



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Sustainable Agriculture

Research and Education Program

www.sarep.ucdavis.edu

Linking Farmers, Consumers and Communities through Sustainable Community Development and Public Policies

UC SAREP

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Since 1991, SAREP has been instrumental in promoting sustainable community development and public policies that forge creative links between farmers, consumers and communities. Through the competitive grants program and research and extension activities, SAREP supports collaborative efforts that shape community food systems and policies in which sustainable food production, processing, distribution and consumption are integrated to enhance the economic, environmental and social health of a particular place. Such community development and public policy projects include direct or local marketing activities; consumer education about local, sustainable agriculture; community food security projects; economic development that creates local food and agriculture related enterprises; urban agriculture projects; food policy council development; land, water or pesticide use policy analyses; food- or watershed analyses that involve local residents in decision-making; farm labor analyses; and economic or policy analyses that encourage growers, processors, retailers and others to support a transition to sustainable food and agricultural systems.

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The Food System Context

California's food and agricultural system can be characterized as one of the most productive in the world. It also has one of the most rigorous regulatory environments in the nation. The dominant trends in this state, however, as in the rest of the nation, have been toward increased pressure from population growth on farmland, diminished natural resources (particularly water) and concentration in agricultural production and processing operations. Family-owned farms and local control over production, marketing and labor has been superseded by large, non-local agribusiness control. As a result of these and related trends, farmers today receive less than 10 cents of every food dollar. Consumers have gradually lost the knowledge of where their food comes from, and food insecurity in rural and urban communities throughout the state continues to be a major problem. Producers and community groups need applied research and effective partnerships, and policymakers need analyses and information about how best to encourage stewardship and sustainable development of the state's most precious resources—its land and its people.

SAREP's Role: Making Food System Connections

SAREP supports research, education and demonstration projects that work within the food system to build more sustainable communities—those that are environmentally sound, economically viable and socially responsible. One of the most important hallmarks of these community projects is that they empower local citizens and residents to participate in the food system. SAREP provides resources to community organizations and university researchers through its competitive grants program, through outreach in workshops and technical assistance, and through collaborative research and extension activities. SAREP actively disseminates the results of these activities through publications, its Web site and other media.

COMPETITIVE GRANTS PROGRAM

Since 1987, SAREP has funded over 30 projects for a total of \$723,682 promoting community economic development, direct marketing strategies, consumer education about sustainable food and agricultural systems, community food security, public policy analyses and the development of community food system projects in California. Several of these projects have received state and national recognition for their innovative approaches to linking local farmers with communities.

For example, the Park Village Farm Project in Stockton received a grant from SAREP in 1997 to develop a feasibility study and business plan for a new urban farm and Community Supported Agriculture project (subscription farm or CSA) to benefit a low-income housing development for the Southeast Asian community. The project is now nationally recognized and funded through the USDA's Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program.

Research and education grants are funded for one to three years and range from \$5,000 to \$25,000. SAREP also funds smaller grants for graduate students and educational events in these areas. Requests for Proposals can be downloaded from the Web site at <http://www.sarep.ucdavis.edu/grants/request.htm>.

SAREP FUNDED PROJECTS

Projects funded in 1999 are summarized below. Individual fact sheets for projects funded in previous years are available at the SAREP Web site at www.sarep.ucdavis.edu.

1999

■ **Healthy Farms, Healthy Kids**, Andrew Fisher, \$16,918 (1 year)

As part of a Community Food Security Coalition national campaign to improve the quality of school meals and increase the connection between schools and agricultural learning, this project will prepare a major policy and practices study. The goal of this report and on-going educational effort is to expand the number of school districts that purchase produce directly from farmers and use fresh foods in their menu planning.

■ **Community Food Security Assessment Guidebook**, Andrew Fisher, \$15,301 (1 year)

Considerable interest has been generated by the concept of community food security, spurring scores of projects and programs around the country. Few communities, however, have conducted any rigorous assessments of their food systems, mostly because of a lack of expertise or guidelines on how to conduct such an assessment. This project will produce a guidebook of practical information on how to conduct comprehensive community food systems assessments, as well as follow-up activities including coalition building, getting media coverage, and food policy action.

■ **FARMS (Farming, Agriculture, and Resource Management for Sustainability)**, Katy Pye, \$17,500 (1 year)

Now in its fifth year, the FARMS program has educated rural, urban and suburban high school students about the relation between sustainable agriculture, and science and natural resource conservation. This project will develop a "FARMS Program Manual" and accompanying recruiting video to be used as a training device for local site coordinators and administrators.

■ **The Willard Greening Project**, Yolanda Huang, \$28,400 (1 year)

The Willard Greening Project is attempting to encourage school children to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables by starting and supporting school gardens, hands-on learning in school gardens, and developing creative curricula that link core science and math with school gardens. The project also aims to link schools with agriculture by making the school lunch program a market for locally produced fruits and vegetables. (See related project Huang 1996)

■ **Park Village Farm Project**, Jeff Kositsky/Cherise Melton, \$20,000 (1 year)

The Park Village Farm Project is designed to create economic opportunities for residents of Park Village Apartments while improving the food security of low-income Southeast Asian families in Stockton, Calif. Through this project, residents of Park Village Apartments will organize and operate a 27-acre farm. They will sell produce through conventional markets and will also sell affordable produce to low-income Southeast Asian families. (See related project Kositsky 1997)

■ **Farm Community Responses to Water Marketing: Two Case Studies**, Adrienne Alvord/Judith Redmond, \$10,000 (1 year)

This project will undertake two in-depth case studies of water marketing in California to assess their impacts on the social, political, and natural environments in farm communities in regions from which water has been transferred. It will also briefly survey communities where water marketing proposals are being considered to see how these communities are responding. The project includes a survey of relevant academic and policy publications to provide a context for the case studies. A paper resulting from these case studies will make recommendations on how water marketing regulations might be structured to solve or mitigate problems that emerge for farm communities when water is transferred.

1997

■ **Market Cooking for Kids: Facilitating Field Trips to Sustainable Agriculture Farms**, Sibella Kraus, \$5,520 (1 year)

■ **Park Village Community Supported Agriculture Research Project**, Jeff Kositsky, \$10,000 (1 year)

■ **Design Plan and Monitoring Program Development for Straw Bale Produce Cooler Demonstration Unit at the Rural Development Center (RDC) in Salinas Valley, California**, José Montenegro, \$4,700 (1 year)

■ **Scott River Basin Water Balance**, Lorrie Morrison Bundy, \$14,850 (1 year)

1996

- **Evaluating Farmers' Markets in Low-Income Communities**, Andrew Fisher, \$9,540 (1 year)
- **Urban Food Project—Collaboration Between Willard Greening Project and BOSS**, Yolanda Huang, \$37,707 (2 years)
- **Natural Beef: Consumer Acceptability, Market Development and Economics**, Glenn Nader, \$14,948 (1 year)
- **Market Cooking for Kids: In-Season Cooking and Science for School Children**, Sibella Kraus, \$10,000 (1 year)
- **Rethinking Direct Marketing Approaches Appropriate to Low-Income Communities and Urban Market Gardens**, Laura Lawson, \$15,000 (2 years)
- **A Spatially Explicit Vineyard Model: Addressing Crop Production, Public Policy, and Environmental Concerns**, Adina Merenlender, \$80,200 (3 Years FY 96-98; 1 Year FY 99)
- **Socio-Economic Analysis of Rotational Management of Wetlands and Cropland in the Tulelake Basin**, Carol Shennan, \$14,440 (1 year)

1995

- **Pomona-Inland Valley Council of Churches' Food Security Project**, Joyce Ewen, \$20,000 (3 years)
- **Market Cooking for Kids: Developing Children's Consciousness of Regional Sustainability**, Sibella Kraus, \$7,000 (1 year)

1994

- **Impacts of Local Food Systems on Communities and Agriculture: Reason for the Season**, Sharon Junge, \$30,000 (3 years)

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

SAREP is engaged in applied research and extension projects that support the development of sustainable agriculture and community food systems. SAREP staff are partnering with community-based organizations, university researchers, and Cooperative Extension personnel throughout California and nationwide to support, assess and document local food and agriculture systems. Some of the recent research and extension activities include:

Entrepreneurial Community Gardens

SAREP, in collaboration with the California Communities Program, completed a study of the economic and social benefits and challenges of community-based "entrepreneurial" or "market" gardens. The study outlines site requirements, marketing outlets and strategies, number and type of jobs created, job training opportunities, revenues produced, additional funding mechanisms, and the long-term viability of such projects. Results of the study were published in *Entrepreneurial Community Gardens: Growing Food, Skills, Jobs and Communities* (for ordering information, see the Selected Resources and Publications listing at the end of this brochure).

Farmers' Markets as Small Business Incubators

With a USDA Fund for Rural America grant, SAREP is collaborating with researchers at Cornell University and Iowa State University to study the role of farmers' markets in promoting community development and stimulating the growth of small businesses. The three-phased study includes surveys of market managers, market vendors and case studies of innovative markets in each state.

Increasing the Adoption of Sustainable Agriculture in the Central Valley

SAREP is collaborating with the Community Alliance with Family Farmers, the Lodi-Woodbridge Winegrape Commission and UC researchers to study why farmers adopt sustainable agriculture practices and how community links might be strengthened to support adoption. Farmers in the Biologically Integrated Orchard Systems (BIOS) program and community stakeholders in Stanislaus and Merced counties have been interviewed to identify current and potential links in the areas of farmland preservation and local marketing. A community outreach project will be designed to build on the most promising areas. This project was funded by USDA's Fund for Rural America.

Local Food Systems and Sustainable Community Indicators

SAREP is part of a national study with 18 other land grant universities to examine local food systems in a globalizing environment. "Foodshed" or "state of the food system" studies will be completed in three counties in California—Placer, Stanislaus and Alameda. Each county study will include an assessment of the current food and agricultural system, an analysis of sustainable food system initiatives, strategies local organizations use to remain viable, and the selection of sustainable food system benchmarks for measuring progress toward a more sustainable community. This study is funded through USDA Hatch Act funds.

Berkeley Food Security Project Evaluation

SAREP is conducting an evaluation of the Berkeley Food Systems Project, a USDA-funded Community Food Security project, which is forming a local food policy council and attempting to incorporate more produce from local farmers, and school and community gardens into the Berkeley Unified School District's school food service. A report of baseline data has been completed from which the project can measure its accomplishments in the next few years.

Mutual Assistance Network's Entrepreneurial Nursery/Garden Project

SAREP is providing technical assistance to the Mutual Assistance Network in Sacramento in the development and implementation of a neighborhood nursery and school gardens. Youth will be trained in urban agriculture, horticulture and marketing and business development as the project proceeds.

Community Food Security Training and Technical Assistance

Since 1997, SAREP has been an active partner with the Community Food Security Coalition and the USDA in facilitating training workshops about community food security in California and throughout the nation. SAREP's food systems analyst, along with a representative from the Farm Service Agency, are California's community food security co-liaisons to the USDA. Co-liaisons provide technical assistance and referrals in seven areas critical to creating food-secure communities: 1) local infrastructure, 2) economic and job security, 3) federal nutrition safety net, 4) food recovery and donations, 5) community food production and marketing, 6) education and awareness, and 7) research, monitoring and evaluation. A statewide community food security database and resource guide will also be produced.

Conference on Eco Labeling

SAREP was a partner with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Lodi-Woodbridge Winegrape Commission, the California Association of Winegrape Growers and the Robert Mondavi Winery in exploring the concept of eco labeling for California winegrapes at a 1998 conference. The conference brought together representatives from eco labeling programs across the country, researchers, policymakers, producers, processors and retailers to discuss the issues and challenges in initiating a California eco label. Proceedings of the conference can be downloaded at the SAREP Web site.

SELECTED RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

How to Order

SAREP Publications

A complete list of all SAREP publications is available on the Web at www.sarep.ucdavis.edu.

Sustainable Agriculture. Three-times per year newsletter from SAREP. **Free** in U.S.; foreign subscribers are asked to make a donation of \$10.00 or more annually to cover postage. Available in print and on the SAREP Web site.

Exploring Eco Labeling for California Winegrapes: Conference Proceedings. Edited by Janet C. Broome, Clifford Ohmart, Angela Moskow, and Jennifer Waddel. 1999. Available on the SAREP Web site.

DANR Publications

DANR publications can be ordered by phone, FAX, mail, or Internet directly from UC DANR Communication Services.

Entrepreneurial Community Gardens: Growing Food, Skills, Jobs and Communities. By Gail Feenstra, Sharyl McGrew, and David Campbell. 1999. Publication 21587. Price: **\$10.00.**

Community Food Systems in California: Profiles of 13 Collaborations. Edited by Gail Feenstra and David Campbell. 1998. Publication 21574. Price: **\$6.00.**

Related Publications

Growing a Community Food System. Steven Garrett and Gail Feenstra, WREP Publication, Community Ventures Series, Washington State University Cooperative Extension, 1999.

Farmers' Markets Provide Opportunities for Farmers to Expand Their Businesses. Gail Feenstra and Christopher Lewis, California Agriculture, 53(6):25-29, 1999.

Local Food Systems and Sustainable Communities. Gail Feenstra, American Journal of Alternative Agriculture, 12(1): 28-36, 1997.

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