Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education

www.sare.org

What is SARE?

Since 1988, the Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) program has been the go-to USDA grants and outreach program for farmers, ranchers, researchers and educators who want to develop innovations that improve farm profitability, protect water and land, and revitalize communities. To date, SARE has awarded over $6.8 million to more than 152 initiatives [1].

SARE is grassroots with far-reaching impact

Four regional councils of expert practitioners set priorities and make grants in every state and island protectorate.

SARE communicates results

SARE shares project results by requiring grantees to conduct outreach and grower engagement; and by maintaining an online library of practical publications, grantee-produced information products and other educational materials.

SARE: Advancing the Frontier of Sustainable Agriculture in...

South Dakota

Project Highlight: *Regional Shearing Schools Cut Costs, Build Skills across the Plains*

Small-acreage sheep producers in the Northern Plains face a shortage of skilled shearers. High travel costs make hiring professionals expensive, often running $10 to $20 per animal for small flocks.

To bridge this gap, educators Jaelyn Whaley, Chris Schauer, and Brent Roeder partnered with professional shearers. Backed by a $19,940 NCR-SARE Partnership grant, they hosted six intensive, three-day shearing schools across South Dakota, North Dakota, and Montana in 2024 and 2025.

Because shearing is difficult to learn from a book or video, the schools focused on hands-on training. Participants practiced efficient shearing patterns, blade sharpening, and equipment care. They also learned techniques to reduce animal stress, prevent shearer injuries, and preserve wool quality.

The local payoff is already clear. Producers who learned to shear their own flocks have lowered their annual input costs, which is vital for operations with tight margins. Others have turned their new skills into income. Two Montana high school students now shear over 50 head a day and plan to go professional after graduation. Four more students are shearing local flocks around Billings. Meanwhile, two brothers from Missouri attended to launch a shearing business back home.

The classes also sparked new ideas for raw wool. One South Dakota attendee is now partnering with South Dakota State University to test raw wool as a sustainable garden mulch.

Learn more at projects.sare.org, and search for project number ONC24-147.

SARE in South Dakota

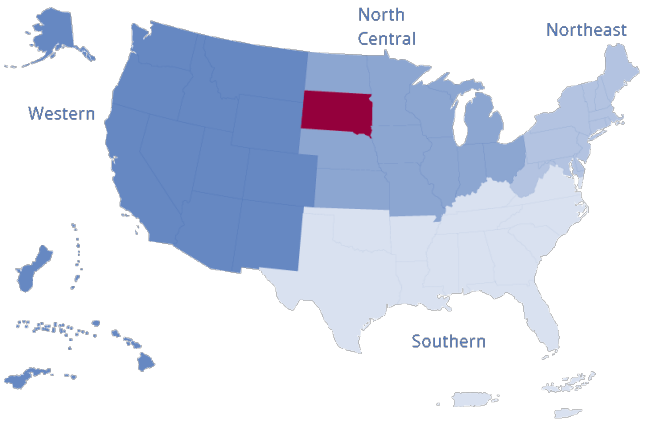
northcentral.sare.org/state-profiles/south-dakota/

$6,770,734 in total funding

152 grant projects

(since 1988 [1])

For a complete list of South Dakota grant projects, go to projects.sare.org/state-fact-sheets/



[1] These totals reflect available data; complete information may not be available for all grant programs prior to 2016.

SARE in South Dakota, 2021–2026

This is a summary of recent SARE-funded activities and impacts in the state. To search all SARE projects visit projects.sare.org. For a list of all projects in South Dakota visit projects.sare.org/state-fact-sheets/.

Grants awarded

Total awards: **34 grants**

4	Farmer/Rancher
8	Research and Education
2	Professional Development Program
6	On Farm Research/Partnership
6	Graduate Student
4	PDP State Program [2]
4	Youth Educator

Total funding: **$2,978,883**

$61,051	Farmer/Rancher
$1,810,613	Research and Education
$188,475	Professional Development Program
$221,473	On Farm Research/Partnership
$113,448	Graduate Student
$559,826	PDP State Program [2]
$23,997	Youth Educator

[2] The Professional Development Program (PDP) State Program is a non-competitive award that funds the activities of the state coordinator(s). See more below.

For a complete list of South Dakota awards, visit: projects.sare.org/state-fact-sheets/

Farmer and rancher impacts

SARE grantees have reported the following impacts from their projects:

4,406 farmers participated in a SARE-funded project

281 farmers changed a practice



Learn about local impacts at: northcentral.sare.org/state-programs/south-dakota/

Contact Your SARE State Coordinator

SARE sustainable ag coordinators run state-level educational programs for Extension and other ag professionals, and many help grant applicants and recipients with planning and outreach. Visit northcentral.sare.org/state-profiles/south-dakota/ to learn more.

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USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

SARE is funded by the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).