



# New American Farm Conference

Advancing the Frontiers  
of Sustainable Agriculture  
Kansas City, March 25-27



8-11-08

## 20 Years of Sustainable Agriculture



Jill Auburn

KANSAS CITY, MO. – With 20 years and nearly 4,000 initiatives to develop, encourage and communicate sustainable agriculture under its belt, the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program invited more than 800 guests to Kansas City March 25-27 to celebrate its successes and chart its future.

“We want you to help us steer the course for the next 20 years,” said Jill Auburn, national director of SARE in her welcome and charge to conference attendees.

“SARE’s mission,” she said, “is to advance – to the whole of American agriculture – innovations that improve profitability, stewardship and quality of life by investing in groundbreaking research and education.”

Auburn, noting that the conference had reached its maximum capacity of 800 attendees, asked each to consider to whom, when they returned home, they would take the message of sustainable agriculture to reach 800, 8,000, 80,000 people.

Gale Buchanan, undersecretary of agriculture, observed that today’s consumers are concerned about the safety, nutrition and quality of their food.

“They’re concerned about how and where their food is grown and how it’s produced, and they want to maintain land and water sources to ensure (their food) into the future.” In response, said Buchanan, farmers have done things like reduce on-farm fuel use by 40% and switch to minimum tillage, now done on two-fifths of American farmland.

“This is directly related to you and your efforts in sustainable agriculture,” he said. “We still have a long way



Gale Buchanan

to go, but I can't say enough about this program. It keeps everybody on the same sheet of music. Sustainable agriculture is more than an idea whose time has come."

Colien Hefferan, administrator of the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service of USDA, said the fundamental question in agriculture – What is the impact of the science on the sustainability of agriculture? – is front and center thanks to SARE's efforts.

She said she met Patrick Madden, a pioneer of sustainable agriculture, in Pennsylvania, so she learned about sustainable agriculture early on.



Colien Hefferan

"Our agency appreciates your work and the leadership of Jill Auburn, who does such an outstanding job," said Hefferan. "She has linked sustainability across all of our programs."

Keynote conference speakers included luminaries from the world of agriculture and agencies and organizations that support it. (Presentations of several, listed below, are summarized on this "Conference" portion of the Western SARE website.)

The Western region was well represented at the conference with 23 poster presentations showcasing work on funded grants (some of the posted can be found on the National SARE website [www.sare.org](http://www.sare.org) under New American Farm Conference). Two dozen Westerners make presentations during breakout sessions on a wide range of topics.

#### Keynote Summaries

Topic: Advancing the Frontier of Sustainable Agriculture in the Field – Innovations from Farm, Ranch and Market

**Judy Gifford**, owner and operator, St. Brigid's Farm, Kennedyville, Maryland, and a member of the Northeast SARE Administrative Council



**Karl Kupers**, marketing director, Shepherd's Grain, and Western SARE Administrative Council Chair, August 2006 to August 2008



Topic: Advancing the Frontier of Sustainable Agriculture in Universities – How Far We’ve Come, A Vision for the Future

**Jerry Dewitt**, director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Ames, Iowa, and former interim director of National SARE



Topic: Advancing the Frontier of Sustainable Agriculture in Our Communities – Food, Health and People

**Bryant Terry**, award-winning eco-chef, author and food justice activist and a host on “The Endless Feast,” a 13-episode public television series



Topic: Advancing the Frontier of Sustainable Agriculture in Our Leadership – Cultivating the Next Generation

**Margaret Krome**, policy program director of the Michael Fields Agriculture Institute in East Troy, Wisconsin

