

Southern SARE Seeks

Social Science Research Proposals

There is an inherent social science element to sustainable agriculture: one of the three main pillars of sustainable agriculture is the enhancement of the quality of life for farmers and rural communities. The Southern SARE Research and Education Call For Proposals encourages submissions of social science research proposals in all priority areas: 1) limited resource farmers; 2) organic farming systems; 3) environmentally sound practices/agricultural ecosystems; 4) marketing/economic development; 5) policy, program evaluation, and quality of life; and 6) women in sustainable agriculture.

Using the priority area Limited-resource Farmers as an example, in economics there's a need for more/better economic analysis of production and marketing alternatives, and of the economic constraints of various types of limited-resource producers. In anthropology we need more understanding of the limited-resource farmers' cultural environments and how various sustainable ag approaches fit into those cultural contexts. In communications we need to understand how minority farmers think/feel/talk about agriculture and the environment so educators can better shape programs to fit their needs.

Southern SARE also seeks research proposals that examine the regeneration of local/regional food systems, the economics of local/regional food systems, and policies and programs at the local (or state and national) level that support the types of activities above. Of particular interest will be proposals that:

Focus on research related to the development of concepts related to civic agriculture. Civic agriculture can be defined as a locally organized system of agriculture and food production characterized by networks of producers who are bound together (Lyson) and committed to sustainable agriculture principles. Among the examples of civic agriculture include; farmers markets, direct marketing, community and school gardens linked to food banks and other efforts to provide food and nutrition information to low-income members of a community, local marketing systems, production networks, community supported agriculture, grower-controlled marketing cooperatives, agricultural districts around particular commodities, community kitchens, specialty produce and on-farm processors, and small-scale, off-farm, local processors.

Focus on the research on the development of local/regional food systems that incorporate production, processing, and marketing. Such projects might include a focus on grassfed beef and/or pastured poultry production systems and their linkages to processing plants, local/regional grocery stores, or restaurants. Others may emphasize links involving organic produce, fruits, vegetables, grains, etc.

Focus on research related to the development of linkages between two or more different sub-systems of the supply chain: production, processing, distribution, marketing, consumption.

Focus on research related to the barriers and opportunities for the development of marketing cooperatives for alternative food products.

Focus on policy and program implementation issues, particularly as they impact small, limited resources and minority producers.

Focus on community structure in relation to the structure and type of agricultural systems.

Proposals are encouraged from all disciplines within the social sciences including economics, sociology, anthropology, geography, history, philosophy, political science, and psychology. Social scientists are also encouraged to collaborate with those in non-social science disciplines.