SFA Selects Winter Sustainability Conference Interns

For the second consecutive year, SFA has tapped Sustainability Conference Interns to help plan our winter conferences and become a part of our farmer networking organization. This year, three interns were picked from a diverse, deep pool of applicants: Katie Harris, Helen Schnoes and Kelsey Wulf.

Harris (top right), who will work alongside Livestock & Grazing Specialist Kent Solberg, is a student at the University of Minnesota with a major in Food Systems – Organic and Local Food Production Emphasis. Harris, of Anoka, works at Grass Roots Cooperative in Anoka, has volunteered at Mill City Farmers Market and has studied sustainability in Ecuador.

Schnoes (middle right), who will work alongside Event Coordinator Jerry Ford, just received her Master of Regional Planning degree from Cornell University. A Minneapolis native, she has extensively studied food systems and co-funded Sitka Salmon Shares and has experience planning several local foods events.

Wulf, who will work alongside Communications Coordinator Jason Walker, is a familiar face at SFA events and graduate of the Sustainable Food Production program. Wulf, who lives in Detroit Lakes, has worked on several farms, including Seven Pines Farm and Lida Farm. She has also been selected to help with SFA’s 25th anniversary celebration, and has written and compiled several submissions for the upcoming CornerPost and an online historical archive.

SFA thanks everyone who applied for our sustainability internships.

Executive Director's Note
Winter is here. Earlier than most of us would like, but its here, and that means conference season. Hopefully, you've already registered for the Midwest Soil Health Summit on Feb 18-19, as those seats will sell fast. And I know you wouldn't let SFAs Annual Conference on Feb. 14 pass you by. Its the perfect winter-time warm up!

However, there's another conference you really should be thinking about. The MN Department of Agriculture's Minnesota Organic Conference. I just got my registration packet in the mail recently, and I'm going to be there.

SFA will have a booth, and SFA will be offering our very first Adjust 2015 Workshop! Yes, you've heard about Adjust 2015 for the past 2 years now, and we are ready (almost) to launch the curriculum!

As a reminder, Adjust 2015's "New Farm Reality Check" Curriculum is designed to offer beginning farmers that one final run through of their plans before they embark on an important farm business. We've asked hundreds of farmers to tell what the initial hurdles were in their businesses, and what they would do over again to avoid them. We've identified key components of flexibility and planning success that will help beginning farmers to avoid potentially disastrous situations. Come early to the MN Organic Conference, and sign up for the "Reality Checking your Farm Plan" Winter Workshop. ***Hey, its FREE for SFA members!***

The MN Organic Conference, easy to get to in St. Cloud, loaded with information, and SFA will be there too!

**Danielson Elected Association Board Vice-Chair**

Charlie Danielson, a farmer from the Duluth area and member of SFA Lake Superior Chapter, was elected Vice-Chair at the SFA Association Board of Directors meeting on Fri., Oct. 24, at the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph, Minn.

Danielson (right), owner of Up North Farm, is a permaculture educator and farmer who works with nature to rebuild the soil while creating a diverse career in creating a more sustainable food system.

"I am happy to help connect our regions around the state in creating a more sustainable and secure food system while protecting the soil and water that we borrow from our future," he said.

Danielson, who joins the SFA Board as the Lake Superior delegate following the resignation of former Vice-Chair Eric Ament, was unanimously elected to the position.

The SFA Association Board of Directors meets three times a year: February, April and October.

**Submit Legal Questions Now, Get Answers at AC**

By Helen Schnoes • SFA Event Coordination Intern
Navigating the world of farm and food laws can at times make even the savviest Minnesotan feel out at sea. Perhaps you’ve recently wondered:

- Why isn't it legal for me to buy unpasteurized milk?
- Is there really a law that says activists can't shoot unauthorized videos on farms?
- What are the legal ramifications of having interns on my farm?
- How new food safety laws impact my food business?

Luckily, “good food” lawyers Jennifer Jambor-Delgado and Amanda Heyman are here to help! Through Feb. 1, 2015, we will be collecting SFA members’ most important questions for Jambor-Delgado and Heyman to answer during a special session at the Annual Conference. At the conference, Jabor-Delgado and Heyman will also provide information about how smart legal strategies can help grow and protect your business. Join us in making this great opportunity a success—send your questions to hello@jamborheyman.com.

SFA Annual Conference Tidbits

Pre-Conference Reception and Jam Session

Come socialize with your farmer friends the night before the SFA Annual Conference during a reception and jam session from 7 to 9 p.m. Friday, Feb. 13 at Minnesota Street Market (the food co-op in downtown St. Joseph). Bring the whole family, your instruments, or just drop in to say hello. There is plenty of space to chat inside the co-op, one of St. Joe’s several fine local food establishments. If you’d like to continue on afterward, head to the La Playette just down the street.

The event is free, but an RSVP is encouraged by Feb. 9 to lisa@bakersacresfarm.com if you would like to buy a simple soup meal served at the co-op.

Also:

- Art and science projects, cooking lessons and more – the Budding Farmers program is coming to the 2015 SFA Annual Conference. Children attending must be between 3 and 12 years old and potty trained; kids under 3 are welcome to attend the conference but are the responsibility of their parents. Click here to register.

- Volunteer registration is now open – all 2015 volunteers receive a newly designed SFA t-shirt. Volunteers are needed to be session monitors, help with parking and registration, setup/teardown, and more. To volunteer or to learn more, contact SFA Volunteer Coordinator Gretchen Boyum at 218.535.1567 or boyumfarms@gmail.com.

- Register through Dec. 30 at the Early Bird rate of $45/members and $55/nonmembers. SFA members should have received a separate email with discount registration instructions. Only SFA members will receive this separate email – new members will upon signup.

- Vendor/Exhibitor Registration is open as well. Visit our Annual Conference homepage to download the proper form.

- Scholarships to attend the SFA Annual Conference are available for current students and require a volunteer commitment; for more information, email Jerry Ford at jerry@sfa-mn.org.

Third Deep Winter Greenhouse Short Course Added

After the first two sold out, we’ve added another SFA Sustainable Food Production Program “Deep Winter Production of Greens and Livestock Fodder Utilizing Passive Solar Energy” class: from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 1, 2015, in Ashby, Minn.

Click here to register.

NOTE: This class is in addition to the sold-out Deep Winter classes already scheduled for Jan. 31 and Feb. 13. If you already registered for those courses, please be assured they are still set
During the class, farm owners Sue Wika and Tom Prieve will provide a detailed overview of the construction and operation of their deep-winter greenhouse, which utilizes passive solar energy with underground heat storage. The greenhouse provides greens for local consumers. In addition, the structure is utilized to produce fodder for the farm livestock. Students will be in the greenhouse to see how greens and fodder are planted and harvested.

This particular Deep Winter class is more in-depth and will provide opportunity for students to “get their hands dirty” in the greenhouse by planting and harvesting greens. It will also cover greenhouse construction in a more detailed manner. Registrants: Don’t forget to bring a sack lunch. Beverage and fresh winter salad (grown on site) provided.

The class will be held at Paradox Farm, 11643 State Hwy 78, Ashby, MN 56309 (Directions: 7 miles north of Ashby; 10 miles south of Battle Lake). Storm date is Feb. 8, 2015.

Make the Annual Conference Work for Your Chapter

By Helen Schnoes • SFA Event Coordination Intern

The SFA Annual Conference provides our chapters with a wonderful chance to share the events, stories, and successes of their regional work, and chapters can take advantage of these two opportunities to do so:

Opening Session Chapter Showcase: Help us kick off the event by giving a one-minute introduction of your chapter! What excites your members? What guides your chapter? Share your happenings from 2014 and what you’re planning for 2015.

Chapter Displays: Foster conversation and promote chapter engagement throughout the conference by preparing a tri-fold display to show all your chapter’s projects! Displays can include the following:

- Your mission and activities
- Needs for volunteers/ members/activities/etc.
- Vision for how your chapter will impact sustainable agriculture to rally future activity
- Products, farming practices and history highlights, as well as landscape features that make your chapter’s region unique
- Your Chapter’s official SFA logo and graphics

SFA Communications Coordinator Jason Walker can provide chapters with display advice, graphics and fonts. You can reach him at jason@sfa-mn.org.

Take advantage of the Mini-Presentations and Chapter Showcase to inform your current members, draw in new members, and help your chapter grow in 2015!

To reserve a spot for your showcase presentation and your display, contact Helen Schnoes, SFA Event Coordination Intern: heleanschnoes@gmail.com or 612.741.1591.

SFA Chosen as ‘Good Food Org’ by Beard Foundation

SFA was recently chosen as part of the Good Food Org Guide by the James Beard Foundation and Food Tank. This definitive guide “highlights nonprofit organizations that are doing exemplary work in the United States in the areas of food and agriculture, nutrition and health, hunger and obesity, and food justice.”

The Good Food Org Guide has already been downloaded 25,000 times through various channels and has received dozens of incredible press clips from major news outlets across the country. View the guide here.

Sustainable Food Production Program

The Sustainable Food Production Program, formerly part of M State Fergus Falls, is a much-needed beginning-farmer curriculum that emphasizes all three tenets of sustainability, plus provides extensive skills training.

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.
MSHS Returns With Gabe Brown and Dr. Allen Williams

Registration is now open for SFA's second annual Midwest Soil Health Summit, featuring Gabe Brown, set for Feb. 18-19, 2015, at Arrowwood Resort in Alexandria, Minn.

The MSHS, newly expanded for 2015, also will feature Dr. Allen Williams, a champion of the grass-fed beef industry.

Brown, the keynote speaker, owns Brown's Ranch in Burleigh County, N.D., and is a pioneer in diverse cover cropping who has used no-till techniques for two decades. At the 2015 MSHS, Gabe will discuss soil health programming for beginners as well as lead a separate program for advanced farmers – if you attended the previous MSHS, rest assured this year's version will include plenty of fresh information from Gabe.

Last year's MSHS was a sellout; register now to guarantee your spot. Walk-up registration will be dependent on pre-registration numbers, and SFA members receive a $50 registration discount. [Click here to register.]

Also scheduled to appear:

- **Jerry Doan**, farmer from Black Leg Ranch in Burleigh County, N.D., a multi-generational family farm that emphasizes soil health.
- **Dr. Michael Lehman**, a research microbiologist whose studies include evaluating soil microbiological responses to agricultural management practices.
- **Dr. Wendy Taheri**, a research microbiologist who specializes in the study of arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF).
- **Kent Solberg**, SFA Livestock & Grazing Specialist, will discuss Designing Complex Cover Crop Blends.
- **John Mesko**, SFA Executive Director, will lead a program on Soil Science Basics.
- **Ian Cunningham**, a cow-calf producer and veteran cover cropper from Pipestone County, Minn.

Also returning this year is our exclusive "Gab With Gabe" networking session from 4 to 6 p.m. Feb. 18, 2015, with Gabe Brown. ONLY 10 TICKETS will be sold at $50 each for this chance to network one-on-one with a soil health pioneer. You must register for the MSHS separately – this ticket will ONLY get you into "Gab With Gabe." [Click here to register for "Gab With Gabe." ]

Need a room? Arrowwood Resort is a family friendly location with ice fishing, cross country ski trails, snowmobiling, ice skating, broomball, and more. For more information or to reserve a room at the special MSHS rate of $99, call the resort at 320.762.1124.

Check this Out

“Check This Out” is a section of links to articles and videos chosen by SFA staff that you might enjoy. Consider:

- For the second year in a row, a national survey of farmers has documented a yield boost from the use of cover crops in corn and soybeans, as well as a wide variety of other benefits. The survey - which was funded by the North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program and carried out by the Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC) - also details the challenges and benefits farmers expect from cover crops, data on the costs of seed and establishment, and insight into how farmers learn to manage cover crops. Minnesota had the highest number of survey participants. The 2013-2014 SARE-CTIC Cover Crop Survey Report is available for download at [www.sare.org/covercropsurvey](http://www.sare.org/covercropsurvey).
Photographer extraordinaire Crystal Liepa once again documented our 2014 Annual Conference, held Feb. 8, 2014, at the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph, Minn. To learn more about Crystal, visit her website.

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**Minnesota Organic Conference Registration Now Open**

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture has opened registration for the 2015 Minnesota Organic Conference. This farmer-focused event and associated trade show is being held Jan. 9-10 in St. Cloud. Organizers expect 500-600 people to attend and are offering an early bird discount rate until Dec. 26.

Program information, registration forms, and a growing list of trade show vendors are available here or by calling 651.201.6012 for a registration brochure.

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**Apply Now for MN Sustainable Ag Demonstration Grants**

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture is now accepting applications for its Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant program. These funds are intended to help farmers find new ways to conserve natural resources and to improve farm profitability and quality of life. MDA awards up to $25,000 for on-farm projects; a total of $250,000 is available for the current program. Eligible recipients include Minnesota farmers, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations.

The grant application is available on the MDA website or by contacting MDA at 651.201.6012. Completed applications must be received no later than Jan. 23, 2015.

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**Federal Funding Guide Released for Sustainable Farmers**

Producers, landowners, NGO’s, and researchers who are seeking resources to help them reach their sustainable agriculture goals need look no further than the recently updated Building Sustainable Farms, Ranches, and Communities Guide. The 86-page guide covers 63 programs, which coincide with changes reflected in the 2014 Farm Bill. It provides a one-stop reference for governmental resources, information, and financial assistance on topics ranging from investment opportunities in agricultural entrepreneurial ventures to technical assistance and grant funding for renewable energy projects, and everything in between.

To download a free copy as well as order paper copies, click here.
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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