

## **PCEE Staff Attend Annual Conference of Pennsylvania Association of Sustainable Agriculture**

### ***Dramatic growth in market for organically grown produce is highlighted***

Slippery Rock, PA – February 27, 2007 – Sales of organically grown produce are increasing more than five times faster than conventionally grown food, according to the Organic Trade Association. This dramatic growth was one of the driving forces that swelled attendance at the recent annual conference of the Pennsylvania Association of Sustainable Agriculture's (PASA). The 16<sup>th</sup> Annual event was held February 1 – 3 at the Penn Stater Conference Center in State College, PA. Kathleen Paul, Director of the Pennsylvania Center for Environmental Education in Slippery Rock, and Melissa Reynolds, PCEE Education Programs Coordinator, attended the event.

According to the Organic Trade Association, organics have increased market share by an average of 17 – 21% per year since 1997, compared to an average annual increase of 2 – 3% for conventionally grown food.

“Sustainable agriculture is enjoying an unprecedented level of interest as an increasing number of farmers and others involved in agriculture are seeing profits in the organic foods business,” said Ms. Paul. “At PCEE, we are gathering information about the educational resources these agriculturalists will need to successfully operate a sustainable enterprise.”

The PCEE representatives attended sessions on such topics as financially successful and sustainable small farm operations, successful marketing for small farmers, the link between human health, nutrition and agriculture, alternative ‘green’ building techniques, the importance of supporting community-focused agricultural industries, and finding and using no spray/low maintenance fruit and nut plant varieties.

“This conference provided us with information about sustainable agricultural practices and resources that we will be able to share with visitors to the PCEE website and newsletter,” added Ms. Paul. “In addition, we were able to develop a larger network of contacts within the sustainable agriculture community, which will also be important to our mission of linking individuals and organizations with the contacts and resources they need.”

**About PCEE:** The Pennsylvania Center for Environmental Education (PCEE) was created by Executive Order of the Governor in 1997 to “provide an avenue for increased participation by educators, local officials, citizen and non-profit groups, business and industry as partners in the implementation of quality environmental education on a state-wide basis.” Administered by the PA State System of Higher Education, PCEE is housed at Slippery Rock University.

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