

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE 2009
Developing Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems
Request for Proposals

The Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station and the C.S. Mott Chair of Sustainable Agriculture at Michigan State University (MSU) announce **a request for proposals for research in sustainable agriculture**. Approximately \$266,000 will be available from USDA in summer 2009. **The lead PI must be currently appointed at the rank of Assistant Professor or Associate Professor promoted to rank on or after July 1, 2006.** Projects must not exceed \$75,000 in total funding or 24 months in duration. All awards will be funded from the USDA 2009 grant to MSU, regardless of project duration. Assume a starting date of July 1, 2009.

Proposals are due by 4:00 pm, EDT on Wednesday April 1, 2009. No late submissions will be accepted. Proposals must be sent via email to Anne Conwell (conwella@msu.edu).

Research should focus on understanding and/or optimizing sustainable food and farming systems; including biological, biogeochemical, economic and social dimensions in an ecosystems context. They may include processes for systems integration, management of natural biological cycles and controls, and/or social/economic aspects of food and agricultural system sustainability. Research topics should have focus and scope appropriate for completion within project duration and resources and be consistent with the Congressional 1990 Farm Bill definition of sustainable agriculture:

. . . an **integrated system** of plant and animal production processes having a **site specific** application that will, over the long term,

- satisfy human **food and fiber needs**;
- **enhance environmental quality** and the natural resource base upon which the agricultural economy depends;
- make the most **efficient use of nonrenewable resources** and on-farm resources and **integrate**, where appropriate, natural **biological cycles and controls**;
- sustain the **economic viability** of farm operations; and
- enhance the **quality of life** for farmers and society as a whole (Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, Public Law 101-624, Title XVI, Subtitle A, Section 1603).

While funds are dedicated to research, proposals that extend research results via developing specific extension/outreach materials will be considered. Research outcomes must be applicable to Michigan food and farming systems and the people involved with them. Multiple PI's and group projects may be appropriate as interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary approaches are often needed to address sustainability issues. Researchers should show appropriate linkages and collaborative interaction with MSU Extension, community-based organizations and/or food system actors. Although proposals will be accepted on any topics that fall within these guidelines, we are especially interested in receiving proposals that:

- are designed to leverage additional funding from other sources, either now or with future grants;
- address barriers to scaling up locally-integrated food systems, emerging food market opportunities, and/or enterprise expansion;

- improve access to and availability of healthy, locally and sustainably produced food; and
- strengthen and enhance MSU's research portfolio for sustainable food and farming systems.

FORMAT AND SPECIFICATIONS

Format proposals as follows:

- Single-space with indented paragraphs; double-space between sub-sections.
- Use 12-point Times Roman font with one-inch top, side, bottom margins.
- Do not number pages.
- For citations and references, use the *Agronomy Journal* format . See <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/societyimages/agron/Instructions%20to%20Authors%20October%202008.pdf> (page V)
- No appendices.
- Provide separate files for each of the following (format in parenthesis)
 - Cover sheet (completed, signed and scanned PDF)
 - Project Narrative (word doc)
 - Key personnel (word docs): profile (see below for details), biosketch, current and pending support form
 - Budget (xls spreadsheet)
 - Budget justification (word doc)
 - Evidence of support (word doc or PDF)
 - Graphics (jpg)
- Templates for cover sheet, budget, current and pending projects form and timetable are provided at <http://www.mottgroup.msu.edu>

Cover Sheet

Use the cover sheet template at the website (<http://www.mottgroup.msu.edu>) above, which includes:

- Project title:
- Team leader name & title:
- Other team members names, titles:
- One paragraph abstract
- Are human subjects involved?* Yes No
- Are vertebrate animals used? Yes No
- Is proprietary information included in the application? Yes No
- Have all personnel agreed to their project roles as described in this proposal?
 Yes No
- Team leader signature and date
- Team leader's unit administrator signature and date

After sheet is complete and includes required signatures, scan and include as a pdf file.

*If human subjects are involved, team leader must apply to the MSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) for preliminary approval before April 17, 2009. Final IRB approval must be secured before funds are disbursed.

Project Narrative. Sections 1-3 must be no more than 5 pages.

1. **Objectives.** State specific project aims clearly, concisely, completely, in logical order
2. **Procedures.** Explicitly describe methodology or procedures, including:
 - a. Provide planned sequence of each proposed investigation/experiment;
 - b. Describe techniques to be employed, including their feasibility;
 - c. State expected results;
 - d. Explain means by which data will be analyzed/interpreted;
 - e. State potential pitfalls; and
 - f. State limitations to proposed procedures.
3. **Justification.**
 - a. Estimate problem magnitude, its relevance to ongoing MI food & ag research programs, and its potential impact on food and farming system sustainability
 - b. Explain Importance of starting the work now
 - c. Provide reasons work should be done by/at MSU
 - d. Present potential and likely sources for future funding
4. **Literature review.** Summarize pertinent publications related to proposed effort, including complete, accurate citations in *Agronomy Journal* format.
5. **Current work.** Describe unpublished institutional activities related to proposed work.
6. **Project timetable.** Outline all important phases as a function of time using format provided.
7. **Progress report.** If applicant has been funded by this program or for similar work from other funding sources, include a summary project report, including:
 - a. Compare actual accomplishments with stated goals;
 - b. Provide reasons if stated goals not met;
 - c. Provide name & contact information of one or more MI residents who could speak about the project's benefits to funders;
 - d. List additional funding leveraged by this grant; and
 - e. List any associated publications.

Key personnel. Provide for all individuals who contribute as team leaders (i.e., PI or co-PI) on each proposed project whether or not salaries are requested:

1. **Profile** (name, mailing address, phone, email and project role)
2. 2-page **bio sketch** including
 - academic & research credentials as applicable (1 page)
 - all pubs in refereed journals for past 4 years and relevant pubs in nonrefereed journals (1 page)
3. **Current and Pending Projects** in format provided.. You will need to fill in your percent of effort for this project and all details for your projects

Budget.

1. Complete budget spreadsheet provided. Note that while the budget categories conform to **grants.gov** SF 424 (R&R) and you are encouraged to refer to this document for appropriate definitions and categories, **please submit your budget on the spreadsheet (xls) form** provided at <http://www.mottgroup.msu.edu>
2. Provide budget justification explaining each item. Indicate sources for any current or pending matching funds or in-kind contributions. Explain and justify any proposed subcontractual agreements. **Use the Contract and Grants website** (<http://www.cqa.msu.edu/fringe08-09.asp>) for calculating salary and fringe rates.

NOTE: Funds may not be used for tuition, building construction/renovation or indirect costs.

Evidence of Support. In a separate file (word document or PDF), provide evidence (letters or emails) of support and cooperation from stakeholders (e.g., MSU Extension, community-based organizations and food system actors).

Graphics. Include any jpg graphics files in a separate file.

Proposals that do not meet content and format specifications may not be considered.

Proposals selected for funding will be combined to create MSU's master proposal. Because this is a major task with very limited time, the proposals must be complete with components formatted as indicated. Research teams that, after being selected for funding, do not provide timely needed revisions for the comprehensive proposal to USDA may be disqualified.

Proposal Review. A committee composed of MSU faculty members, agricultural professionals and Michigan farmers will evaluate and rank proposals and recommend awards based on:

Max Points for Proposal Evaluation

- 25 Rationale and significance, degree to which proposal addresses multiple dimensions of sustainable food and agriculture systems
- 25 Soundness, appropriateness, feasibility of approach and methods; team members' expertise
- 25 Stakeholder engagement
- 15 Leverage of funds (matching funds, other current/future support)
- 10 Accuracy, attention to detail, provision of requested information and format
- 100 Total

Reviewers may provide partial funding and/or suggest project modifications if they believe the situation warrants. Notification of awardees will be made by April 10, 2009 and will become official upon receipt of the USDA funds. At notification, awardees will be asked to provide other information (e.g., if applicable, evidence of preliminary human subjects (IRB) application submission) required for the overall proposal submitted to USDA. The overall proposal will undergo peer review according to MAES procedures and may be revised prior to USDA submission, anticipated in April 2009.

Anticipated Time Line

- March 16, 2009 RFP released
- April 1, 2009. Proposals due
- April 10, 2009 Notification of awards
- April 17, 2009 Overall proposal to peer reviewers
- April 23, 2009 Proposal due to USDS
- July 2009 (Approximately) Funds available
- 12/31/2009 (Approximately) Progress report due
- 12/31/2010 (Approximately) Progress report, impact statements due
- May 31, 2011 (Approximately) Termination. Projects must be completed, funds expended, final report submitted.

For **questions regarding the content/focus** of this RFP, contact David Conner (517-353-1914 or connerd@msu.edu).

For **questions regarding submission/format**, contact Anne Conwell (517-432-1612 or conwella@msu.edu).