



# Sustainable agriculture farmer/rancher grants available

Have you been mulling over a great idea for improving farm or ranch production, but you just don't have the money to give it a whirl? There is a grant program looking for you!

The Western Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (WSARE) is a competitive grants program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture that supports economically viable, environmentally sound, and socially responsible agricultural systems.

Several types of competitive grants are available.

One is the Farmer/Rancher Grant, which allows recipients to conduct **research and/or on-farm demonstrations and educational outreach in areas of sustainable agriculture.**

WSARE is particularly interested in projects that help meet its program goals, which are to:

1. Promote good stewardship of the nation's natural resources by providing site-specific, regional, and profitable sustainable farming and ranching methods that strengthen agricultural competitiveness; satisfy human food and fiber needs and maintain and enhance the quality and productivity of soil; conserve soil, water, energy, natural resources, and fish and wildlife habitat; and maintain and improve the quality of surface and ground water.
2. Enhance the quality of life of farmers and ranchers and ensure the viability of rural communities, for example, by increasing income and employment, especially profitable self-employment and innovative marketing opportunities in agricultural and rural communities.
3. Protect the health and safety of those involved in food and farm systems by reducing, where feasible and practical, the use of toxic materials in agricultural production and optimizing on-farm resources and

integrating, where appropriate, biological cycles and controls.

4. Promote crop, livestock, and enterprise diversification.
5. Examine regional, economic, social, and environmental implications of adopting sustainable agriculture practices and systems.

The amount that can be requested for a Farmer/Rancher Grant is \$15,000 for one producer or a total of \$30,000 for a project involving three or more producers.

What should a producer consider when contemplating applying for a Farmer/Rancher Grant?

- The WSARE Web site (<http://wsare.usu.edu/grants/>) offers general information about its programs and applying for grants. Take a look at the information provided for Farmer/Rancher Grants. Determine if your idea is one WSARE might fund and if you are willing to take on all the responsibilities and time commitments such grants require. Make sure you can meet any requirements outlined. Information for the upcoming application period (2008) is on the WSARE Web page. Deadline for applications is December 7.
- Next, write down the goals of the proposed project and how you would go about carrying it out. What are the resources needed in the areas of time, equipment, personnel, supplies, etc., to pull it off?
- After those have been outlined, find an agricultural or natural resource professional who might be interested in collaborating in this project, since these grants require such a professional to serve as a technical adviser. Bounce the idea off these professionals to see if they'd like to join the proposed project in this capacity. They might have some additional ideas that could refine the project and/or the proposal. Often times these folks are local Cooperative Extension Service educators, specialists, or Natural Resources Conservation Service employees.
- Set aside a block of time to write the proposal and have it ready to be submitted before the December deadline. (Read it ahead of time to prepare and then sit down and do it – it's only a couple pages long.)

What do reviewers look for when reading a proposal?

- Did the applicant follow directions in the Request For Applications (RFA)? (Basically did you give them the information they requested in the format they requested it in? If not, the application may be thrown out without further review.)
- Did the applicant think the project out thoroughly and create a clear plan of action, and was it all clearly communicated to the reviewers? Don't assume reviewers will understand or know things they aren't told.
- Does the project address WSARE's goals?
- Is the idea creative, and could it, if successful, be used by other farmers and ranchers?
- Does it seem feasible? (Can it be pulled off with the resources requested?)
- Does the applicant have a plan to communicate results of the project to others?

Grant programs such as this one provide great opportunities for possibly once-in-a-lifetime opportunities to test ideas; however, they also require good planning and commitment of substantial amounts of time and effort.

Read the RFA very carefully, give it intensive consideration, and then decide whether to give it a whirl. For more information, visit the WSARE Web page, call the WSARE office at Utah State University at (435) 797-2257, or e-mail [wsare@ext.usu.edu](mailto:wsare@ext.usu.edu).

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