IATP a Collaborative Partner With Local & Global Focus

By Jason Walker • SFA Communications & Membership Coordinator

Editor’s Note: This is the first in a new occasional feature in SFA Connect that spotlights an organization with which SFA collaborates and our relationship therein.

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy has been working locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems.

Recently, IATP has partnered with SFA on a number of projects, including Farm-to-School and Farm-to-Institution work that links interested parties within our farmer network to potential institutional buyers and provides education and information for our members to more profitably work with said buyers.

IATP also has been forthcoming with assistance and resources – it has collaborated with SFA at the last two Midwest Soil Health Summits, hosting the International Roundtable and sending multiple experts with vast global expertise to lead each discussion.

A Business/Organization Member of SFA, IATP’s work nicely complements ours and is making a difference both locally and globally. We are proud of this partnership.

Executive Director's Note

SFA New Crops Project Expands Work on Herbs

Funded by a USDA Specialty Crops Block Grant through the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, the SFA New Crops Project has developed production information on herbs and will be presenting this information on our website as well as at a field day later this summer.

Herbs are a growing market for Minnesota farmers. There is latent demand for locally produced herbs, both culinary and medicinal, here in the Upper Midwest. Most herbs sold in quantity are produced outside of the region and shipped into Minnesota, which reduces the diversity and quality of herbs available. The SFA New Crops Project endeavors to find and highlight those crops which are under-produced in our area, and helps farmers to understand those crops and decide if they want to produce them for their markets.

So stay tuned to this blog for further, scheduled updates throughout the summer. More information on specific crops, including photos, production and harvest information, and advance notice of the SFA Herbs Field Day will be posted here.
Central Chapter Hosting Keyline Design Workshops

Come learn from two Central Minnesota farmers about using keyline design principles on their farms to manage water during two upcoming SFA Central Chapter workshops, “Restoration Agriculture & Keyline Design for Improving Hydrology.” This demonstration project explores how we can utilize excess water as an asset to increase productivity and resilience by capturing and storing it high on the landscape.

The first workshop is 6 p.m. this Fri., April 8, at Bakers’ Acres, 36861 County Rd 9, Avon. Farmer Lisa Baker installed 900' of berm and swale to move water from concentrated areas out to drier hillside ridges. This free field day will discuss the strategy and construction process.

The second workshop is 4 p.m. Fri., May 6, at Island Lake Farm, 23111 State Hwy 18, Deerwood. Farmer Jim Chamberlin has been researching and installing berm and swale terraces for over a decade. This free field day will include hands-on demonstration of surveying and installing a keyline terrace, as well as touring other established systems.

These workshops are free but advance registration is recommended. Click here to register.

For more information, visit the SFA Central Chapter homepage.

2017 Annual Conference Voting Now Open

Once again, we are using this online voting system to select programming for the SFA Annual Conference, which is set for Feb. 11, 2017, at the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph, Minn. Vote on the topics YOU want addressed at the 2017 SFA Annual Conference and enter your topic ideas!

Click here to vote and enter your ideas.

Registration for the 2017 Annual Conference will open soon as well, with an early bird discount. Watch SFA Connect for the announcement when registration is open.

East Central Visioning Meeting is May 5 in Isanti

SFA East Central Chapter is officially up and running, and to mark the occasion the chapter is hosting its first event at 7 p.m. May 5 at Wintergreens Golf and Grill, 306 Credit Union Dr NE, Isanti.

The evening will include an informal networking meeting as well as a discussion of vision, goals, and possible events and activities for the nascent chapter. Get in on the ground floor and help guide the direction of this new SFA chapter!

The event is free and open to the public. To register, visit the East Central homepage.

Space Remains for May 1 Homestead Dairy Class

Our next Deep Roots Farmer Development Program course is Introduction to Homestead Dairy on May 1, 2016. Anyone wondering about adding a
dairy component to their farm enterprise or who would like more information to guide their current dairy practices should consider this class. Registration options include two milking labs – although space in the labs is nearly full. Don't delay – click here to register.

DEEP ROOTS NOTE: Our Farm Skills 101 is now sold out for the Spring 2016 semester. Fall 2016 classes will be announced as their details are available; keep watching SFA Connect and the Deep Roots homepage for details.

SFA Board Member is Finalist for James Beard Award

SFA Board of Directors member Paul Berglund (right), chef at The Bachelor Farmer restaurant in Minneapolis, received a nomination for Best Chef: Midwest by the James Beard Foundation.

The awards, which will be handed out on May 2 in Chicago, celebrate excellence among chefs, restaurants, food media, and more. Berglund’s category consists of "Chefs who have set new or consistent standards of excellence in their respective regions. Eligible candidates may be from any kind of dining establishment and must have been working as a chef for at least five years with the three most recent years spent in the region."

Congratulations, Paul!

Western Chapter Annual Meeting is April 16

SFA Western Chapter is hosting its Annual Meeting along with a "Bread Mixer" event from 4 to 8 p.m. April 16 at the Milan Community Center, 408 N 4th St, Milan.

Bring your dough ready for the ovens and/or sandwich fixings as attendees will bake bread together. Discussion will focus on local ingredients and recipes as well as chapter business. Bring your instrument or voice for a jam session.

This event is free and open to the public. Register at www.sfa-mn.org/western.

WOC Talks, Annual Conference Videos Now Online

The 2016 SFA Annual Conference, held Feb. 13 at the College of Saint Benedict, marked the debut of our new Wisdom of the Community – WOC – Talks. Similar to the popular TED Talks, WOC Talks are a platform for SFA members and supporters to submit talks on subjects relating to sustainable farming and food systems at the SFA Annual Conference.

View the 2016 WOC Talks – from Scott Haase, Joe Borgerding, and Eric DeBlieck, at our WOC Talks homepage.

Also, a new video about the SFA Annual Conference featuring John Mesko is now available on our AC homepage.

Check This Out • Special Soil Health Network Edition

SFA is building a special portal for soil health expert farmers and professionals, and we will have it up and running soon. Meanwhile, check out these soil health-focused articles:

- We at SFA are often asked about Return on Investment (ROI) from cover crops. From Agriculture.com, here's an interesting take on reasons why "Investing in Soil Health Pays."
From the Journal of Soil and Water Conservation, this report: "The role of ruminants in reducing agriculture’s carbon footprint in North America."

From No-Till Farmer magazine, "Extra Cover Crop Growth Prior to Soybeans Provides Benefits."

Purdue University's newsletter has a "WEEDS" section with information on herbicide resistance and cover crop establishment. Read it here.

Annual Conference Photo Feature

Photographer extraordinaire Crystal Liepa once again documented our 2016 Annual Conference, held Feb. 13, 2016, at the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph, Minn. To learn more about Crystal, visit her website. To view more photos from the 2016 SFA Annual Conference, visit our Facebook page.
SFA Connect is your bi-weekly link to the Sustainable Farming Association

The Sustainable Farming Association is a chapter-based, statewide non-profit organization that supports the development and enhancement of sustainable farming systems through innovation, demonstration, education, and farmer-to-farmer networking. If you, your farm or organization has any upcoming events that you would like posted on the SFA Community Calendar, email info@sfa-mn.org.

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