

# Summary Report

## ISC Sustainable Agriculture Education Association Stakeholder Needs Assessment Survey

### Background

The survey was conducted by the ISC for the purpose of defining the organizational function and assessing the viability of a sustainable agricultural education association (see Appendix A. for survey instrument). The survey included seven questions (both quantitative and qualitative) and was distributed June 13<sup>th</sup> with a return deadline of June 22<sup>nd</sup>. This period of time was somewhat problematic given the typical academic Calendars.

Survey participants were drawn from three populations; 1) ISC members and their nominees (colleagues and peers from their institutions and regions), 2) participants of the 2006 Facilitating Sustainable Agriculture Education Conference (FSAEC), and 3) the 2006 FSAEC advisory council. ISC members distributed and collected surveys from their own nominees. The ISC staff coordinator administered the remainder of the surveys. The ISC analyzed the data and formatted the report as a committee.

Approximately 245 individuals were invited to participate in the survey, 98 individuals responded (~40% response rate). Survey participants included eighteen social science students, twenty natural science students, seventeen staff, sixteen social science faculty, twenty-two natural science faculty, and five administrators.

Of the entire survey population (n=98), sixty-two individuals (63%) were from Land Grant Universities. Others participant backgrounds included, twenty individuals from 4-year public institutions, eleven from liberal arts colleges, one from a community college and four from public or private organizations that serve post-secondary students and programs. The high participation rate of Land Grant faculty (30% of population) likely caused a result bias towards the needs and interests of that professional group.

### Results

1. Do you know of an existing organization with very similar goals and functions to the one proposed?

*Total Responses: 96, with 10 YES, 86 NO (90% NO)*

2. Should SAEA be formed as an autonomous organization or be attached to an existing organization? *Autonomous organization (AUT), Attached to an existing organization (ATT), Un-Decided (UD)*

*Total Responses: 97, with 53 AUT, 25 ATT and 19 UD*

*Overall sentiment towards an AUT approach. Some other points to note:*

*Un-Decided votes did not infer a negative opinion of an autonomous organization. Of those UD, only 2 out of the 19 expressed opinions against the idea of forming an autonomous organization.*

*Roughly 40% of Staff were Un-Decided.*

*19% of the sample, but 36% of Un-Decided, were Staff.*

3. What are the three most important SAEA Goals and three most important Functions?

*Total Responses: 95*

*19 Partially Incomplete (responses were either greater or less than three goals and/or functions)*

*9 Incomplete (6 suggested that most or all the goals and functions were favorable, 3 were left completely blank)*

(Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of votes received for each goal or function.)

Goals:

1. (56) Promote and disseminate curricula, best educational and experiential learning practices, and research related to the teaching and learning of sustainable agriculture.
2. (36) Serve as a vibrant network for individuals and organizations involved in sustainable agriculture education.
3. (34) Engage in activities to aid the professional development of sustainable agriculture educators and students.
4. (31) Promote and advocate the establishment of sustainable agriculture education programs.
5. (24) Obtain public and private funds to develop and disseminate sustainable agriculture education and curricula at the post-secondary level and to the general public.
6. (21) Contribute to the growth of sustainable agriculture in the U.S. and abroad (grassroots and educational institutions, farms, businesses etc.).
7. (19) Serve as an advocate for sustainable agriculture in other contexts and in collaboration with other organizations relevant to sustainable agriculture education.
8. (18) Provide public forum for addressing issues in sustainable agriculture education teaching and learning.
9. (12) Attract talented, bright individuals to teach and work in the field of sustainable agriculture.

Functions:

1. (51) Provide opportunities (workshops, symposia, conferences, short courses, etc.) to learn about and develop sustainable agriculture education programs.
2. (34) Maintain an organizational web site for communication and dissemination of sustainable agriculture education information.
3. (28) Communicate with high school and college students about the opportunities within sustainable agriculture education.
4. (27) Host national conferences to provide a forum for professional development, networking, advocacy activities and publishing of proceedings.
5. (25) Advocate for resources to promote sustainable agriculture education.
6. (25) Maintain a bibliography and/or library of sustainable agriculture education curriculum materials.
7. (23) Publish a series, journal or publication with another organization to publicize scholarly research on sustainable agriculture education.
8. (10) Publish a newsletter to share information about sustainable agricultural education information.

4. Are there additional goals and functions that you would suggest? If so, what are they?  
*Responses: 68 NO (stated No or left a blank response), 30 YES (See Appendix B. for list of suggestions)*

5. Would you become a member of the SAEA?  
*Total Responses: 79, 72 YES, 7 NO (91% YES)*

6. To what extent would you agree or disagree that the proposed organization should serve the following potential target audiences.  
 (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = no opinion, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree)

<i>Specific Potential Target Audiences</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean Score</i>
A. Post-secondary students enrolled in sustainable agriculture or related academic programs	88	4.43
B. Post-secondary teaching faculty/staff that instruct students about sustainable agriculture or related fields	88	4.83
C. Extension faculty/staff that inform students about sustainable agriculture	87	4.22
D. Extension faculty/staff that inform farmers about sustainable agriculture	85	3.90
E. Professional adult learners learning about sustainable agriculture	85	3.51

7. Would you attend the 2007 SAEA Conference?  
*Total Responses: 85, 83 YES, 2 NO (98% YES)*

## Appendix

### A. Survey Instrument

#### **National Stakeholder Needs Assessment Survey for Proposed Post-secondary Sustainable Agriculture Education Association:**

Thank you for your willingness to complete this survey. Please provide the following information about yourself and answer the questions below.

**Note: Please return the completed survey no later than Thursday, June 22<sup>nd</sup>.**

1. Name:
2. Student (grad. or undergrad.), staff, faculty or administrator:
3. Field/discipline of interest or work:
4. Type of university/college or institution that you work for or attend: (i.e., 2yr, 4yr, Liberal arts, public, private, Land-grant, etc.):
5. If faculty or staff, what is your appointment and what type of learners are you responsible for educating? (i.e., teaching undergraduates, research, farmer extension, 50:50 research : teaching, etc.)

*Note: The following associations are being assessed for compatibility with the proposed organization.*

6. Please **BOLD** the names of any of the organizations of which you are a member.

- Agriculture, Food and Human Values Society (AFHVS);
- Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE);
- American Association for Agricultural Education; (AAAE)
- European Network of Organic Agriculture University Teachers.
- North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA);
- University Affiliate Program of the National Council for Science and the Environment;
- University Leaders for a Sustainable Future;
- Ecological Society of America (ESA);
- American Society for Horticultural Science (ASHS)

#### **Proposed organization description:**

The Sustainable Agriculture Education Association (SAEA), promotes and supports the development, application, research, and dissemination of best teaching and learning practices in post-secondary sustainable agriculture education and curricula through communication, training, development, and collaborative activities for teachers and learners.

#### **Assessment Questions:**

1. Are you aware of an existing organization(s) with goals and functions very similar to those proposed here? (please see list of goals and functions that follow)  
If so, please identify it/them. (*Note: Please also see above for a list of associations currently being assessed for compatibility.*)
2. Do you think the proposed SAEA should be developed as an autonomous organization or should it be created within an existing organization? Please explain, including your thoughts

- on the advantages and disadvantages of each option.
3. Reviewing the lists of goals and functions below, please list the three goals and three functions that would best serve your needs and interests and/or the needs and interests of your program or institution. (copy and paste selected list of goals and functions here)
  4. Are there additional goals and functions that you think should be added to those listed below? If so, please describe and indicate where they rank relative to your previously selected top three.
  5. Would you be likely to become a member of an organization whose goals and functions were similar to those listed below?
  6. What target audience do you see this organization best serving?  
Please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement with the following set of statements by selecting 1- strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-no opinion, 4-agree, or 5-strongly agree.  
I think the proposed post-secondary SAEA should serve:
    - A. Post-secondary students enrolled in sustainable agriculture or related academic programs
    - B. Post-secondary teaching faculty and staff that instruct students about sustainable agriculture or related fields
    - C. Extension faculty and staff that inform students about sustainable agriculture
    - D. Extension faculty and staff that inform farmers about sustainable agriculture
    - E. Professional adults learning about sustainable agriculture (broadly described as the general public or non-matriculated students)
  7. Would you be interested in participating in the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual conference on post-secondary sustainable agriculture education in 2007 or beyond? Yes/No

**Sustainable Agriculture Education Association: Goals and Functions:**

Goals:

- Promote and advocate the establishment of sustainable agriculture education programs.
- Promote and disseminate curricula, best educational and experiential learning practices, and research related to the teaching and learning of sustainable agriculture.
- Provide public forum for addressing issues in sustainable agriculture education teaching and learning.
- Serve as a vibrant network for individuals and organizations involved in sustainable agriculture education.
- Engage in activities to aid the professional development of sustainable agriculture educators and students.
- Serve as an advocate for sustainable agriculture in other contexts and in collaboration with other organizations relevant to sustainable agriculture education.
- Obtain public and private funds to develop and disseminate sustainable agriculture education and curricula at the post-secondary level and to the general public.
- Attract talented, bright individuals to teach and work in the field of sustainable agriculture.
- Contribute to the growth of sustainable agriculture in the U.S. and abroad (grassroots and educational institutions, farms, businesses etc.).

Functions:

- Provide opportunities (workshops, symposia, conferences, short courses, etc.) to learn about and develop sustainable agriculture education programs.
- Maintain a bibliography and/or library of sustainable agriculture education curriculum

materials.

- Publish a newsletter to share information about sustainable agricultural education information.
- Host national conferences to provide a forum for professional development, networking, advocacy activities and publishing of proceedings.
- Publish a series, journal or publication with another organization to publicize scholarly research on sustainable agriculture education.
- Advocate for resources to promote sustainable agriculture education.
- Communicate with high school and college students about the opportunities within sustainable agriculture education.
- Maintain an organizational web site for communication and dissemination of sustainable agriculture education information.

Definitions:

- Post-secondary education herein is broadly defined as adult learning that occurs in multiple programs and settings.
- Sustainable Agriculture herein is defined as food and agricultural systems that are environmentally sound, economically viable, socially responsible, non-exploitative, humane, and that serve as a foundation for future generations.

A second national sustainable agriculture education conference has been proposed for

2007. Please see the following UCSC and UCD websites for more information:

<http://socialsciences.ucsc.edu/casfs/conference/index.html>; <http://studentfarm.ucdavis.edu/>.

*Please return the completed survey no later than Thursday, June 22<sup>nd</sup>.*

## B.

Survey Questions 4. Unedited Additional Goals and Functions. Not ranked.

- Communication to Secondary Educators and counselors regarding professional and career opportunities.
- Goals and functions that would lead to better communication and cooperation regionally would be best.
- We strongly need an association to accredit sustainable Ag educational curriculum for private independent programs that will integrate or transfer into 4 year university programs. We need advocacy for Sust. Ag study abroad programs and the need for such supplemental programming to be incorporated into existing university agriculture curriculum.
- Advocate for resources to promote sustainable agriculture education.
- Sustainable ag and sustainable development programs become a part of LGU accreditation.
- I think the overarching goal needs to be institutionalization of SAEA within the UC system. Everything flows from that goal.
- Seems to me like there are already a lot of advocacy organizations lobbying for improved sustainable ag education funding. Perhaps what's missing here is improved communication and facilitation between the political advocacy organizations and university extension/research so that the two could better serve their common interests.
- Have annual meeting
- There needs to be a broader role for this group that extends to eaters of food. They need to understand how their eating choices influence how the agri-food system is constructed. So, I suggest another goal of promoting university efforts to educate the public about their part in the agri-food system.
- Aid the professional development of sustainable agriculture educators and students.
- It would be valuable for my students to have a broader sense of what is going on in other sustainable agriculture programs, and to have a broader background in the concepts and value schemes that underlie sustainable ag.
- Funding for (field) classes
- Funding for additional staff to address deficiencies with: admin, outreach with local community, complimenting 2yr college programs in the area, courting students who show interest, and program marketing.
- To provide a forum for agriculture educators and others working in the field of sustainable agriculture to discuss changing issues, practices and innovations in sustainable agriculture. For example, to discuss the impacts of climate change on sustainable agriculture as well as the effects of sustainable agriculture on climate. I think it is important that SA education uses a dynamic curriculum that addresses food and fiber needs amidst a rapidly changing society and environment.=
- I think that one thing not listed is a more challenging goal, perhaps a next level phase of the SAEA, and that is to not just disseminate curricula, but to compile, create or integrate curricula into existing popular models of science education. Targeting regents curricula or popular textbooks and textbook publishers, editors

and authors with finely tuned sustainable agricultural “units” “lessons” or “margin-sized” inserts. Picture creating “units” or lessons on sust. Ag. uniquely based in Plant, Micro and Cellular Biology, chemistry, geology, policy, etc. Even my fairly rigorous and comprehensive env. Science major conspicuously lacked sust. Agriculture teaching. We went over eutrophication, and the many other environmental problems of conventional agriculture, but no solutions. Imagine that they show students how sust. Ag. principles are being applied to real-life solutions in the area of their focus and opening doors in their mind to the world of possibilities and intellectual challenges that is sustainable agriculture. Serve as a hub for exchange of resources and for support for those involved (or wanting to be involved) in sustainable agriculture

- Actively seek to self-educate while sharing knowledge and resources, recognizing that each of us is a learner in the field of sustainable agriculture.
- Coalition-building and encouraging participation in agricultural education from people in all sectors of society and the workforce.
- Goal and function: to actively seek students from underserved backgrounds (i.e., lower income, African American/black, Native American, Latino) to participate in creating curricula that address their needs AND to enable these students to attend college and university ag programs. This is a first priority on both lists for me.
- Seems to me that faculty need to be able to contribute to the scientific literature or proceedings through oral and/or poster presentations.
- Develop and support a peer-reviewed journal dedicated to Sustainable Agriculture Education (I’m not really happy with the existing publication outlets for this type of field)
- I feel that one very important goal is that the education tries to eliminate the dichotomy between sustainable and non-sustainable agriculture showing the varied continuum that exists between the two. The principles of sustainable agriculture should be interwoven with education in conventional agriculture, horticulture, nutrition, trade, sociology, economics and so on, so that the concepts, even if not in depth, become more familiar to a broader body of learners. That is, an understanding of what makes agriculture sustainable or not, ecologically, socially, and economically, should be introduced in ALL curricula, not only in specialized curricula. These goals rank second or third in my list.