



September 22, 2006

## PRODUCER GRANTS AVAILABLE

The USDA North Central Region (NCR) SARE has allocated about \$400,000 for the 2006 Farmer/Rancher Grant Program. Competitive grants of up to \$6,000 are available for individual farmers and ranchers, and grants up to \$18,000 are available for groups (three or more independent and separate operations) of farmers and ranchers interested in exploring sustainable agriculture. Maximum duration for grant projects is 21 months. A satellite program will be held in Wilber at the office of UNL Extension in Saline County about the SARE grants on Tuesday, October 3, 2006, 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Producers are welcome to attend if harvest schedules allow.

With this program, producers are invited to submit proposals to test, evaluate, and adapt sustainable agriculture practices for their operations; conduct learning circles, educational events, field days or demonstrations to further disseminate information to farmers/ranchers; develop new technologies; or create or modify equipment.

As you look at projects funded last year, hot topics include anything to do with organic, composting, prairie restoration, agro-tourism, biofuels, less antibiotics, alternative crop ideas, sustainable livestock agriculture ideas, evaluating a cover crop, and renewable energy source ideas. Basically, many of the projects involved on-farm research and/or demonstration. Applicants must identify specific problems and potential solutions to those problems. Projects that include a youth component are welcome and encouraged. Livestock projects need to comply with reasonable animal care requirements to insure that animals are properly cared for. The application deadline is December 1, 2006. For more information on how to apply, visit the Farmer/Rancher Grant Program Web site at <http://www.sare.org/ncrsare/prod.htm>

During the past fourteen years, the SARE North Central Region program has funded 584 grants on a variety of topics, such as rotational grazing, livestock systems, crop production systems, urban and rural waste management, weed control, alternative uses for CRP land, biological weed and pest control, organic farming, marketing, quality of life, water quality, and soil conservation.

Regarding this grant, the satellite program will highlight the Doug and Krista Dittman farm of rural Lincoln. Krista Dittman and Charuth Loth, another farm family in the Lincoln area, received a farmer/rancher grant to develop dairy and dairy goat cheeses as one of their enterprises. They will be discussing and showing their enterprise and how the SARE grant assisted them. In addition, Joan Benjamin, the coordinator for this program on the conference, will also be present to further describe the requirements. I would be willing to assist a local farmer in how to apply for these grants.

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