



### Western SARE

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[www.westernsare.org](http://www.westernsare.org)

### Western SARE Grant Categories

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

Western SARE is supported by the National Institute for Food and Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Western Region SARE program is hosted at Utah State University, and the Western Region SARE PDP program is hosted by the University of Wyoming.



## CONNECTING MARKET LINKS

### Situation

Certified organic producers in the Four Corners States of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah want to be part of healthy food enterprises that benefit local and regional economies.

The producers are willing to cooperate to make this happen, but connecting the links in the organic marketing chain is difficult across the wide-open spaces that separate producers and consumers in this region.

This project grew from a desire on the part of organic industry members, educational and governmental institutions and nonprofit organizations to foster the development of a strong market for organic products in the Four Corners States. The purpose



## STRENGTHENING AGRICULTURE'S INFRASTRUCTURE

ADDING VALUE, BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS, INCREASING PROFITS

is to provide a better understanding of the opportunities for and barriers to a larger, more vibrant organic food market.

This was to be accomplished through a four-stage research program consisting of:

1. comprehensive literature search
2. survey of certified organic producers for 2005 from the Four Corners States
3. series of interviews with experts in the four states
4. three carefully selected case studies of notable businesses

### Objectives

- Provide a better understanding of current and potential regional organic markets through comprehensive market supply analysis
- Identify specific market opportunities and solutions for producers to overcome market barriers
- Relay findings to producers, extension agents, industry members and nonprofit organizations

### Actions

Data were collected from 141 of the 285 certified organic producers in the Four Corners States. Respondent demographics were:

- 78 percent men, 22 percent women
- Average age: 51
- Average number of years classified as certified organic: 7
- 59 percent consider their business a "family farm or ranch"
- 35 percent consider their business a "family partnership or corporation"
- 12 percent attribute some of their sales to agri-tourism activities

The three case studies highlight some interesting and creative ways in which local organic agricultural businesses are operating within the region. These enterprises are:

### Research & Education Grant

**Title:** Supply and Market Analysis for Organic Producers in the Four Corners States

**Project Number:** SW05-085

#### Principal Investigator:

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*The goal of Western SARE is to foster sustainability through grants that enable cutting-edge research and education to open windows of sustainability across the West.*

*SARE's **vision** is an enduring American agriculture of the highest quality. This agriculture is profitable, protects the nation's land and water and is a force for a rewarding way of life for farmers and ranchers whose quality products and operations sustain their communities and society.*

*SARE's **mission** 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.*

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## CONNECTING MARKET LINKS

1. An innovative regional distribution network initiated by a partnership between a successful natural foods cooperative and a regional producer group.
2. A regional consumer-owned distribution cooperative, serving the entire Four Corners States region, that specializes in natural and organic products.
3. A newly built, family-run, small-scale, certified organic meat processing plant.

### Results

- The demand for local, organic products is expected to continue to exceed supply.
- Organic producers are committed to their organic investments.
- Most producers plan to maintain or expand their certified organic acreage in the next five years.
- Over 60 percent of the producers sell all of their products within the region (Four Corners States and neighboring states).
- Organic producers are looking for ways to increase their local sales.
- Producers want to play a role in strengthening processing and distribution sectors.
- 25 percent of producers are selling through the natural food store market outlet.
- 75 percent of producers want to enter the natural food store



market or increase their sales in the market in the next five years.

- Collaborative, producer-involved marketing initiatives, transportation networks and processing facilities are priorities for regional improvements.

### Potential Benefits

This report comes at a critical point for organic agriculture in the Four Corners States. The importance of consuming locally produced agricultural products is growing, and consumer demand for certified organic products is at an all-time high. A growing number of conventional

retail outlets, including chain supermarkets and restaurants, are choosing to offer organic products to their consumers.

The information gathered through this project identifies strategies that will assist the regional certified organic market to grow and develop into its full potential.

Data from the 2006 research, the survey and its results, case studies and opinions and recommendations of regional experts in organic agriculture are at: <http://www.swmarketingnetwork.org>

### Recommendations

- Enhance education about market opportunities and certification requirements
- Develop a regional business incubator and innovation center
- Increase assistance for local direct marketing
- Increase assistance for producer certification expenses
- Establish a regional conference focused on marketing and distribution
- Target research on processing and distribution
- Promote policy improvements supporting production and marketing

