evaluating how these varieties perform with the added benefits of landscape fabric, focusing on yield, disease resistance, and heat tolerance. Early results suggest that fabric use may increase efficiency by reducing labor demands while supporting higher-quality harvests.

This work provides valuable guidance for farmers across the Virgin Islands who are seeking more sustainable and cost-effective methods to grow food for schools and the local markets. By developing low-input systems that improve production while protecting chemical use, the project is helping strengthen local agriculture and ensure that students have access to fresh, healthy food.

For more information on this project, see projects.sare.org and search for project number **FS23-354**.



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