



## Curbing the silent ranch crisis

**D**rought, disease, and toxic plants are obvious ranching problems that are easy to spot, document, and even photograph for the evening news. Inadequate planning is not as obvious but potentially more disastrous, according to Bill Fox, a proponent of long-term strategic planning for farmers and ranchers.

“Just look at the statistics,” he says. “More than 70,000 American farms and ranches are technically insolvent. Another 73,000 have debts equaling 70-100 percent of their assets. A further 222,000 have debts equaling 40-70 percent of their assets. The need for long-term strategic planning is the farm and ranch crisis you don’t hear about.”

“Strategic planning has been used

successfully in the corporate business community for many years,” he continues. “But it has yet to be widely adopted by the agricultural community. The terms *strategic planning* and *total resource management* may be intimidating at first, but they simply mean selecting enterprise mixes that satisfy long-term goals and maintain sustainable natural resources.”

Fox is the Texas Cooperative Extension Associate who coordinates a Total Resource Management (TRM) program as part of a Southern SARE Professional Development Program project. He, along with Charles Anderson (NRCS), Jason Johnson and Bruce Carpenter (both with Texas

Cooperative Extension) serve as instructors facilitating the workshops. The Texas Cooperative Extension, Natural Resource Conservation Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife collaborated to develop the workshops and accompanying training materials, which will include development of an interactive web site.

So far 77 professional educators and natural resource managers from three states have interacted in training workshops across Texas. These five workshops have hosted personnel from the Texas Cooperative Extension, Natural Resource Conservation Service

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## Cropping up in Bangladesh

**M**ary Peet’s *Sustainable Practices for Vegetable Production in the South* is being translated for farmers in the north—northwest of the Bangladesh capital Dhaka, to be exact.

Data collection for the guide was partially funded by a Southern SARE grant in 1991. It was later produced in book form and as a web document through North Carolina State University.

The guide has become a sustainable ag classic in both versions, but Peet was surprised by the e-mail request for permission to translate it into *potcha* (a village dialect) for use by peasant farmers around Konabari.

Konabari High School students will help with the translation as part of their English and permaculture studies.

The request came from Keith Stewart, who with his

*“We have learned to start every project with the premise that it is impossible to achieve anything in rural Bangladesh, then we make a list of 17 reasons why it is impossible and solve them one by one.”*

Keith Stewart

Bangladesh partner Enamul Haque, established the school, a clinic, a farmers cooperative and an agricultural education program in the rural district that is home to about 223,000 poor people in 30 villages. The climate and landscape are similar to Louisiana’s bayou country.

Their website (<http://members.optusnet.com.au/~netlinkoz/index.html>) describes Stewart and Haque as two misguided dreamers who operate a self-funded community development program.

“We have learned to start every project with the premise that it is impossible to achieve anything in rural Bangladesh,” says Stewart. “Then we make a list of 17 reasons why it is impossible and solve them one by one.”

Mary Peet’s production guide will solve one of the problems faced by the farmers in the district, most of whom own small holdings, handed down for generations.

“Everyone grows the same few crops at the same time, using the same poor quality seed,” explains Stewart. “Then



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## Cropping up

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they all show up before daylight at the local market with their huge baskets to sit there all day in rows of other small farmers with the same glut crop. At the end of the day, wholesalers buy at rock bottom prices and deliver it by trucks to Dhaka markets the next day for a handsome profit. If the farmers try to transport their produce to the Dhaka markets, their tires are slashed, and they are beaten by the wholesalers.”

The goal of the farmers cooperative is to raise an array of high-quality vegetables using sustainable techniques and then market directly to fine hotels and restaurants, bypassing the local markets and wholesalers.

“We start picking at 4 a.m. Our fresh produce can be delivered for cash payment to a Dhaka hotel by 8 a.m.,” says Stewart. “We have organized to sell to the five-star Hilton in Dhaka, which currently imports produce from California. We would like to expand to export from Zia International Airport, about 20 minutes away, overnight to Singapore and the Arabian Gulf States.

Translations of the vegetable production guide will help the farmers diversify and produce higher quality crops. Stewart discovered the guide through the Southern SARE website during a visit to his home in Australia. Also a permaculture trainer, he has used the internet for years to gather teaching materials on everything from integrated pest management to tissue culture of orchids.

Although Stewart was the first person to request translation rights, Peet has received email posts from Egypt, India, Kenya, Korea, Guam, Greece and other places faraway from North Carolina. Some just want to tell her how the information has been adapted and used. Others seek specific information. The most unusual request was from someone who wanted to grow white potatoes in a greenhouse at 14,000 feet in Nepal. Peet’s response was a simple “Good luck!”

Even though the publisher allowed Peet to make the information available free of charge over the NCSU web site, the book has had unexpectedly strong sales abroad.

“Sustainable vegetable production seems to strike a universal chord,” she says. “Finding more profitable crops concerns farmers every where from the Specialty Crop Center in Kinston, North Carolina, to a small group of farmers I worked with in Slobozia-Dusca, Moldova.”

Peet continues to teach and conduct research at NCSU, concentrating on sustainable greenhouse production. Read more about her current research at [www.ces.ncsu.edu/greenhouse\\_veg/](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/greenhouse_veg/).



The book version of *Sustainable Practices for Vegetable Production in the South* is still available for \$28.95, plus shipping, from Focus Publishing, (800) 848-7236. View it on the award-winning website: [www2.ncsu.edu/sustainable](http://www2.ncsu.edu/sustainable).

## Ranch crisis *Continued from page 1*



and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas General Land Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service and the Oklahoma-based Nobel Foundation.

Wayne Hanselka, Associate Department Head and Extension Range Specialist, heads up the current SARE project. According to Hanselka, the Total Resource management concept applies natural resource management, strategic management and economic decision-making concepts, commonly used in business, but often neglected on ranches and farms.

In the mid-1980s, Extension Range Specialist Larry White and Livestock Specialist Tom Troxel saw the need for integrated management and planning at the ranch level. They saw the potential of using TRM to emphasize the interactions of all sustainable rangeland practices and how each part of a ranch impacts the whole system. The current program was expanded from an earlier SARE-supported program. Using the *Texas Range Management Handbook* and concepts from the NRCS *Nine Step Planning Program*, they have developed additional training materials that cover the principles of TRM, risk management, ecological management and economic management.

“Unfortunately, early efforts of the program often did not go beyond the ranch gate,” says Bruce Carpenter. “Current efforts focus on professional resource managers who affect a larger audience. We follow a shift in management paradigm, from one geared toward production to one promoting sustainability. Sustainable natural resources should lead to sustainable production. Our approach is to introduce strategic planning techniques to a broad base of land-use consultants and land managers to evaluate enterprise mixes that will meet goals and sustain available natural resources.”

To make the concepts come alive, the workshops center around the simulated 2000-acre Coleman River Property containing all the problems of real life including debt, drought and an uncertain future. It gives workshop participants a scenario for collaborative problem solving combining expertise from their individual backgrounds. Participants are assigned to work with partners outside their disciplines in order to stimulate systems thinking.

Participants use their respective expertise to help a “family” set long term goals for their property. This



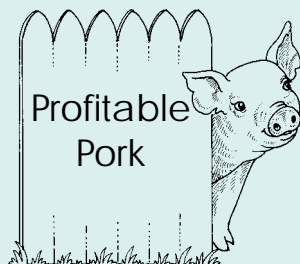
typically includes maintaining ownership and meeting financial objectives. Often other goals emerge such as self-employment, a rural lifestyle and preservation for future generations.

“The most creative solutions come when people from different backgrounds start looking at a problem together,” says Fox. “The participants are always surprised to find out how many alternatives there are for each decision once they allow themselves a broader view than their specialty encompasses.”

In addition, some participants report taking TRM concepts into other settings, including their personal lives and family goals. “That’s not surprising,” says Johnson. “These principles are applicable for any business, non-profit organization, government agency, or individual that will take the time to study their respective situation and make realistic goals based on the resources available.”

Now that the initial workshops are behind them, the project cooperators are busy helping participants implement what they learned and planning for future activities. Additional tools such as an interactive web site are being developed for ranchers and professional resource managers.

“Our vision is that TRM training will become self-perpetuating,” says Charles Anderson, “Through SARE support, we anticipate a hub of TRM information that can be delivered and maintained. This will help agencies and interested parties implement TRM and strategic planning at the local level to address local needs.”



*“Profitable Pork: Alternative Strategies for Hog Producers,”* a new 16-page bulletin from USDA’s Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN), showcases examples of alternate ways to raise pork profitably. In designing hog systems that work on their farms – in deep-straw bedding, in hoop structures and on pasture – producers have been able to save on fixed costs, find greater flexibility, identify unique marketing channels and enjoy a better quality of life.

The bulletin features successful hog producers as well as the latest research on everything from greater profits to better-tasting pork raised in alternative hog systems. To order a free copy, call (301) 504-6422 or go to [www.sare.org/bulletin/hogs](http://www.sare.org/bulletin/hogs).

# Workshop scrutinizes genetic engineering

*Looking at Genetic Engineering Through the Lens of Sustainability* is the title of the seventh annual Southern SARE Professional Development Workshop to be held January 24-25, 2002 in Chattanooga.

Rather than trying to give answers about genetic engineering, the workshop will examine different sides of issues surrounding the topic. New developments in genetic engineering of agricultural crops have spawned changes and concerns on many levels.

On issues of food safety, public health, farm economic sustainability and environmental implications--much is still unknown. But farmers are being required to make decisions now. If farm

advisors are uninformed, they are unable to provide effective assistance.

The workshop will present information about potential benefits and risks, what is known and what is uncertain, and who will own potential profits and liabilities. A key element of the program is an opportunity for in-depth, facilitated discussion with your peers about how the implications of genetic engineering play out in your work, your organization or your farm.

An historical perspective will be presented by Ross Love of Oklahoma State University and the environmental implications by Dick Richardson of the University of Texas. Kitty Smith of the USDA Economic Research Service will

talk about the economic implications of genetic engineering, and Rick Welsh of Clarkson University will present the social implications.

Facilitated discussion groups and panel responses will be interspersed with the presentations.

The workshop will conclude with a two-hour session entitled *Making Farm-level Decisions about Genetically Engineered Crops: A Dialogue between Farmers and Extension*.

Sponsored jointly by the PDP and SSAWG. For more agenda details go to the Southern SARE web site at <http://www.griffin.peachnet.edu/sare/> or contact the SARE office at (770) 412-4787.

## Registration Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security # \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Street or PO Box \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Registration Fee \$45.00

### Method of Payment

Payment must accompany registration

Visa  Mastercard  American Express

Purchase Order (must be attached) PO# \_\_\_\_\_

Check enclosed ( make payable to North Carolina State University)

### Credit Card Information

Card # \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Card \_\_\_\_\_

Please register by January 7, 2002. Complete the registration form and mail it along with your registration fee to:

Continuing & Professional Education  
Box 7401, McKimmon Center  
Raleigh, NC 27695-7401  
Ph: (919) 515-2261  
Fax: (919) 515-7614

### Lodging

Reserved lodging is available at two hotels at a group rate if you call by January 2, 2002 and identify yourself with the Southern Region SARE Program.

Chattanooga Choo Choo Holiday Inn  
1400 Market Street, Chattanooga, Tennessee  
\$54.00, plus tax, per night  
Ph: (800) 872-2529

Days Inn Rivergate  
901 Carter Street, Chattanooga, Tennessee  
\$55.00, plus tax, per night  
Ph: (423) 266-7331

For more information, contact:  
Rosanne Minarovic  
Southern Region SARE PDP Coordinator  
North Carolina State University  
(919) 515-3252  
[rminarov@unity.ncsu.edu](mailto:rminarov@unity.ncsu.edu)

## Which SARE grant program for you?

Southern SARE administers six separate grant programs, each with its own priorities and audiences. The process begins with the release of calls for proposals for each of the programs. If you are on the Common Ground mailing list you will receive an issue prior to the release of each call for proposals. The SSARE web site [www.griffin.peachnet.edu/sare](http://www.griffin.peachnet.edu/sare) is the quickest way to receive the calls for proposals as soon as they are released.

**Research and Education Projects** generally are conducted by interdisciplinary, multi-institutional, and often, multi-state research teams coordinated by a principal investigator from a non-governmental organization, university or governmental agency. These projects include farmers as participants. For more information call Jeff Jordan at (770) 412-4788.

**2002**

**February** Full proposals due  
**March** Full proposals reviewed  
**April** Administrative Council announces grant awards  
**June** Call for 2003 preproposals released  
**August** 2003 Preproposals due

**Producer Grant Projects** are developed, coordinated and conducted by producers or producer organizations. These projects are generally located in one state, often on one farm. There is a \$10,000 limit for funding proposals submitted by an individual producer and a \$15,000 limit on proposals submitted by producer organizations. For more information about Producer Grants call John Mayne at (828) 298-9667.

**2002**

**January 25** Proposals due  
**March** Proposals reviewed  
**April** Administrative Council announces grant awards  
**September 15** Call for 2003 proposals released

**Graduate Student Awards** are intended for full-time graduate students (masters or Ph.D.) enrolled at accredited colleges and universities in the Southern Region. Up to \$10,000 will be awarded to each successful applicant for up to three years of project activities. The funds are paid directly to the university for use on the graduate student's project. For more information call John Mayne at (828) 298-9667.

**2002**

**January** Proposals due  
**April** Administrative Council announces grant awards  
**May** Call for 2003 proposal released

**Professional Development Program Projects** train agricultural information providers in sustainable agriculture techniques and concepts. For more information contact Rosanne Minarovic at (919) 515-3252.

**2002**

**February** Full proposals due  
**March** Full proposals reviewed  
**April** Administrative Council announces grant awards  
**June** Call for 2003 preproposals released  
**August** 2003 Preproposals due

**On-Farm Research Projects** are conducted by agricultural professionals such as extension agents, NRCS and/or NGO personnel who currently work with farmers and ranchers. Cooperators must include at least three producers at all stages of the project. Funded for a maximum of \$15,000 for up to two years of activities. Call John Mayne at (828) 298-9667.

**2002**

**January 25** Proposals due  
**March** Proposals reviewed  
**April** Administrative Council announces grant awards  
**September 15** Call for 2003 proposals released

**Sustainable Community Innovation Projects** link sound farm and nonfarm economic development with agricultural and natural resource management. Applicants may be farmers, ranchers, researchers, community organizations, environmentalists, ag and community development professionals, entrepreneurs, governmental and non-governmental organizations. Funded for a project maximum of \$10,000 for up to two years of activities. Call John Mayne at (828) 298-9667.

**2001**

**September** Call for proposals released  
**November** Proposals due

**2002**

**Spring** Awards announced

## Don't miss the bus October 23-26, 2002 !



"On The Road to Sustainable Agriculture" is the theme of the national conference to be hosted by Southern Region SARE on October 23-26, 2002 in and around Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina.

Based at the Sheraton Imperial Hotel and Convention Center, the conference will roll through farms, markets and research stations on comfortable chartered buses.

The goal of the conference is to let farmers, ranchers and agricultural professionals see sustainable agriculture in action so they can bring new ideas and solutions back to their farms and communities. While conference participants will visit Southern farms, markets and research sites, the program will address issues of national concern.

For details about the conference as plans are confirmed see <http://www.griffin.peachnet.edu/sare> or email [ppatton@gaes.griffin.peachnet.edu](mailto:ppatton@gaes.griffin.peachnet.edu) or call the Southern SARE office at (770) 412-4786.

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