

RESEARCH COMMENTARIES: FOOD SYSTEMS RESEARCH PRIORITIES OVER THE NEXT 5 YEARS

The next food systems agenda: A western grassroots perspective

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Abstract

The national United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Sustainable Agriculture

Research and Education (SARE) program celebrates its twenty-fifth year of operation in 2013. At this critical juncture, the Western SARE Center is now addressing what it considers to be key food systems development priorities in the years ahead. They include:

- Gaps in and lack of infrastructure development;
- Consumer education on the benefits and preparation of sustainable, locally grown foods;
- Changes in policy, regulations, institutional purchasing, and financing that are more supportive of and a catalyst for local food system development; and
- Training for beginning farmers and ranchers.

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In this research commentary, we share how Western SARE arrived at these priorities, based on extensive grassroots input. Further, we outline to what extent these priorities may be a part of a larger, longer-term research agenda in food systems.

Keywords

beginning farmers, consumer education, funding, infrastructure development, policy, processing, regulation, sustainability, sustainable agriculture, value-added

Introduction and Background

As it neared its twentieth anniversary in 2008, Western SARE had disbursed more than US\$69 million to fund more than 1,110 grants. These competitive grants funded research and provided research-based education about sustaining the West's agriculture. This grant-making process reflected the West's research and education needs to some degree, but only as understood by the people who knew about the United States Department of Agriculture's National Institute for Food and Agriculture SARE (USDA-NIFA-SARE) program and had the motivation to apply. SARE's twentieth anniversary presented Western SARE leaders with an opportune time to identify significant changes that could be fully implemented by its twenty-fifth anniversary in 2013.

In appraising its successes and plotting strategies for the future, the Western SARE Center's staff and administrative council (the congressionally stipulated governing board of directors composed of producers, land-grant university administrators, and other key agricultural leaders) saw a need to more fully grasp the region's evolving issues and constraints. Their desire was to assure that (1) the grant-review process selects quality projects for funding that truly address local and regional needs, and (2) priority issues could be addressed through the release of targeted calls for proposals.

Percolating from these deliberations was the launch of a series of seven listening sessions, dubbed Western SARE's Subregional Conferences, beginning in October 2007 on the island of Guam and concluding in March 2010 in the heart of Alaska. The intent was to engage key stakeholders at the grassroots level in each of seven easily identified subregions within the Western SARE Region. The stated goals of the subregional conferences were to:

1. Identify and prioritize emerging and unmet

- research and education needs in sustainable food, fiber, and energy systems; and
2. Increase stakeholder and policy-holder awareness of the accomplishments of the Western SARE Center and its projects.

The administrative council and staff harnessed a distinctive combination of needs assessments and educational tools to meet these two goals.

From October 2007 to March 2010, nearly 700 people from the Western SARE region, each with a stake in production agriculture and food systems, voiced more than 7,000 recorded comments about the state of western agriculture and how it can be strengthened and sustained. These comments arose at seven separate subregional conferences within seven distinct geographic zones (Oceania [Agatna, Guam], Southwest [Albuquerque, New Mexico], High Plains [Cheyenne, Wyoming], Pacific Northwest [Spokane, Washington], North Pacific [Hilo, Hawaii], Pacific Coast [Visalia, California], and Subarctic [Fairbanks, Alaska]). The conferences were planned, carefully facilitated, and implemented by the Western SARE Center (a designated regional research center of the USDA-NIFA). The Western SARE Center is headquartered at Utah State University, and its SARE Professional Development Program is headquartered at the University of Wyoming. A broad cross-section of food and farming leaders were invited in order to identify and prioritize research and education needs in sustainable food, fiber, and energy systems.

The extent of the data collected in seven subregional conferences, spanning the globe from Guam to Montana, cannot be adequately portrayed in this commentary. However, a more complete and extensive presentation of all significant data collected at all seven Western SARE Subregional Conferences is available online.¹

Conference Approach and Methodology

The overall strategy was to gather grassroots input followed the basic principles of Schmoldt and Peterson (2000) while putting the information to

¹ See more about the subregional conferences at <http://www.westernsare.org/Conferences/Subregional-Stakeholder-Conferences>

work as described by Glass (1979). The specific method of gathering information in each region used Western SARE's design, which drew on the main elements of the Nominal Group Method (NGM) as defined by Delbecq and Van de Ven (1971), and refined by Delbecq, Van de Ven, and Gustafson (1975), Sample (1984), and Place (2007).

Although this technique required countless hours of staff effort, it was critical to the success of the conferences. It allowed for the distillation of information into priorities for each subregion. Specific details of our methodology are outlined in appendix A.

Results and Discussion

Seven hundred people from the Western SARE Region who have a stake in production agriculture and food systems (farmers, ranchers, educators, agency personnel, nongovernmental organization leaders, and others) attended the seven Western SARE Subregional Conferences. Attendees generated more than 7,000 individual recorded comments pertaining to the issues and constraints of western agriculture. The number of comments from roundtable discussions ranged between 400 and 800 for each conference, with additional comments recorded in table reports, open-microphone sessions, and surveys during and after the conference.

Sorting and ranking this mountain of data presented a challenge. Western SARE employed a unique process at the conferences to streamline the information in real time on site for use during the conference and in subsequent strategy deliberations. As facilitated table groups worked through the "burning issue" focus questions, responses were recorded on oversized Post-it notepads. Western SARE staff then recorded those responses into Excel spreadsheets where they were categorized, collated, and prioritized, providing real-time turnaround of ranked results from the first day. The first-day results were printed and delivered to participants early the next morning for additional discussion and further prioritization.

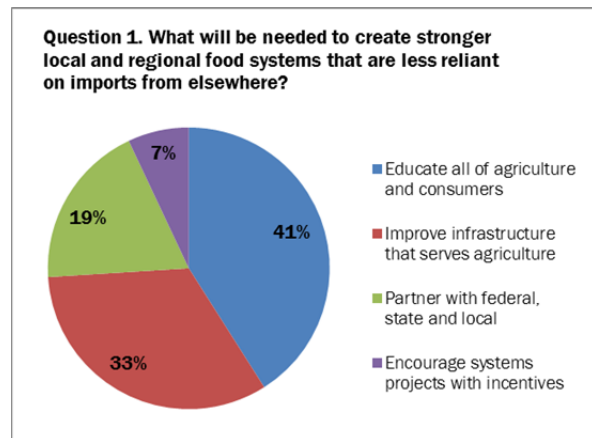
There are many other ways to sort and present the "poster pad" issues that received large numbers of votes at any, some, or all conferences. Appendix B presents the issues that received the highest

"votes" (via the nominal group methodology) across all of the conferences.

The following figures provide the overall results for the Western SARE Region for each burning issue focus question across all of the subregional conferences.

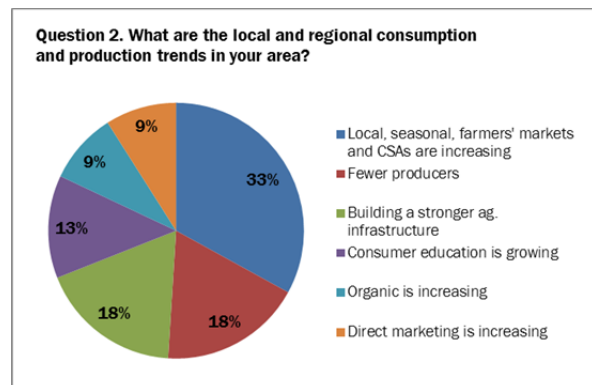
BURNING ISSUE 1. What Will Be Needed to Create a Stronger Local and Regional Food System?

Conference attendees reported that education and improved infrastructure that serves agriculture (processing, transportation, utilities, etc.) are the leading means for creating strong local and regional food systems that are less reliant on imports.



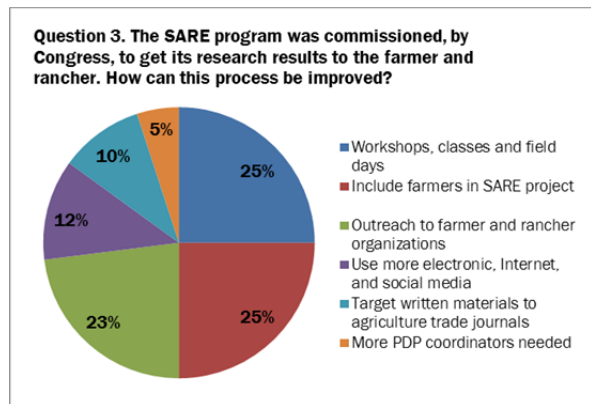
BURNING ISSUE 2. What Are the Local and Regional Trends?

The most significant trends in the subregional area identified by conference attendees include simultaneous increase in direct markets and a decline in producers. Note that agricultural infrastructure surfaces as both a need (question 1) and a trend.



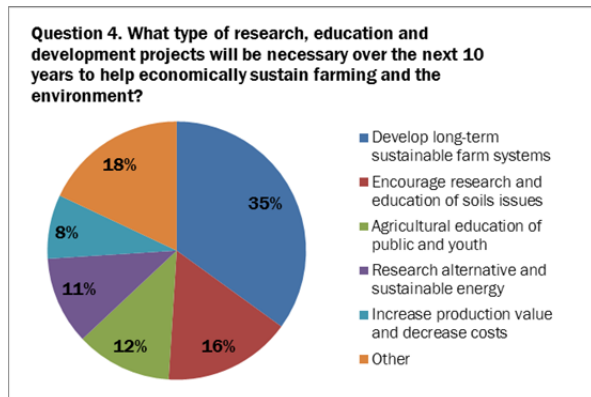
BURNING ISSUE 3. How Can the Process of Disseminating Research Results Be Improved?

Representing about 75% of the votes, conference attendees felt that Western SARE could improve dissemination the most through three methods: (1) sponsoring or encouraging more conferences workshops, classes, and field days in an on-farm setting; (2) including farmers and ranchers in all SARE projects (emphasized repeatedly and quantified in this graphic); and (3) improving outreach to farm and ranch organizations and publications (also repeatedly emphasized).



BURNING ISSUE 4. What Research and Education Are Needed in the Next 10 Years?

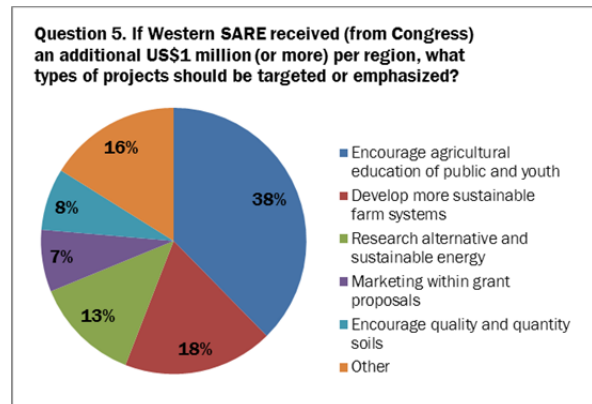
Conference attendees reported a wide range of projects needed, with developing longer-term sustainable farm systems garnering the most votes.



BURNING ISSUE 5. What New Projects Should Be Targeted?

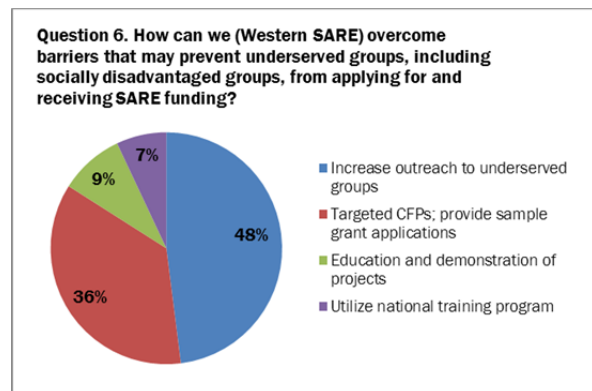
Again, a wide range of project types was identified

by the conference attendees. Education of the public and youth on sustainable agriculture research results received the most votes, followed by SARE-funded research and education on on-farm “systems” and on alternative and sustainable energy systems.



BURNING ISSUE 6. How Can Western SARE Overcome Barriers?

Conference attendees overwhelmingly voted for Western SARE to increase outreach (including electronic, printed, specialist-to-farmer, and farmer-to-farmer) to underserved groups, and to target calls for proposals toward underserved groups and provide simple illustrations of successful proposals.



What became apparent as we viewed the plethora of data collected from each conference were these top food systems concerns:

- Gaps in and lack of infrastructure development (such as slaughtering

facilities, local incubator kitchens, small farm equipment pools, adequate capital, adequate energy transmission lines, and resilient transportation systems);

- The need for consumer education on the benefits of sustainable, locally grown foods and how to prepare them;
- Needed changes in policy, regulatory, institutional purchasing, and financing systems that are more supportive of and a catalyst for local food system development; and
- Pressing needs for training of beginning farmers and ranchers.

Gaps in and Lack of Infrastructure Development

Infrastructure includes storage, livestock processing and other food processing and distribution facilities. Attendees in all or most subregions identified the need to have USDA-inspected facilities within driving distance to process livestock and poultry year-round. Without such facilities, livestock producers typically sell at auction, leaving them with few options for branding their products to participate in higher-value markets. Yet the regulatory environment makes creating locally based facilities quite challenging, as does the development of an effective business structure. To meet increasing consumer demand, farmers, ranchers, and small branded meat companies need appropriate-scale processing facilities along with the skills, inspection status, and other qualities to handle their products safely and to customer specifications.

Other infrastructure development needs acknowledged were increasing the availability and use of community-based certified kitchens, cold storage, food development centers, and other shared equipment that would serve regional needs — especially for small-scale producers. Transportation and distribution challenges were noted as affecting producers at both the small and mid-scale of production.

Consumer Education on the Benefits of Sustainable, Locally Grown Foods and How To Prepare Them

More education should result in an increasing number of consumers who are dedicated to

purchasing locally produced and marketed foods. This larger market will, in turn, increase the economic viability of producers and help develop alternative distribution and transportation systems. The consumers will also be eating healthier, fresher foods, making it a win-win for all.

Policy, Regulatory, Institutional Purchasing, and Financing Changes That Are More Supportive of and a Catalyst for Local Food System Development

The input provided by the stakeholders is that the agriculture system as it is currently constructed has placed barriers in front of innovative and alternative methods for processing, distributing, and marketing food regionally.

Training for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers

With increased training for those who are starting a farm or ranching operation — especially those who do not come from such a background — there will be more assurance that our region will have enough farmers as current ones retire. Attendees discussed their belief that increasing the ability of beginning producers to succeed and increase their profit will strengthen the food system since oftentimes new producers are located closer to urban and suburban areas. Urban and peri-urban areas could also provide entry-level market opportunities for beginning farmers with limited access to capital.

The information gathered at the seven subregional conferences is unique to the Western SARE Region in regard to how food systems are typically looked at because many areas are remote from urban areas. Food systems work often assumes access to large urban markets, yet regions such as northeast Montana, the Four Corners region (where the states of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah meet), tribal lands, most of Alaska, the Pacific Islands, and parts of Wyoming are very far from large urban markets. We heard from stakeholders in these regions, in addition to those who live in or near urban areas, and cataloged their priorities for building stronger regional food systems. The Western SARE Region is unique in its vastness and diversity, yet even with this diversity we were able to determine common needs and concerns.

Conclusions

One may ask how a competitive grants program such as Western SARE could address problems that are clearly beyond its congressionally mandated scope (“to enhance agricultural sustainability through competitive research/education grants”). For example, it is clear that agricultural infrastructure issues surfaced as key, quantifiable issues for more than one focus question at every subregional conference. Therefore the Western SARE Administrative Council prioritized infrastructure problems as something SARE research and education could address. In addition, a set of special Infrastructure Conferences were planned to further define the problems, suggest solutions, and encourage research proposals to address those problems. Western SARE, under USDA-NIFA policies, can neither directly work to change government policy nor issue grants for capital investments or operating costs for infrastructure facilities and equipment. However, Western SARE leaders felt that bringing leading farmers, ranchers, agency personnel, and key decision-makers together for a dialogue was surely within the SARE mandate. In retrospect, this has been very successful — and has certainly stimulated appropriate research and education proposals for Western SARE to evaluate for funding. The conferences also assisted in identifying other specific food systems issues that could be addressed by proposals to the Western SARE Center.

Significantly, Western SARE’s administrative council has implemented major changes in its calls for proposals, the key elements by which proposals are rated for funding, and the very nature of the type of proposals that are solicited. Note that each of these address a need or suggestion that was illustrated in the previous figures. These changes include:

1. The development of a new multidisciplinary farm to fork “systems” emphasis in each major research and education grants program.
2. The clear acknowledgement, based upon subregional conference results, of the fact that most measured outcomes from “systems” research projects will require projects that span far beyond Western SARE’s current three-year funding cycle.
3. The development of a new and clearly defined mechanism within the calls for proposals and the proposal review system to engender and foster longer-term research studies that can be renewed (multiple times if justified), based upon clearly measured outcomes, significant accomplishments, and positive external evaluations.
4. The reemphasis of the requirement for farmers and ranchers to be involved, from the start, in every type of SARE-funded project.
5. The number of required farmers and ranchers who were involved in a project was also increased.
6. The empowerment of the Western SARE Center’s new communications specialist to increase efforts to reach out to disadvantaged communities.
7. The development of a long-term plan for ongoing research and education conferences (such as two Infrastructure Conferences and one Water Conference) to increase communication in and between all levels of SARE clientele (scientists, educators, farmers, ranchers, agricultural specialists, agribusiness, and farm lending organizations). This has already been shown to aid in the improvement of proposal specificity and quality.
8. The provision for a special US\$50,000 competitive call for research and education proposals targeted to the subregional conference area. These targeted calls for proposals immediately followed each subregional conference and were directed at the most significant research and education needs identified at each conference.
9. The increased support and funding for Farmer/Rancher grants and Professional/Producer grants as well as all other Western SARE Center competitive grants programs.

10. The substantial increase in oversight, evaluation and expert support for all on-farm research and education projects.
11. The requirement for both an extension and outreach component and a built-in outside evaluation component in any new Western SARE competitive proposal that is funded.
12. The changing of the research and education grant funding schedule and associated deadlines so that each grant can be funded during the current crop year — even if Congress delays annual appropriations for as much as a year.

Acknowledgements

The Western SARE Center is one of four regional SARE Centers funded by Congress through the United States Department of Agriculture's National Institute for Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA). The authors are indebted to the entire staff of Western SARE who spent countless sleepless night-time hours compiling, sorting, transcribing, analyzing, and summarizing the first-day results from the Nominal Group Method Post-it poster sheets. This allowed the second-day roundtable groups to immediately assess, comprehend, and critically discuss all high-ranking ideas from every table's first-day discussions and NGM voting. In addition, we wish to thank the over 700 participants in the round-table NGM process from the 11 contiguous Western states, Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Micronesia, and American Samoa. The depth and breadth of experiential information supplied to this study by these participants, from countless separate cultures and agricultural backgrounds, cannot be overstated.

Finally, Western SARE would like to acknowledge Dr. Barbara Rusmore of the Institute for Conservation Leadership for her invaluable assistance in designing the subregional conference framework and planning timeline. We also must acknowledge the incomparable assistance of Dr. Jerald "Jerry" R. DeWitt, whose masterful facilitation ensured the success of all Western SARE subregional conferences.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Detailed Conference Methodology

Western SARE used a unique modification of the Nominal Group Method that included several key elements:

- Utilizing large, round tables of semirandomized participants (8 to 10 participants each).
- Electronically distributing six focus questions prior to the meeting which were then discussed in distinct 40-minute sessions at the tables as the conference began.
- Using Delbecq's "Brainstorming of Ideas" at each table and recording responses to the focus questions on poster-size Post-it notes.
- Holding a round-robin sharing of ideas, facilitated after all ideas were assembled (and after similar ideas were combined).
- Allowing all participants 10 votes at the conclusion of the first day's discussions.
- Hosting an evening of relaxed conversation that separated the initial brainstorming from a second day of critical discussion and rankings.
- On the first evening, Western SARE staff summarizing all responses and vote totals electronically and providing them to all participants at the initiation of the second day's critical discussion of all tables' top-ranking ideas.
- Providing each table with ranked summaries of all tables' first-day ideas.
- Voting by all participants on a second ranking after similar ideas were combined and a full morning's critical discussion of all ideas took place.
- Creating a final ranking by compiling, collating, summarizing, and sorting ideas electronically prior to the second day's afternoon discussion and reflection by the Western SARE Administrative Council. The council sat in front of the 10–20 roundtable groups to reflect and respond to audience questions regarding the final highest-ranked ideas.
- Posting ALL of the first day's brainstorming ideas on a website for each subregional NGM activity, along with the second day summaries. This reemphasized that all ideas were captured and that all comments were valuable to the Western SARE Administrative Council.
- Posting electronically (via Western SARE's website) the top-ranked ideas for each focus question at each subregional conference in a summary document after all conferences were concluded. This document was then discussed in depth at later administrative council meetings for appropriate action.

In crafting a conference format, planners began with basic questions:

- What are appropriate divisions for subregions?
- Who should be invited?
- How will the conferences be structured?
- How will responses be elicited from participants?
- How will information be gathered, processed, and used?

Defining Subregions

The Western SARE Region encompasses 17 political entities (13 states, two territories, and two Pacific island protectorates) that include a wide variety of geographical and ecological subregions — from mountain to desert and subarctic to tropical. The subregions defined for the conferences considered political, ecological and cultural divisions. Each subregion contained an easily definable entity or name tag: *Oceania* for the U.S. Pacific territories and protectorates, *North Pacific* (islands) for Hawaii, Midway, etc., *Subarctic* for Alaska's subarctic farming zones, *Southwest* for the arid Southwest states, *Pacific Coast* for California's large (Mediterranean) central valley and coastal agricultural zones, *Pacific Northwest* for the Pacific Northwest states, and *High Plains* for the High Plains and Intermountain states.

Attendance and Structure

To ensure that attendees were drawn from representative sectors of agriculture (production, education, government, business, and nonprofit), Western SARE decided that attendance would be by invitation rather than open to all. A call for proposals issued in each subregion sought applicants who would help plan the conference, solicit local speakers, and develop lists of potential attendees. Specific invitations to potential attendees were sent by both email and postal mail. These attendees included farmers and ranchers with a known focus on sustainability components of their operations. Other specific attendees were sought from known commodity group leaders. These included specialty crop growers such as hop and wine grape growers in the Pacific Northwest and nut, fruit, and vegetable growers in California's Central and Coastal valleys. The regional SARE offices also sent invitations to the key leaders and agricultural specialists in state departments of agriculture, Farm Bureau, Farmer's Union, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS), the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS), the land-grant university system, and local organic organizations and Sustainable Agriculture Working Groups (SAWGs). In addition, at least ten SARE grantees also attended each conference — including those who were willing to highlight their projects in posters that were displayed at the periphery of the conference. Total attendance at each conference was planned for between 100 and 140 key grassroots representatives.

Each conference followed a basic two-day structure. Day one included opening presentations by local speakers and SARE experts as well as a poster session and a half-day discussion of critical questions. Day two included a half-day of ranking and discussing responses, table leader reports, an open-microphone session, and responses by administrative council members.

To further ensure continuity among all seven subregional conferences, one person was chosen to moderate all the conferences. Serving in this capacity was Jerry DeWitt, former director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University.

Eliciting Responses

Western SARE solicited input from key constituents to develop a set of six questions that would serve as a stimulus and focus for discussion at each subregional conference. The resulting burning issue focus questions were designed to elicit broad feedback on issues and constraints. Asking the same questions at each conference provided continuity in responses, enabling comparisons among subregions. The approach was not meant to provide a statistical underpinning for conference evaluation, but rather to allow the administrative council to better equate and weigh responses from varied subregions.

Subregional Conference Burning Issue Focus Questions

1. What will be needed to create stronger local and regional food systems that are less reliant on imports from elsewhere?
2. What are the local and regional consumption and production trends in your local area?
3. The SARE program was commissioned, by Congress, to get its research results to the farmer and rancher. How can this process be improved?
4. What type of research, education and development projects will be necessary over the next 10 years to help economically sustain farming and the environment?
5. If Western SARE received (from Congress) an additional US\$1 million per region, what types of projects should be targeted or emphasized?
6. How can we (Western SARE) overcome barriers that may prevent underserved groups, including socially disadvantaged groups, from applying for and receiving SARE funding?*

* *This final question was not raised at the Pacific Subregional Conference, where all participants fell into the category of "underserved."*

Western SARE leaders focused on several techniques for eliciting responses from participants. They facilitated and recorded roundtable discussions, applied the Nominal Group Technique for ranking issues raised, presented table-top reports from a representative chosen by the group at each table, held an open-microphone session at the conference conclusion, and conducted surveys during and after the conference.

Extension educators — many of whom are state and protectorate professional development coordinators in the Western SARE Region — along with staff and administrative council members served as facilitators and recorders for tabletop discussions. They were trained on site and instructed to:

- ensure that every comment was recorded;
- give every participant an opportunity to speak; and
- draw out comments from all participants.

Appendix B. Cross-Subregion Results

Table 1 summarizes the most significant data that was collected from the Western SARE Subregional Conferences. It details the issues that received the highest “votes” (via the nominal group methodology) across all of the conferences. It also denotes which subregional conference gave “voice” to each specific issue.

Table 1. Major Ideas with Significant Votes Sorted by Burning Issue Focus Question Number

Total Votes Day 2	Question 1: What will be needed to create stronger local and regional food systems that are less reliant on imports from elsewhere?	Subregion
82	Educate and/or mentor students in kindergarten through high school on benefits of growing own food and about agriculture	North Pacific
70	Develop local and/or regional infrastructure for financing, processing (small and medium scale and/or mobile), cleaning, distribution, consulting	Pacific NW
61	Educate the consumer and market the advantages of locally grown food	Subarctic
59	Agriculture infrastructure (land and water)	North Pacific
55	Regional livestock processing plants and infrastructure or mobile facilities	High Plains
55	Farmer- and consumer-friendly regulations (relief from burdensome regulations)	High Plains
50	Availability of affordable agricultural land (land and water rights, labor and ownership issues)	North Pacific
48	Educational programs for consumers, producers, facility owners, investors, schools, chefs, and food services (on nutritional values, freshness, local economy, environment, reduced transportation, growing livestock and produce)	High Plains
45	Statewide training and outreach for beginning farmers and gardeners	Subarctic
43	Infrastructure (e.g. processing, canneries, etc.)	Subarctic
43	Feasibility studies and/or research of alternative and/or local distribution channels; financial and economic aspects; food and land trusts barriers; facilities and storage issues; opportunities for meat processing	Pacific Coast
26	Availability of processing facilities specifically for animals	Southwest
Total Votes Day 2	Question 2: What are the local and regional consumption and production trends in your local area?	Subregion
84	Demands for local and organic produce are increasing	North Pacific
63	There is an increasing demand for local food	Subarctic
63	Supply of local food is not adequate to meet demand – most food is imported	Subarctic
59	Farmers reestablishing community linkages are capturing local demand for products	North Pacific
55	New market opportunities are growing, but there is a lack of supporting infrastructure (storage, mills)	Pacific NW
52	Fewer farmers statewide	North Pacific
49	There is a lack of warehousing, storage, and processing capacity	Subarctic
42	Increased preference by consumers for locally grown, organic, farmers’ markets, and community-supported agriculture operations (CSAs)	High Plains
41	More small- and large-scale gardens and small-scale animal production	Subarctic
40	Not enough local protein sources	Oceania
29	Local processing facilities and infrastructure	Southwest

Total Votes Day 2	Question 3: The SARE program was commissioned, by Congress, to get its research results to the farmer and rancher. How can this process be improved?	Subregion
79	Disseminate more region-specific information (research results, locally adapted cultivars or livestock, big ideas for small places, etc.)	Subarctic
55	Provide more money (stipends to attend conferences, research projects, organization matches, etc.)	Subarctic
55	Farmer-to-farmer education and co-learning opportunities (field days, information-exchange meetings, etc.)	Pacific Coast
48	Provide info and help Cooperative Extension Service do its job better	Subarctic
43	Disseminate more information on Internet-based venues (blogs, email, social networks, online courses, etc.)	Subarctic
40	Not enough communications	Oceania
39	On-farm trials, publications, tours, demonstrations, farmer-to-farmer events	Pacific NW
30	Add youth-education component to grants	Southwest
Total Votes Day 2	Question 4: What types of research, education, and development projects will be necessary over the next 10 years to help economically sustain farming and the environment?	Subregion
76	Soil improvement and sustainability (including composting)	Subarctic
92	How to reduce farm inputs, reduce fuel cost, efficiency modeling, on-farm fertilizer production	North Pacific
61	More collaborative projects to develop whole farm systems for the North Pacific	North Pacific
54	Developing local infrastructure (processing, storage, suppliers, etc.)	Subarctic
52	Energy-efficient, low-impact farming	Subarctic
51	Explore alternative food systems (including native systems, food sources, new varieties, unconventional farming)	Subarctic
51	Mobile and local processing	Pacific NW
48	Agricultural economics (identifying, evaluating, reducing, and managing the real costs of agriculture, etc.)	Subarctic
47	Support projects that develop regional foodsheds	Pacific NW
Total Votes Day 2	Question 5: If Western SARE received (from Congress) an additional US\$1 million (or more) per region, what types of projects should be targeted or emphasized?	Subregion
76	Using local sources of soil nutrients (compost, fish vegetation, etc.) to their best abilities	Subarctic
72	Energy efficiency and alternative energy for sustainable production methods for producers (sustainable energy technology: solar heating and electrical power for producers, do-it-yourself wind, solar, electric, and hot water systems; biofuels, hydroponic)	Subarctic
69	Invest in school gardens, elementary education, and consuming food in cafeterias	North Pacific
64	Education and involvement of youth on sustainable agriculture practices, agriculture in general (includes kindergarten through high school), internships on farms and in colleges	Subarctic
59	Whole farm energy and nutrient systems	Pacific NW
58	Garden demonstration projects (local, community, apartments, school, tribal, and village) of locally produced food, how to grow your own food, how to add value to products	Subarctic
56	Agricultural research (including economic evaluations) of all aspects of sustainable farming systems, including permaculture	Subarctic

Total Votes Day 2	Question 6: How can we (Western SARE) overcome barriers that may prevent underserved groups, including socially disadvantaged groups, from applying for and receiving SARE funding?	Subregion
87	More outreach to these groups with a funded position; travel to the areas	Subarctic
82	Provide extra points to grant-writers who target minority groups in their grants	North Pacific
67	Provide funding support for mentors to build community relationships and to collaboratively apply for grants	Pacific NW
63	Education and demonstration projects	Subarctic
62	Western SARE is the largest and most diverse SARE region; it should get more dollars for funding	North Pacific
59	Promote farming as a viable vocation and science	Subarctic
58	Employ a liaison to work with farmers and others on grant applications to help get things going	Subarctic
58	Partner with regional groups, tribes, communities, extension, Farm Service Agency (FSA), etc.	Subarctic
37	Develop partnerships with organizations serving these communities	Southwest
35	Provide funding to local entities to target locally identified, underserved audiences	High Plains
35	Consider "agriculture in the middle" as disadvantaged groups	High Plains