

## Cultivating Success Program Overview

Interest in sustainable agriculture, in particular small acreage farming and ranching, and direct marketing, has increased steadily over the past decade. While there has been a slight increase in opportunities to study sustainable small acreage systems in Washington and Idaho, for-credit agricultural programs that offer on-farm experiential education are rare. Undergraduate educational degree programs in small acreage farming systems do not exist at either Washington State University or the University of Idaho, the states' two land grant universities. Regional institutions that offer courses in sustainable agriculture with hands on components have more student interest than they can accommodate.

### Background

The need for a small acreage farming program was first recognized at WSU in 1992 when an evaluation of the agricultural curriculum revealed that an increase in sustainable agriculture, food systems courses and experiential learning opportunities is necessary to attract non-traditional students to campus-based agricultural degree programs.

In the fall of 1999, a Kellogg Foundation Partnership 2020 Project began focusing its efforts in the area of sustainable food systems through the Sustainable Food Systems Initiative, and by spring 2000 had allocated funds for the creation of a pilot year-long on-farm education program (OFEP) proposed by a team of UI faculty and Rural Roots. At the same time, P2020 funds were allocated to the development of two Sustainable Food Systems courses.

In summer of 2001, a USDA Higher Education Challenge Grant was awarded jointly to Rural Roots, UI and WSU to further develop and combine the two sustainable food systems and the three OFEP courses to create an academic certificate in Sustainable Small Acreage Farming and Ranching. This certificate option at WSU and UI is offered to both academic students and to community member for continuing education units (CEU's). This program is now called "Cultivating Success."

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Over the past 5 years we have continued to expand Cultivating Success through grants from the Risk Management Agency, SARE, and a second Higher Education Challenge Grant from the USDA. The certificate has evolved to include more options, new courses have been developed, and many locations are now trained to offer Cultivating Success courses.

### Program Description for Academic Certificate\*

Two required courses:

- Sustainable Small Farming and Ranching
- On-Farm Internship

Students choose one course from each of three modules:

Farm Business Planning	Sustainable Food Systems	Sustainable Production Systems
Agricultural Entrepreneurship – Tilling the Soil of Opportunity	Science, Society and Sustainable Food Systems	Organic Gardening and Farming
Or other approved farm business planning course	Sustainable Food Systems Field Analysis	Ecological Soils Management
	World Agricultural Systems	Sustainable Animal Production
		Organic Farming Practicum

\*Any of the courses may also be taken individually

The Cultivating Success program was designed to provide beginning and existing farmers with the planning and decision-making tools, production system knowledge, and skills necessary to develop a sustainable small acreage farming and ranching enterprise. Cultivating Success is an innovative program that uses a community-based, experiential approach. Farmers and other community resource people are brought into the classroom, field trips are taken to farms and other agricultural venues, and farmer-student mentoring relationships are encouraged. The courses are collaboratively taught at both University of Idaho and Washington

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State University. The courses are also open to community members for continuing education units.

Case study publications and videos have been developed to bring farmer and faculty expertise into the distance education classroom. Community leaders (farmers, ranchers, entrepreneurs and economic advisers) partner with on-site instructors by giving seminars exposing students to real life situations and problem-solving. Networking between students, farmer instructors and faculty will occur during classroom and small group discussions, field trips and the web. A web-based program using chat rooms and threaded discussions is under development to enable students to work together to solve problems that exist in real world situations.

### On-Farm Internship Course Description

During the internship, the farm is the classroom and the farmer is the on-site instructor. Local, successful small acreage farmers and ranchers are key educational resources. In addition to being the main instructors in the internship, the farmers mentor students throughout the core program, providing students with information, guidance, and instruction. Students are matched with farmers based on the student's academic area and the farmers' expertise. Under the guidance and one-on-one instruction of a farmer instructor, students receive continual feedback and learn the day-to-day aspects of sustainable small acreage farming or ranching.

Through hands-on experience and research, students will gain an in-depth understanding of a selected farm or ranch enterprise throughout the year, including farm business planning, goal setting, and innovative marketing strategies. They will also gain the technical farming skills necessary to initiate and manage an economically viable, environmentally sound, and socially acceptable small acreage farm or ranch.

-----2008 Farmer Mentor Handbook-----  
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For the most recent information on Cultivating Success courses and locations, visit the website at [www.cultivatingsuccess.org](http://www.cultivatingsuccess.org)



Greentree Naturals intern, Erin Bohm, preparing CSA bags