

Northeast SARE's definition of a farm and topics eligible for Northeast SARE grants

Northeast SARE offers grants to farmers under its Farmer Grants and to organizations collaborating with farmers under its Partnership Grants. The question often arises: What is a farm, and what type of activity is considered farming?

For the purposes of Northeast SARE grants, a farm is defined as a commercial operation with an established farm income of at least \$1,000* from the regular harvest and sale of crop, nursery, livestock, or aquaculture products. Common examples are grain, fruit, vegetable, dairy, and livestock operations.

The ultimate goal of agriculture, as defined by the USDA, is to provide food and fiber to meet human needs. For example, farms raising plants or livestock that are part of the food or fiber value chain, like hay for livestock feed or stocker cattle for finishing, are eligible operations.

Some operations that do not produce food or fiber crops, like nurseries and turf farms, would qualify based on the fact that they are land based and a part of the agricultural economy. Businesses that supply only services, raw resources, or land amendments to farmers would not; examples of these business would include a mobile slaughter unit, a fish emulsion fertilizer producer, or a compost company. Additional examples of eligible and non-eligible businesses are below.

Eligible food or fiber operations:	Activity/products:
Mushroom from owned land or structure	Mushrooms for food or medicine
Sheep, llama, alpaca	Fiber
Aquaculture, land tanks, on-farm ponds, salt water farms	Cultured fish or shellfish, kelp for human consumption
Nurseries, greenhouses	Vegetable, fruit, berry, other food crops or plants
Honeybees/sugar bush	Honey or maple syrup
Eligible nonfood or nonfiber operations:	
Turf, nurseries, greenhouse, trees	Ornamental landscape products, Christmas trees
Horse operations that are land-based with significant pasture/hay production	Management, including boarding, directly supported by grazing/hay production
Not eligible/not a farm:	
Activity/products:	
Composting company (not part of a farming operation)	Production and sale of compost, vermicompost, worms
Landscaping company	Installation or maintenance of plants
Horse operation without substantial pasture/hay production	Lessons/training/sales exclusively
Fisheries	Wild-caught, marine or fresh water
Woodlot (not part of a farming operation)	Biochar, pulpwood, firewood

Farms affiliated with an institution or an organization may qualify as a farm if the primary activity of the farm is to produce and sell agricultural products under the kinds of economic constraints that affect commercial farmers. Enterprises where the primary mission is education or research normally do not qualify as a farm, and thus could not apply for a Farmer Grant, but they may still be eligible for a Partnership Grant by collaborating with other commercial farms

*minimum income requirement for farm classification as defined by USDA National Agricultural Statistical Service.

Examples of topics and their eligibility for Northeast SARE grants

Proposals should touch on one or more topics that address agricultural sustainability issues such as profitability, environmental or health risks, natural resource conservation, farm labor, quality of life, etc. Many other topics may also be addressed provided the issue is substantive, the project results have clear potential to benefit farmers, and the approach explores new ways to advance sustainable agriculture.

In addition to traditional agricultural topics focused on the production and marketing of crops and livestock, SARE also funds proposals that address agritourism, aquaculture, on-farm composting, farm energy, land conservation, urban agriculture, and value-added processing. Both traditional and nontraditional topics are eligible for SARE funding *if the proposal describes a clear and strong connection to working farms and if there is a compelling potential benefit to agriculture*. For example:

Northeast SARE could fund	Northeast SARE could not fund
A proposal aimed at farms growing turfgrass to be sold to golf courses or landscapers	A project aimed at golf course managers or landscapers
A training program for extension educators that improves their ability to advise farmers on labor laws	A program that simply catalogs existing labor laws
A study of composting effects on soil fertility	A proposal to study the economic impact of a composting business that is not clearly part of a farming operation
Research into on-farm production of rabbits for a niche meat market	Research into the use of rabbits for therapy in hospitals
Business training for farms engaged in agritourism to help them improve their financial plans	A project to establish ski trails that simply cross over farmland
An effort to improve breeding stock for aquaculture operations	An effort to improve harvest or marketing methods for non-cultivated fishes
A project to strengthen woodlot management owned by farmers	A woodlot project directed overwhelmingly at all types of rural landowners
A grazing, forage, or conservation project on a horse farm aimed at improved stewardship and reduced costs	A proposal to support riding lessons, training, or boarding of horses only, without significant pasture/hay production
An institutional marketing effort that offers farmers better access to public school markets	A project to develop and deliver classroom education materials on farming
An urban farm cooperative marketing plan	Education of community gardeners to help them grow extra vegetables

Sometimes an idea for a project will fall in a gray area and it is up to the applicant to persuade reviewers that there is significant potential benefit to other farmers and to the region's agriculture. Contact Northeast SARE if you have any questions on eligibility.

7/5/2016