



Summary Report of The 2006 New England Regional In-Service Summer Training for Agricultural Service Providers and USDA Northeast SARE Professional Development Program Annual Summer Tour

Introduction

The Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) Program is a professional certification program offered by the American Society of Agronomy (www.agronomy.org). For the past ten years, the University of Maine Cooperative Extension (UMaine CE) has coordinated and conducted New England Regional in-service training for CCAs and other agricultural service providers and interested participants. For more information about the annual winter training program, visit our New England Region Water Quality website,

www.usawaterquality.org/NewEngland/Focus_Areas/ne_npm/extension/default.html



On July 18, 2006 UMaine CE conducted a central Maine field tour for CCAs and other agricultural service providers in conjunction with hosting the Northeast Region USDA SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education) Professional Development Program annual field tour.

A needs assessment, conducted during the February 2006 annual CCA training program, revealed that over 76% of respondents would prefer a field tour format for part or all of a one day summer field training program.

The tour showcased USDA NE SARE research and education grant projects that are associated with the New England Water Quality Program Agricultural Nutrient and Pest Management Focus Area work on integrated crop management, predominantly organic cropping systems. The topics covered provided recertification credits in the following areas: Pest Management – 1; Crop Production – 1; Soil and Water Conservation – 1.5; Soil Fertility – 1; and Professional Development – 0.5. The NE-SARE Professional Development Program meets annually to see results of funded

projects, meet with local farmers to assess needs, and to learn about professional development needs.

Tour Highlights

The tour was conducted on July 18, 2006 in Central Maine. Approximately 60 people from all New England States and several states throughout the Northeast Region including New York, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and West Virginia attended representing the NE SARE Professional Development Program. Approximately 20 CCAs and other professionals from Maine, Vermont and Rhode Island also attended.

Peacemeal Farm, Dixmont

Peacemeal farm has been an organic vegetable farm for nearly 30 years producing vegetables for direct market through farmer's markets, restaurants and the Common Ground Fair. The farm is owned and operated by Mark Guzzi, a graduate of the UMaine Sustainable Agriculture Program. The farm has participated in several NE SARE funded initiatives including:

- Diversity and Intensity of Cover Crop Systems: Managing Weed Seed Bank & Soil Health
- Managing Weed Seed Rain: A new paradigm for organic and low-input farmers
- Hybrid Mulching Effects on Vegetable Crop Productivity, Weed Dynamics and Soil Quality



Tour participants view a plot of Fava Beans used as a cover and green manure crop prior to establishing a fall made bed. Beds are maintained for a three year rotation using black plastic or straw mulch with perennial ryegrass and white clover in between the beds for erosion control. Frost seeded red clover is also used as a cover and green manure crop.

Bullridge Farm, Albion

Bullridge Farm is an organic dairy farm milking approximately 70 Dutch Belted/Holstein cattle and the site of a NE SARE Farmer/Grower project on Winter Spelt production.

Owner/operator Henry Perkins is President of the Maine Organic Milk Producers and an officer with the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance. Henry is also a farmer participant in a variety of NE SARE funded initiatives including:



Winter Spelt planted October 2005 to be harvested for on-farm grain for dairy herd.

- Using Cover Crops and Crop Diversity to Optimize Ecologically Based Weed Management
- Evaluating Organic Feed Quality for Dairies
- Expanding Grain Production and Use on Organic Dairy Farms in Maine and Vermont
- Growing Winter Spelt as an Organic Grain or Forage for Dairy Cows

A field of triticale and organic corn was also viewed. A discussion on ecological weed management and trapping and monitoring of insects that may eat weed seeds that are produced in organic corn production was led by Bill Curran, Penn State Extension who is collaborating with Rick Kersbergen, UMaine CE on this research. Henry Perkins also demonstrated his transitional on-farm grain storage and processing facility.

Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA)

Tour participants visited the education center and MOFGA Executive Director Russ Libby discussed their recently funded project on “Building Connections: Creating a Broader Public Base for CSA’s (Community Supported Agriculture groups.)” Kerri Sands presented on the growth of the “Farms for the Future” business assistance program that was initially funded with a NE SARE Research and Education grant. Discussion included collaboration with other states such as Massachusetts and Vermont. Other NE SARE funded initiatives include:

- Restoring Our Seed: Extension Program to Train Farmers in Ecological Seed Crop Production
- Farms for Maine’s Future: Comprehensive, Sustainable Strategies Using Teams
- Eat Local Foods Coalition: Connecting Nutritionists and Farmers
- MOFGA’s Farm Training Project: Workshops for farm apprentices and other new and beginning farmers
- Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA)
- Developing a Support Network for Grass Based Livestock Producers

USDA Agricultural Research Service Field Research Site, Newport



Sustainable potato cropping systems



Organic forage and grain cropping systems

The Newport Field Research Site is part of the USDA ARS New England Plant, Soil and Water Lab in Orono, ME and conducts many collaborative research projects, including a USDA CSREES Integrated Organic Program project on organic forage and cropping systems for New England Dairy Farms (joint grant between UMaine and the University of New Hampshire) and a NE SARE



funded joint grant between UMaine and the University of Vermont “Expanding Grain Production and Use on Organic Dairy Farms in ME and VT.” Participants viewed potato and forage cropping systems and participated in a demonstration on soil quality field testing methods (using potassium permanganate to measure active soil carbon in the field), field assessment methods (Maine Soil Quality Assessment Card developed by USDA NRCS) and interpretation. A certified crop consultant also presented on dairy/potato integration operations in the area and the influence of these systems on soil quality and farm profitability.

The USDA SARE Professional Development Program and other traveling participants ended the evening at the UMaine Rogers Research Farm (www.umaine.edu/mafes/farms/rogersfarm.htm) in Stillwater for dinner and a self-guided tour of various sustainable forage and crop systems.

For more information about the New England Region Water Quality Program Agricultural Nutrient and Pest Management Focus Area, visit our website www.usawaterquality.org/newengland or contact:

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