

On-Farm Research Mini-Grants Available

URBANA, ILL.

University of Illinois Extension is looking for organic and sustainable farmers with weed problems to participate in on-farm research. "In 2008, seven farmers were chosen to participate in the project – five in Illinois, one in Wisconsin, and one in Missouri," said Dan Anderson, University of Illinois Extension Specialist. "We visited their farms, helped them identify weed-management issues, and developed some strategies to help solve the problem."

This year Anderson hopes to have a total of 20 participants in the program.

Anderson said that across the Midwest organic and sustainable farmers report that managing perennial weeds without chemicals is one of their most difficult challenges. "We hope to help organic and sustainable ag farmers improve their skills and practices in managing perennial weeds using integrated management approaches."

In order to participate in the program, farmers must be currently farming in Illinois or in neighboring states within close proximity of the Illinois border.

"We are looking for sustainable and organic farmers working to develop methods to cope effectively with perennial weeds in their grain or vegetable systems," Anderson said. "We'll be looking at an applicant's farming system, farm location, and how open they are to innovative approaches to managing perennial weeds."

All applicants will receive a packet of material on a number of ideas for integrated management approaches to controlling perennial weeds in crop and vegetable farming systems. These might include, cover crops, tillage, soil balance, flaming, scouting/early removal (by hand or tillage), rotations, mowing/fallow or hay rotation, livestock/rotation, sprays (organic), biological control (release of beneficial, predatory insects or organisms), and optimizing competition from growing crop.

Participating farmers will be chosen from the applicant pool. Those chosen will be contacted by the on-farm research coordinator to develop and finalize plans for their on-farm project.

"In addition to a farmer's originally proposed approach we'll encourage each participant to incorporate one or more of the integrated management approaches from the info packet," Anderson said.

Anderson stressed that these on-farm research projects are a win-win situation. "The participants will each receive \$500 per year of participation, but more important, they will benefit from getting the latest research-based info on managing perennial weeds without chemicals and one-on-one assistance in developing a viable on-farm research project."

To apply, visit <http://asap.sustainability.uiuc.edu/org-ag/>, scroll down and click on Mini-Grants Apply Now, or contact Dan Anderson (217-333-1588; aslan@uiuc.edu). Δ



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