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CSREES SCIENCE FOR SUSTAINABILITY OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS | 2007-2008

The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) advances sustainability through national program leadership and funding for research, education, and extension. The agency offers competitive grants programs and collaborates with other federal agencies to advance the knowledge and application of sustainability principles. National Program Leaders (NPLs) and Program Specialists working in agriculture, communities, and forestry have completed several projects which better position USDA and its partners to serve stakeholders interested in and committed to sustainability. This report is a sampling rather than a complete list of activities.

SUSTAINABILITY HIGHLIGHTS

- CSREES incorporated sustainability topics into a number of competitive funding programs, including Higher Education, the Specialty Crops Research Initiative (SCRI), the National Research Initiative (NRI), and the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program. As a result, sustainability is being addressed by university grantees across the country.
- CSREES staff worked in partnership with sustainability committees, interagency working groups, and roundtables to expand research, education, and extension efforts in sustainability, including working with The United Nations, the National Academy of Sciences, USDA Council on Sustainable Development, and the Pollinator Partnership.
- CSREES staff presented talks, published papers, and developed educational tools to inform professionals on current sustainability practices. Program Leaders also sponsored seminars and discussions at CSREES to expand expertise among program staff and administrators about sustainable agriculture, forestry, and community development.

GRANT PROGRAMS / FUNDED PROJECTS

- The Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate and Postgraduate Fellowship (NNF) grant program incorporated "Training in Sustainable Sciences" as a targeted expertise shortage area. Since 2005, 14 awards totaling \$2.8 million supported training graduate students in Sustainable Sciences: 39 at M.S. level; 20 at Ph.D. level.
- CSREES implemented the Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) to address the critical needs of the specialty crop industry. The Requests for Application (RFA) for the new Specialty Crops Research Initiative established sustainability as the foundation of this program. In 2008, 26 grants totaling \$28.4 million were awarded.
- CSREES launched the Environment and Natural Resources Enterprise (*enr*) to optimize agricultural production while protecting the environment. As a result, sustainability language consistent with the *enr* vision was integrated into RFAs in several Agency grant programs.
- The CSREES Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program marked its 20th Anniversary at a conference in Kansas City, Missouri. Impacts from SARE grant projects have helped farmers see new ways of doing things, expanding their networks, and becoming community leaders.

PARTNERSHIPS

- Agency staff served on the planning committee for a National Academy of Sciences workshop, *Transitioning to Sustainability Through Research and Development on Ecosystems Services and Biofuels*. The CSREES Long Term Agriculture Program was cited as an exemplar in the Sustainability R&D Forum workshop and a Deputy Administrator presented state-of-the-art examples of sustainable activities at CSREES.
- The USDA Research, Education and Economics (REE) mission area Energy Plan incorporated sustainability as central to its role, vision, and two specific goals -- (1) Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource-Based Energy Production, and (2) Sustainable Bioeconomies for Rural Communities. These efforts will help the Agency increase energy security and maintain or increase current ecosystem services.
- CSREES and several other USDA agencies collaborated to develop an exhibit for the 2008 summer exhibition held at the U.S. Botanic Garden. "One Planet - Ours! Sustainability for the 22nd Century," featured the work of USDA's Sustainable Development Council and projects from the University of Georgia, the Northeast IPM Center, and Penn State University. More than half a million visitors had the opportunity to see the exhibition and participate in Family Days, educational classes, seminars, and tours.
- Staff worked with the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA Department of Operations, and Sodexo to identify and promote dishes made with locally grown ingredients in the USDA South and Whitten Building cafeterias. Benefits of selecting locally-grown foods include reduced fuel use and cost, support for local farmers and economies, and increased demand for local produce in USDA cafeterias.
- Agency staff had leadership roles with the Roundtable on Sustainable Forests and Agency funding supported the Sustainable Forests Partnership (SFP). This activity educated stakeholders about indicators that are used to evaluate the sustainability of forests and forest products.
- CSREES Administrator and NPLs served as members of the U.S. Delegation and contributed background papers and case studies for the United Nations (UN) Regional Sustainability Meetings and the 16th session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-16) in May 2008. CSREES' emphasis on science and education was also incorporated as a key U.S. Government policy theme, and SARE, eXtension, and other CSREES programs were featured. The Agency is helping plan federal government involvement in future CSD meetings.

- CSREES partnered with the Department of Energy's Office of Biological and Environmental Research (DOE-OBER) to convene a June 2007, Experts Workshop that produced recommendations for social, economic, and environmental science priorities for bioenergy research, education, and extension. Staff also provided expertise to the DOE-OBER Ethical, Legal and Social Implications (ELSI) grant program resulting in eight funded projects on ELSI aspects of biofuels (six at land-grant universities).

EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

- The CSREES Green Team is responding to Executive Order 13423 by working to advance recycling, reduce the use of paper through double-sided printing and copying, promote green electronics stewardship, and encourage energy conservation. The Executive Order sets goals in the areas of energy efficiency, acquisition, renewable energy, toxics reductions, recycling, renewable energy, sustainable buildings, electronics stewardship, fleets, water conservation, and sustainable practices.
- NPLs participated in an interagency working group to develop criteria and indicators for sustainable biofuels production. The group was formed at the request of the Biomass R&D Board co-chaired by USDA mission area REE Under Secretary Buchanan. Developing criteria and indicators will enable agencies and the agriculture industry to assess their success at achieving sustainable bioenergy production.
- University of Arkansas Applied Sustainability Center and its Center for Agricultural and Rural Sustainability conducted an Agency seminar on Life Cycle Analysis for the Food/Ag sector. The seminar was recently expanded to a workshop and the Agency is working with private sector partners to develop sustainability indicators.
- NPLs facilitated revision of the guide, *Living Sustainably: It's Your Choice*, and a paper, *Sustainable Living Education: A Call to All Extension*. In addition, members of the National Network for Sustainable Living Education developed a full paper, *A Vision for Relevance*, that was presented at the National Extension Directors and Administrators meeting. As a result, the Joint Council of Extension Professionals is now working to develop sustainability as a programmatic focus across the national Cooperative Extension System.

