Dear Supporter,

Thank you for your SFA membership. Our records show you are a current member through April 1, 2016.

If you ever have questions about membership, contact Jason Walker at jason@sfa-mn.org.

Thank you for your support of SFA and its mission!

Greater Mille Lacs Chapter Now Officially Formed

SFA is excited to announce the formation of a brand-new chapter centered around the Aitkin area – the Greater Mille Lacs chapter.

According to Erik Heimark, chapter president (right), Greater Mille Lacs arose because of the large number of sustainably minded farmers around the Aitkin area.

“The idea to form a SFA chapter came about at a meeting last January where local farmers got together to discuss ways to support each other in the coming season,” he said. “The main goals of the Greater Mille Lacs Chapter are to help farmers market and process their products, provide support to their operations, and to educate themselves and their neighbors about the best practices in sustainable agriculture.”

SFA Network Coordinator Jerry Ford shepherded the new chapter through the formation process, and reminds SFA members that anyone interested in chapter-related issues should visit our Chapter Resource Portal.

Anyone interested in learning more about the new Greater Mille Lacs Chapter can contact Erik at heima022@umn.edu or membership coordinator Jodi Olson at jaudette31@gmail.com or 218.927.1435.

SFA Nears Completion in High-level Nonprofit Standards
The Charities Review Council oversees a program to certify nonprofit organizations that meet a high set of standards. The process for attaining the certification is rigorous and demanding, but SFA is nearing the finish line. Organizations that achieve these standards are listed on the website, smartgivers.org, a resource for donors, foundations and philanthropists who seek assurance that a particular charity is structurally sound and effectively pursuing its stated mission.

SFA’s Network Coordinator, Jerry Ford (at right with Kris Kewitsch, Executive Director, Charities Review Council) and Executive Director, John Mesko, have completed a series of required Nonprofit Strengthening Workshops over the past several months as part of this program. Using what they have learned, they have been fine-tuning various area of SFA’s organizational documentation and structure to bring us into greater alignment with legal requirements and accepted best practices.

The final step is a thorough analysis of our procedures, policies and mission, and we are well into that process. Our intention is to be certified by the Charities Review Council before the fall fundraising season, which will open up even greater sources of donation revenue for SFA.

**Lake Agassiz Seed Swap April 26 in Bagley**

SFA Lake Agassiz Chapter is hosting a Seed Swap and potluck from 4 to 6 p.m. Sunday, April 26, at the American Legion, 112 Main Ave N, Bagley. This event is free and no registration is required.

Attendees can bring extra seeds saved from crops or leftover purchased seeds, all in containers that are not spill-prone and clearly labeled, along with small envelopes to carry home your exchanges. Do not bring treated or GMO seeds. Cuttings, scion wood, etc. are welcome.

No seeds? No sweat! Come anyway and pick up some things that interest you. Discussion welcome on the history of heirloom seeds and ancient grains.

For more information, contact Jim Ingvaldson at 218-694-3071.

**Young Farmers Receive Crow River SFA Scholarships**

SFA's Crow River Chapter recently recognized two area youth as recipients of the Outstanding Youth in Sustainable Agriculture award.
These hard-working young people each received a $100 cash award towards their farming projects. It is the CRSFA's hope that this financial assistance will inspire new generations to start farming!

Emily Hackbarth raises goats, llamas, and gardens at her family’s farm near Silver Lake. Emily is especially interested in pasture management and holistic health for her herd of dairy goats. She is active in 4-H, which has helped cultivate her lifelong passion for agriculture.

Charlie Otto (Delano) is also a longtime 4-H member. Charlie raises sheep, cattle, and chickens on his family’s farm, as well as helping with the vegetable gardens. Charlie hopes to use the $100 award to create a better fencing system for his pastured chickens.

The winners are pictured at above right with Crow River Chapter's Nick Neaton.

Check This Out

- We sure are glad to run across stuff like this: from Missouri Farming Today comes this article with a not entirely shocking premise: "Tile Water Data Show Cover Crops Reduce Nitrates." To read the article, click here.
- SFA member Jeanne Johnson wrote a terrific letter to the editor, printed in the Alexandria Echo Press, in favor of SFA, buffer strips, and general soil health-building principles. Read it here.

Annual Conference Photo Feature

Photographer extraordinaire Crystal Liepa once again documented our 2015 Annual Conference, held Feb. 14, 2015, at the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph, Minn. To learn more about Crystal, visit her website.

Feb. 17-18, 2016:
MIDWEST SOIL HEALTH SUMMIT. Arrowwood Resort, Alexandria, Minn.

SFA WORK

Deep Roots Farmer Development Program is a much-needed beginning-farmer curriculum that emphasizes all three tenets of sustainability, plus provides extensive skills training.

New Farm Reality Check: Look Before You Leap is now being presented at various conferences and other forums as a result of our Adjust 2015 project.

Our ongoing GrazeFest series of grass-based livestock and cover cropping events is led by Livestock and Grazing Coordinator Kent Solberg. Visit our GrazeFest homepage and watch SFA Connect for updates on our upcoming on-farm events.

Keep Cattle in Minnesota will build on SFA's foundation to grow and sustain the beef and dairy industries in Minnesota.
April 3 Webinar With Dr. Shannon Osbourne Archived

Our most recent Keep Cattle in Minnesota webinar was April 3 and featured Dr. Shannon Osbourne of ARS in Brookings, S.D. Dr. Osborne’s presentation focused on the impact of crop diversity, no-till, cover crops and residue removal on soil health properties, including soil physical properties and their interaction with soil biological properties. Specific information will included how crop diversity and cover crops impact soil aggregation, carbon and components of soil organic matter.

Click here to view this and past webinars in our new Webinar Archive.

New Crops Project

SFA's New Crops Project aims to expand the availability of local foods in Minnesota and help farmers expand their markets.

Minnesota Dairy Initiative

For information about MDI and its ongoing projects, email SFA Livestock and Grazing Coordinator Kent Solberg.
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.

Sustainable Farming Association (SFA)
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