SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE DEMONSTRATION GRANT PROGRAM

1999-2000 Call for Proposals

Application Deadline December 15, 1999

INTRODUCTION

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) Energy & Sustainable Agriculture Program (ESAP) will provide up to $25,000 to individuals or groups on a competitive basis for sustainable agriculture demonstration or research projects in Minnesota. Sustainable agriculture is characterized by practices and values that promote environmental stewardship and conservation of resources, long-term economic viability and productivity, preservation of quality of life for farm families and support for rural communities. The demonstration projects are intended to display and publicize the profitability, energy efficiency, and environmental benefit of sustainable agricultural practices and systems.

Interested persons or groups are encouraged to be creative, develop their own ideas and apply for a grant. Grants are awarded to innovative, promising and worthwhile demonstrations of sustainable agricultural methods or systems in Minnesota. The demonstrations may be up to three years in duration. Annual progress reports on the project are required each fall and a final report summarizing all significant findings is required when the project or funding is ended.

GRANT PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Eligible Recipients and Projects

Eligible projects are those which encourage widespread adoption of sustainable agriculture systems by Minnesota farmers. Eligible recipients include Minnesota farmers, and individuals at Minnesota educational institutions and non-profit organizations, and local natural resource agencies. The intent is to give preference to projects that are farmer initiated. All non-farmer initiated projects must show collaboration with farmers.

Grants may only be made to applicants residing or located in the state for demonstrations <u>on</u> farms in the state. An applicant is eligible to receive only one Sustainable Agriculture Grant at a time. **Grantees who have completed projects are eligible to receive additional grants to continue previous projects or for new ideas**.

Eligible Activities

The program objectives are to demonstrate and publicize the profitability, energy efficiency, and environmental benefits of sustainable agriculture practices and systems. Grants will be available to fund demonstrations **on farms** of practices or systems that promote environmental stewardship and conservation of resources, improve long-term economic viability and productivity, improve the quality of life for farm families and support rural communities consistent with the application criteria. The program does not fund projects that duplicate previously funded projects. An exception is funding for similar projects in parts of the state where the practice or system is still considered new or innovative. Read through the *Greenbook '99* to see the summaries and locations of previous grants and design a project to meet your objectives and to add new information.

For projects that involve large collaborative efforts, the first year of the project may be used for team development and project planning. This allows the use of grant funds to support the careful, thoughtful development of a project by an appropriate group of cooperators. The program also encourages one year planning grants. Planning grants can be used to put together a team and design workplans. Individuals or groups may apply for up to $5,000 for a planning grant. After the planning grant is completed the grantee may apply for a grant to implement the plans.

Application Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria (not in order of priority):

1. The demonstration project should show the ability to realize direct (fuel or electricity) or indirect (fertilizers, insecticides, herbicides, fungicides) energy savings; external input reduction; or on-farm resource production.
2. The demonstration project should show a positive effect on the environment, the community and on family quality of life.
3. The demonstration project should show increased profitability for the individual farm by reducing purchased inputs and/or increasing income including product development, processing, and improvements in marketing.
4. The results of the project should have applicability to other farms and the techniques or systems demonstrated should be easily adapted by other farmers. The application must include an effective public information plan to communicate project results to the appropriate audiences.
5. The applicant should document his/her ability to accomplish project goals and experience with the practice or system being proposed. In the case of a collaborative project, an appropriate team of participants has been identified.
6. The proposed project design, implementation plan and method for objectively measuring results will achieve the goals of the project. The proposed budget and timeline are feasible and appropriate for the proposed activities.

Project Funding

Grants may cover the total costs for eligible projects requiring less than $25,000. The average grant award is about $12,000 with a range of awards from $4,000 to $25,000. Multi-site, cooperative projects may be eligible for additional funding with proof of a 1:1 cash match. All costs that can be shown to be directly required by the project activities will be considered eligible costs for funding if they have been identified and approved in the application and award process. These can include the costs of salaries paid for time spent directly on the grant project over normal farming operations, consultant fees, materials and supplies needed to conduct the project, costs associated with lease or use of farm equipment and costs associated with your public information plan. **Purchase of most farm equipment will not be funded**.

Grant projects are funded for up to three years - three year projects are preferred. Multi-year projects will be evaluated each year before second or third year funding is approved. Cost overruns from original yearly grant amounts will not be eligible for additional grant money.

Project Evaluation Process

Applications need to be detailed and will go through an intensive competitive selection process involving the program staff, a technical review panel (described below) and the Commissioner of Agriculture, who will ultimately make the awards considering the recommendations and ranking by the technical review panel.

A technical review panel will evaluate grant applications and make recommendations to the Commissioner. The panel consists of at least the following:

> A soil scientist,
> An agronomist,
> A representative from a post-secondary educational institution,
> Two farmers using sustainable farming methods,
> Two farmers using organic methods, and
> A chairperson representing the MDA

SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION

The application has two parts - both must be submitted to be considered for funding. The application was designed to be complete, to assist you with thinking through and planning your project, and to ensure equal

opportunity. The questions provide you with opportunities to present your ideas and the benefits of your project in detail to the technical review panel so that they can objectively evaluate your application based on the application criteria.

The first part of the application includes:

- information on the project objectives or goals;
- the applicant's plan for setting up, carrying out and evaluating the study over the full length of the project, including a timeline;
- a plan for sharing information from the study with other farmers. A portion of every grant award should be targeted for project public information activities (such as tours, publications, field days and news articles). Further assistance for this public information activity requirement is available from MDA; and,
- background information on the applicant and a list of cooperators; any person listed as participating on the project, besides the applicant, must submit a letter stating their role in the project.

When filling in the first part of the application, use the cover page and timeline sheets supplied as part of the application package. Use only three to five pages of white paper (one-sided typed or printed in black ink) to answer the five questions listed on page two of the application.

The second part is a budget form and worksheet. Both the budget form and budget worksheets must be submitted. The worksheet is a guide to planning project related expenses over the term of the study and gives reviewers a more detailed idea of how grant funds will be used. Transfer the annual totals in each category to the budget form. If your proposal is approved for funding, the annual budget totals will be used to determine the schedule of grant payments.

If you plan to reproduce the application on your computer, please follow the cover page, timeline and budget sheet formats and page lengths. To make copying easier, please do not use the backs of the application pages to answer questions. Please keep a copy of your application for your own records. Submitted applications will not be returned.

Assistance

Questions about the Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grants can be directed to Energy & Sustainable Agriculture Program, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, 90 West Plato Boulevard, St. Paul, MN 55107, (651) 296-7673. All applicants are encouraged to obtain technical assistance in preparing the application and help with idea development from MDA staff upon request. MDA staff have experience in many areas of sustainable agriculture such as cropping systems, alternative livestock production systems, soil quality, whole farm planning, integrated pest management, marketing, and organic production. However, any assistance provided will not guarantee a grant award.

Applications must be RECEIVED at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture no later than 4:30 p.m. CST, Wednesday, December 15, 1999 (faxes will not be accepted).

Applications should be sent to:

Sustainable Agriculture Grant Project
Energy & Sustainable Agriculture Program
Minnesota Department of Agriculture
90 West Plato Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55107

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE DEMONSTRATION GRANT PROJECT APPLICATION
1999/2000

Type or print neatly on 8 1/2 by 11 white paper - Use **BLACK INK (NO PENCIL)**

Date: _____

Project Title: _____

_____

_____

Name of Applicant:

_____

Address:_____ City:_____ Zip:_____

County: _____ Telephone: (_____)_____

Social Security # or Federal Tax I.D. of Applicant or Organization : _____

Contact Person (if different): _____

Address:_____ City:_____ Zip:_____

County: _____ Telephone: (____)_____

Project Duration: _____ Starting Date: _____ Ending Date:_____

Total Budget Request: _____

Agricultural Enterprise(s) Involved in this Project (crops, livestock, etc.) _____

_____

Directions to the Project (be specific): _____

_____

_____

_____

Description of Current Farming Operation: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

In 3 to 5 pages, please answer these 5 questions about your project. Use the questions following each main question only as suggestions for information to include in your answer - they may not all apply to your project. Please type or print with black ink on white 8 1/2 by 11 paper.

1. **Why do you want to do this project?** What are your reasons for doing this project? What do you want to change? Is there a problem you want to address? How does this project fit into your long term plans for your farm? Will there be environmental benefits for your farm, community, watershed, etc.? Does this project reduce or make better use of non-renewable resources? How will these changes affect profitability on your farm? Are there input cost reductions, improved markets, increased income? Will these changes affect your quality of life and that of your family? What effect will the changes have on working conditions, labor input, type of work done, family participation on the farm, on your community, etc.?

2. **What do you plan to do?** Describe your project in detail. What practices or systems do you want to study? What is the size of your demonstration such as number of acres or animals, etc.? What is innovative and intriguing about what you plan to do? If applicable, provide a layout drawing or diagram of the demonstration/research project such as your crop rotation plan, paddock design, etc.

3. **How will you evaluate this project?** How will you know if you have achieved what you wanted? How will you know if the changes are beneficial? How will you measure and evaluate the results of the project? What data, measurements and evaluations will you record? What will be compared?

4. **How will you share what you learn from this project?** What methods will you use to get your information to farmers and others who would benefit from knowing about your project? Do you plan to do field days, participate in workshops, prepare publications, etc.? Will other farmers find your project interesting and useful? Can other farmers easily adapt what you learn to their own farms? Who could you work with to get your information to the public?

5. **Who is involved in your project?** Describe your qualifications to accomplish this project such as number of years you have farmed, your achievements, related work experience, organizational memberships, etc. List the names, addresses, and phone numbers of other cooperators such as other farmers, organizations, consultants, extension agents, etc. What will the cooperators do? Letters of support and type of participation from cooperators are <u>required</u>.

6. Timetable and Milestones Planning Worksheet

List the <u>main</u> steps in the work activities for the full length of the project with their approximate starting time and approximate season for completion. Include anticipated dates for delivery of progress reports and for any subcontracting that must be done.

	Activity	*Start* *Season and Year*	*Complete* *Season and Year*
1.	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____
7.	_____	_____	_____
8.	_____	_____	_____
9.	_____	_____	_____
10.	_____	_____	_____
11.	_____	_____	_____
12.	_____	_____	_____
13.	_____	_____	_____
14.	_____	_____	_____
15.	_____	_____	_____
16.	_____	_____	_____
17.	_____	_____	_____
18.	_____	_____	_____
19.	_____	_____	_____
20.	_____	_____	_____
21.	_____	_____	_____
22.	_____	_____	_____
23.	_____	_____	_____
24.	_____	_____	_____
25.	_____	_____	_____
26.	_____	_____	_____
27.	_____	_____	_____
28.	_____	_____	_____
29.	_____	_____	_____
30.	_____	_____	_____

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE DEMONSTRATION GRANT PROJECT APPLICATION

BUDGET FORM

(Use worksheet on the next 3 pages to estimate budget. List only those budget items for which you will be seeking grant funds.)

ITEM:	2000	2001	2002	Total
1. Analysis (soil, plant, water, manure, statistical)	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Consultants, Subcontractors, Bookkeeping, Clerical, Other Services	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Personnel Salaries (time/labor) (Only labor directly related to grant activities over and above time spent on normal farm operations is eligible for funding.)	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Supplies and Materials (Purchase of most new farm equipment will not be funded.)	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. Use of Farm Equipment	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Public Information Costs	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. Communications: Telephone/mail	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. Travel	_____	_____	_____	_____
	=======================================			
9. Total Funds or Costs	_____	_____	_____	_____

If applicable, list other sources of funding for this project that you have received or have applied for:

_____

_____

_____

_____

BUDGET WORKSHEET

1. Analysis (Soil, plant, water, manure, statistical, etc.)

Type	Number of Tests	$ Costs
2000		
	2000 Subtotal	
2001		
	2001 Subtotal	
2002		
	2002 Subtotal	

2. Consultants and Other Services Purchased Off Farm

Name	Fee/hr.	Number of Hours	$ Costs
2000			
		2000 Subtotal	
2001			
		2001 Subtotal	
2002			
		2002 Subtotal	

3. Personnel Salaries (Family or hired labor directly related to grant activities over time spent on normal farm operations)

Name	Wage/hr.	Number of Hours	$ Costs
2000			
		2000 Subtotal	
2001			
		2001 Subtotal	
2002			
		2002 Subtotal	

4. Supplies and Materials (Purchase of most new farm equipment will not be funded.)

Item	Purpose	$ Costs
2000		
	2000 Subtotal	
2001		
	2001 Subtotal	
2002		
	2002 Subtotal	

5. Use of Farm Equipment

Equipment Item	# Acres in Project	Standard Charge/Acre	$ Costs
2000			
		2000 Subtotal	
2001			
		2001 Subtotal	
2002			
		2002 Subtotal	

6. Public Information Costs

Item	Purpose	$ Costs
2000		
	2000 Subtotal	
2001		
	2001 Subtotal	
2002		
	2002 Subtotal	

7. Communication: Telephone/Mail

Item	Purpose	$ Costs
2000		
	2000 Subtotal	
2001		
	2001 Subtotal	
2002		
	2002 Subtotal	

8. Travel

From	To	Purpose	# Miles x	Cost/Mile	= $ Costs
2000					
				2000 Subtotal	
2001					
				2001 Subtotal	
2002					
				2002 Subtotal	