



Western SARE

Phil Rasmussen, Coordinator
 Utah State University
 Agricultural Science Building
 Room 305
 4865 Old Main Hill
 Logan, Utah 84322-4865
 phone: (435) 797-2257
 fax: (435) 797-3344

Professional Development Program

Eastern Washington
 PDP Co-Coordinator

Andy McGuire
 Center for Sustaining Agriculture
 and Natural Resources (CSANR)
 Washington State University
 35 C St NW, Courthouse
 Ephrata WA 98823
 (509) 754-2011 ext. 413
 (509) 754-0163 fax
amcguire@wsu.edu

Western Washington
 PDP Co-Coordinator

Carol Miles
 Associate Scientist/Extension Specialist
 Washington State University Mount
 Vernon NWREC
 16650 State Route 536
 Mount Vernon, WA 98273-4768
 (360) 848-6150
milesc@wsu.edu

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Western SARE Grant Categories

- Research & Education
- Professional Development
- Farmer/Rancher
- Professional + Producer
- Graduate Student
- Sustainable Farm Tours

Go to <http://wsare.usu.edu>
 Click on: Apply for a Grant

CLASS ON A LOPEZ ISLAND FARM

On Lopez Island, in the Puget Sound of northwest Washington, Henning Sehmsdorf and Elizabeth Simpson have created a veritable campus of research, education and extension for sustainable agriculture.

Their 50-acre diversified crop and livestock operation, S&S Homestead Farm, has been transformed into S&S Center for Sustainable Agriculture. It provides practical education in farming and nutrition to interns, students and island residents. It's become a thriving research laboratory delving into the nuances and impacts of ecological farming. And it hosts a variety of seminars and workshops on sustainability.

chicken, eggs, dairy products, fruit and vegetables as well as animal feed and local fertility.

In all, Sehmsdorf has been involved in three Western SARE grants, two he coordinated and another on which

Farmer/Rancher Grants

Title: Sustainable Small-Scale Grain Raising

Project Number: FW01-081

Project Coordinator: Henning Sehmsdorf
 Lopez Island, Washington

Technical Advisor: Tom Schultz
 WSU Extension

Amount Funded: \$2,040

Title: Agricultural Science Class: Principles of Ecological Food Production

Project Number: FW04-006

Project Coordinator: Henning Sehmsdorf

Technical Advisor: Carol Miles
 WSU Ag Systems Specialist

Amount Funded: \$7,441

Professional + Producer Grant

Project Title: Bio-Intensive Forage and Hay Production

Project Number: FW04-305

Project Coordinator: Steve Fransen
 WSU Extension Agronomist

Farmer Advisor: Henning Sehmsdorf

Amount Funded: \$7,499

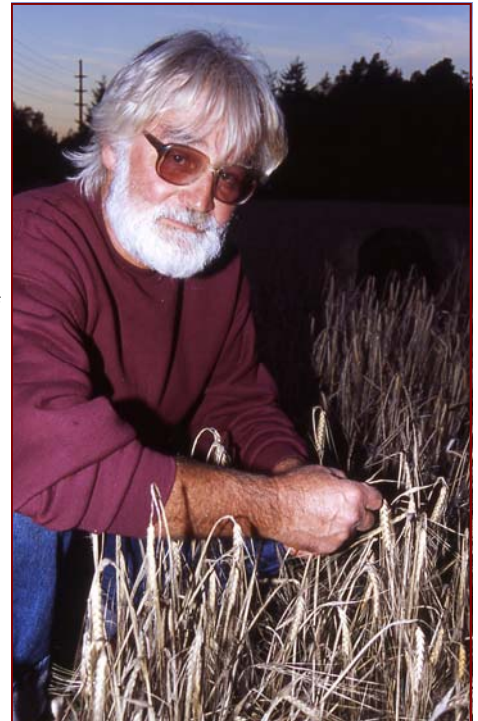
While Sehmsdorf and Simpson have been fashioning their model of sustainable farming and living since 1970, Sehmsdorf says Farmer/Rancher grants from Western SARE have brought focus to priorities.

"The grants helped me articulate, in objective terms, the goals and mission of this farm, which is ecological food production and education in sustainable living," said Sehmsdorf. "The grants have helped us solve specific problems on the production side of our farm and, at the same time, strengthened our educational outreach."

S&S Homestead Farm, with 15 acres owned and 35 leased from neighbors, produces beef, pork, lamb,

he served as a farmer advisor.

The first SARE grant, conducted in 2001 and 2002, tested grain on a small scale. The idea was to find a crop – in this case barley – that could capture and recycle excess soil nutrients from a field used for wintering beef cows, preventing pollution and reducing farm inputs.



Henning Sehmsdorf inspects the barley.



Western SARE, a USDA organization, funds grants for research and education that develop or promote some aspect of agricultural sustainability, which embraces

- *profitable farms and ranches*
- *a healthy environment*
- *strong families and communities.*

The Western Region, one of four SARE regions nationwide, is administered through Utah State University.

Western SARE:
<http://wsare.usu.edu>

National SARE
www.sare.org

CLASS ON A LOPEZ ISLAND FARM

As a result of the project, the farm saves money to buy straw it uses to mulch fruits and vegetables (it typically costs \$7 a bale from the local feed store). The grain fed to cattle, sheep, pigs and chickens promotes their health by guaranteeing a clean, organic feed source. And the barley takes up nutrients that otherwise might pollute ground or surface waters.

A second SARE-funded project, Bio-Intensive Forage Production, completed in 2007, is testing whether farm-produced biodynamic soil stimulants are a viable substitute for lime applications in modifying soil acidity. S&S is collaborating on the project with Washington State University research and extension faculty, including a forage specialist, microbiologist and soil scientist. Preliminary assessments indicated that the biodynamic preparations performed at least as well as the lime application, if not better.

"If final analysis bears this out, we will have achieved our goal, which is to maximize protein production in the form of harvestable forage, meat and dairy products," says Sehmsdorf. "That will increase overall farm production while maintaining ecological balance by reducing the consumption of non-renewable fossil fuels and other resources."

The third SARE project supports the mission of S&S Homestead farm to provide education in ecological food production and sustainable living. In 2004, Sehmsdorf and Simpson received a SARE grant to develop a farm-to-



Elizabeth Simpson at work.

school program the two had developed two years earlier to teach local public school students and supply fresh produce to the local school cafeteria.

The farm built a 45-foot by 12-foot hoophouse in which to grow vegetables during the winter, and a Washington State University plant specialist provided guidance for two-year bean trials in which students could participate for science credit.

Beyond instilling a better understanding about nutrition in the island community, Sehmsdorf acknowledges that the work evolving from the SARE grants has had several ripple effects, among them:

- The school board has officially sanctioned the farm-to-school project in support of the state mandated Wellness Policy.
- An island donor contributed a large hoophouse now installed on S&S Homestead Farm for instruction and vegetable production for the school cafeteria.
- The school cafeteria has

committed to maximize access to locally grown, organic food (within current school budget limits), and the chef and kitchen staff have undergone extensive training to redirect the delivery of school lunch.

- The San Juan Conservation District and the Lopez Island Farm Education program jointly applied for two years of funding under the Agriculture Pilot Project Initiative supported by Washington's Gov. Gregoire; if successful, the grant will double the food budget of the school cafeteria to demonstrate impacts on student health and academic performance, at the same time supporting local agriculture.

Sehmsdorf says the S&S Center for Sustainable Agriculture hopes to obtain grant funding that will continue the center's work to promote sustainability into the foreseeable future – beyond the time when he and his wife can carry out the work.

He says agricultural sustainability is possible only in the context of soils, plants, animals, community and landscape, all of which are local concerns with global implications. He adds that the current industrial global food system, predicated on diminishing fossil energy and waste sinks, is not sustainable.

"Agriculture can be sustainable," says Sehmsdorf, "only if it cultivates perennial, pastoral, polycultural, biological and diverse systems based on renewable solar energy harvested directly through plants and animals."

For more information, see: <http://csanr.wsu.edu/DemoFarms/Brochure04.pdf>