



# Southern SARE/SRDC Sustainable Community Grants

Funded by Southern Region SARE and Southern Rural Development Center

The second round of Sustainable Community Innovation grants, co-funded by Southern Region SARE and the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC), have been announced. Sixteen Southern communities received approximately \$160,000 in grants to implement projects that link sustainable farm and non-farm economic development. With awards up to \$10,000 each, the projects range from establishing farmers' markets to creating awareness of tasty edamame soybeans to surveying whether consumers would pay more for blueberries harvested by workers making a living wage.

While the projects are diverse in subject matter, they share some key characteristics, including their innovative approaches to partnering.

For example, when The Okemah Oklahoma Chamber of Commerce proposed to introduce herbs as a high-value, low-acreage crop to the area, they looked to the local school system and a nearby correctional facility to find prospective growers. Staff from Langston University will help develop an herb farm at J.H. Lilley Corrections Facility where inmates can become skilled at growing, drying and marketing herbs. Students who belong to local 4-H and FFA chapters are using educational materials from OSU Cooperative Extension Service about growing and selling herbs. They also receive assistance to apply for operating loans through the USDA Rural Youth Loans program to establish and operate herb-centered enterprises.

"We are using tribal lands for the herb gardens, and most of the students are tribal members," said Shirley Almerigi, a retired accountant and 4-H volunteer who sees beyond the economic potential of the project. "By introducing the herbs we are expanding their knowledge of foods and seasonings in hopes of combating our mounting problems with diabetes."

To tie it all together, the inmates, students and other growers will take part in a herb festival that will become a new component in Okemah's long-standing heritage celebration—Pioneer Day. (Project CS02-007)



Andy Schroeder gives a first-class hayride around The Cedars Farm during the Prince William County Farm Tour in Virginia. Project CS02-003. Photo by Lisa Schroeder.

In Florida, Harvest for Humanity, a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, is cooperating with the University of Florida, IFAS Center, to improve the quality of life for farm workers through a living wage, affordable housing, education and traditional community support. Under the umbrella of Harvest for Humanity, founders Richard and Florence Nogaj, established the Harvest Farm, the largest blueberry operation in South Florida. The 36-acre farm, currently with 50,000 plants, employs several full-time, salaried farm workers. After five years, the employees will be allowed to purchase the farm through stock options using no-profit, no-interest loans.

The SARE-funded part of this long-term, community effort is to survey whether consumers are willing to pay slightly more for farm products labeled as being USA grown and picked by workers paid a living wage starting at \$8.50 per hour. (Project CS02-008)

A soybean blitz to raise awareness and create demand for the tasty, high-value edamame soybean was the focus of a project led by a consumer Extension agent in Kentucky.

Following production, harvest and storage of test plot beans, the diverse team of producers, Cooperative Extension staff and government officials collaborated with marketing and industry officials in five states to reach growers and consumers through state fairs, television programs, conferences and personal appearances.

The result was a spike in media coverage, consumer demand and grower awareness. Find out more at the web site: [www.edamame.org](http://www.edamame.org). (Project CS02-006)

In Texas the Canutillo Independent School District is developing an agricultural magnet center to train youth and beginning farmers in sustainable agriculture and marketing. Bilingual outreach will multiply the effectiveness of the project. (Project CS03-012)

The Northwest Arkansas Local Food Initiative is promoting All Ozark Meals at area restaurants during the growing season. To be successful, the project requires close coordination of chefs, farmers and a public relations campaign. (Project CS03-014)

# Southern Sustainable Community Innovation Projects

**CS02-001 Agri-tourism: A Strategy Toward Sustainable Farm, Business, Family and Community**, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, VA, \$8,230, D. Brian Calhoun, Ph: 540-469-4030, dcalhoun@vt.edu

**CS02-002 Downtown Farmers' Market – Linking the Farm to the Community**, Carroll County Farmland and Rural Preservation Committee, \$8,600, Rob Gordy, Ph: 770-836-6911, robgordy@cwtwga.com

**CS02-003 Making the Connection: Enhancing Agricultural Understanding in an Urbanizing Area (Final Report)**, Prince William County Farm Tour Inc., VA, \$7,300 Suzanne Heflin, Ph: 703-754-7564, hsheflin@erols.com

**CS02-004 Homegrown, From Our Farms to Your Table: Growing a Farmers' Cooperative in East Tennessee**, Jubilee Project, Inc., \$6,436, Steve Hodges, Ph: 423-733-4195, stevehodges@naxs.net

**CS02-005 SE North Carolina Agri-Tourism Corridor Development**, The Conservation Fund, NC, \$7,000, Nancy Hunt, Ph: 919-967-2223, nancyhnttcf@yahoo.com

**CS02-006 Keen on Beans: Establishing Edamame Awareness and Demand for Kentucky Consumers and Growers (Final Report)**, Daviess County Extension Service, University of Kentucky, \$8,712, Martha W. Lee, Ph: 270-685-8480, mlee@uky.edu

**CS02-007 Pioneering the Way to the Future**, Okemah Chamber of Commerce, OK, \$6,900, Diann Neal, Ph: 918-623-2440, diann.neal@sbcglobal.net

**CS02-008 Test Marketing of New Label in Southwest Florida for USA Grown/Living Wage Produce**, Harvest for Humanity, Inc., FL, \$5,200, Richard J. Nogaj, Ph: 239-657-4888, dhfh@ix.netcom.com

**CS03-009 Strengthening Rural Communities Through Direct Marketing**, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, NC, \$9,941, Susan Andreatta, Ph: 336-256-0439, s\_andrea@uncg.edu

**CS03-010 "Santa Rosa Fresh" Marketing Assistance**, Santa Rosa County Agribusiness Committee, FL, \$10,000, Paula Davis, Ph: 850-983-1848, paulad@co.santa-rosa.fl.us

**CS03-011 Making the Connection: Enhancing Agricultural Understanding in an Urbanizing Area**, Prince William County Farm Tour, Inc., VA, \$7,200, Suzanne Heflin, Ph: 703-754-7564, hsheflin@erols.com

**CS03-012 Sustainable Agriculture Innovations Lead to Rural Success**, Canutillo Independent School District, TX, \$10,000, Gayla Kessinger, Ph: 915-877-7466, gkessinger@canutillo.k12.tx.us

**CS03-013 Expanding Community-Based Retail Opportunities for Agricultural Products Through the Woodford County Farmers' Market Association**, University of Kentucky CES Community and Economic Programs, KY, \$9,700, Betty King, Ph: 859-257-3404, bking@uky.edu.

**CS03-014 Northwest Arkansas Local Food Initiative: Promoting All-Ozark Meals**, ATTRA, AR, \$9,978, Julia Sampson, Ph: 479-442-9824, julias@ncat.org

**CS03-015 Community Development Through a Regional Food System Plan**, Accomac-Northhampton Planning District Commission, VA, \$10,000, Barbara Schwenk, Ph: 757-787-2936, schwenk@easternshore.org

**CS03-016 Taylor Community Supported Agriculture Project**, The United Christian Community Association, AL, \$10,000, Evelyn Williams, Ph: (334) 627-3970, evelynswilliams@hotmail.com

**CS03-017 Putting Pike on the Map**, Citizens to Promote Pike, Inc., GA, \$9,680, Chris Curry, Ph: 770-567-0428, billchrisfarm@aol.com

**CS03-018 New River Sustainable Agriculture Marketing Plan**, New River Community Partners, NC, \$10,000, Hollis Wild, Ph: 336-372-8118, hwild@skybest.com

Download or print most project reports from SARE's [Project Data Base](#)

If you can't access a project report online or if you prefer a mailed copy, contact Southern SARE at:

Phone: 770-412-4787 or  
Fax: 770-412-4789  
[sueblum@griffin.uga.edu](mailto:sueblum@griffin.uga.edu)

Include project number when ordering