Got a Great Idea for a WOC Talk? Want Free Annual Conference Registration? Submit Your Topic Now!

By Jerry Ford • SFA Network Coordinator

If you’re considering participating in our WOC Talks (Wisdom of the Community) program, the deadline to submit your topic and intent to present is Dec. 20, 2015. You can simply email that to me at jerry@sfa-mn.org and I’ll get you signed up.

Similar to the popular TED Talks, WOC Talks will present sustainable farming supporters who submit talks on subjects relating to sustainable farming and food systems at the SFA Annual Conference on Feb. 13, 2016, in St. Joseph, Minn. More information here.

And, participants get free registration to the SFA Annual Conference. Email me and sign up today!

Annual Conference, MSHS Schedules Available

Registration is now open for SFA’s 2016 winter conferences – get the following dates on your calendar and register NOW for the best prices.

Click here to register for the SFA Annual Conference, set for Feb. 13, 2016, at the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph, Minn. Until Jan. 1, registration is just $45 for SFA members and $55 for nonmembers. You may also register children 3-12 for the Budding Farmers program ($10) and for the SFA Leaders Breakfast ($15). Also, the day’s session and events schedule is filling up nicely! Check out the in-progress schedule here and start thinking about what sessions to attend.

Click here to register for the SFA Midwest Soil Health Summit, set for Feb. 17-18, 2016, at Arrowwood Resort in Alexandria, Minn. The MSHS features soil health experts and farm leaders for two days of education and farmer networking – all geared at improving the health of your soil. Pricing is $150 for SFA members and $200 for nonmembers. The MSHS schedule is now available on the Summit homepage.

Sponsor & Exhibitor registration is open for both conferences on their respective homepage linked above. And remember that SFA Business/Organization members earn significant discounts on sponsorships and exhibitor space at our conferences. To learn more about SFA Business/Organization memberships, click here.
Special Event: 'Building Soil Health Experts' Training

SFA has added a special event for agriculture service professionals to complement the 2016 Midwest Soil Health Summit.

“Building Soil Health Experts: Advanced Training for Professionals” is set for 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Feb. 17, 2016, at Arrowwood Resort in Alexandria, Minn., and will provide expert soil health education for NRCS and SWCD soil specialists, Extension staff, crop consultants, agronomists, grazing and livestock specialists, and advisers who work directly with farmers and other ag advisers.

Training will encompass soil biology and measuring soil biology, integration of cover crops and livestock into cropping systems, and seeding methods for establishing cover crops. Presenters are Dr. Allen Williams (above), Dr. Rick Haney, Dr. Michael Lehman and Dr. Scott Wells.

This special event costs $100, is geared solely for ag service professionals and is separate from the Midwest Soil Health Summit. Registration for “Building Soil Health Experts” does not include MSHS registration. If you wish to attend the general Midwest Soil Health Summit as well you must register for that separately here.

Click here to learn more register for “Building Soil Health Experts.”

For more information about the workshop or scholarships, contact Wayne Monsen, SFA Special Projects Coordinator, at wayne@sfa-mn.org or 1-844-922-5573 Ext. 712.

Chapters & Groups: Make the AC Work For You

By Jerry Ford • SFA Network Coordinator

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 or networking group! What excites your members? What guides your chapter? Share your happenings from 2015 and what you’re planning for 2016.

Chapter Displays

Foster conversation and promote chapter/networking group engagement throughout the conference by preparing a tri-fold display to show all your group’s up to. 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

SFA Communications Coordinator, Jason Walker, can provide chapters with display resources. Email him at jason@sfa-mn.org.
Deep Winter Greenhouse Tour Series Announced

SFA is producing a series of tours at deep winter greenhouses across the region, with the kickoff at the Minnesota Organic Conference's "Passive Solar Deep Winter Greenhouses Workshop" and culminating in a wrap-up session at the SFA Annual Conference on Feb. 13. These free tours, presented by SFA's Deep Winter Producers Networking Group, in collaboration with U of M Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships, are occurring all across Minnesota over four weekends, with locations including:

- St. John's University, Collegeville, and College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph
- Garden Goddess, Milan
- Way Cool Farm, Deer River
- Barry's Cherries, Wadena
- Lida Farm, Pelican Rapids, and Paradox Farm, Ashby
- Whitewater Gardens Farm, Altura
- Thiel Gardens, Minneapolis


Lake Agassiz Annual Meeting is Jan. 9 in Bemidji

The SFA Lake Agassiz Chapter will host its annual meeting from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Jan. 9, 2016, at Rail River Folk School, 303 Railroad St SW, Bemidji. Join us for a time of food, fun and sharing and learn how your neighbors are building sustainable farms for the future.

The program kicks off with Lake Agassiz board members giving short presentations about their products and future farm plans. Following the presentations will be a potluck lunch, business meeting and farmer networking time.

This event is free and open to the public but preregistration is required. [Click here to register.](http://www.sfa-mn.org/lake-agassiz/)

Meeting is Jan. 20 for New East Central Chapter

A new SFA chapter is forming in the region just north and east of the Twin Cities, and an organizational meeting will be held at 7 p.m. Jan. 20, 2016 in Isanti, MN at the Community Center, 208 1/2 First Ave NW.

At the meeting, Jerry Ford, SFA's Network Coordinator, will describe what SFA chapters do as well as how to set up the chapter leadership board.

If you'd like to attend and get in on the ground level of this new East Central chapter, or just want to be added to the East Central mailing list, please RSVP to Sharon Johnson at [sharon@minnesotafreshfarm.com](mailto:sharon@minnesotafreshfarm.com) or call 612-735-5459.

Small Scale Sustainable Sheep Event is Feb. 20 in Fosston
The second annual Small Scale Sustainable Sheep Farming Event will be Feb. 20, 2016, beginning at 10 a.m. at the Fosston Civic Center, 215 E First St, Fosston. This event is open to the public and focuses on the benefits of sheep as part of a sustainable farming system where meat and wool are viable value-added products.

Speakers include Mark Hayek, NRCS grazing specialist; Alethea Kenney, Sustainable Sheep Community Project; Keila McCracken, Northern Minnesota Fibershed; Jennifer Wilder, "Midwest Textiles: A Photo Journal Tour"; and Lynn Mizner, Chengwatana Farm Black Welsh Mountain Sheep.

A full trade show will include educational displays and businesses related to sheep and farming.

Cost is $20 for adults, under 10 are free; pay at the door. Lunch and snacks provided. Please RSVP to Alethea Kenney at 218-657-2502 or sustainablesheep@sfa-mn.org. Trade show booths are also still available.

Information: SFA's Sustainable Sheep homepage.

Few Spots Remain for Farm Skills 101, Deep Winter Course

A few spots remain for the Spring 2016 semester of our Deep Roots Farmer Development Program’s Farm Skills 101, which consists of around 50 hours of on-farm education in three weekends of fun and fulfilling learning. This hands-on training consists of days in the field, not field days – participants will need pants, closed-toe shoes, gloves and safety glasses.

Deep Roots programs include small class sizes and individualized attention. Every student engages in the activities. This is real-world, real-time education. Spring 2016 classes will be held on April 15-16, 22-23 and 29-30 at farms near Alexandria, Minn. Friday classes run from 10 a.m.-9 p.m.; Saturdays 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

A recent alum said FS 101 was a “jawdroppingly fabulous program in Minnesota where we learned all sorts of things that we didn’t know we didn’t know.”

Don't wait too long – this class will sell out. Click here to register. To read more, including Fall 2015 student Cassi Dutcher’s Farm Skills diary, visit our Deep Roots homepage.


Check This Out

From Heavy Table, this article details a new food co-op in New Prague that is using technology and keycards to be open 24/7 and allows farmers to deliver goods at their convenience. Click here to read: “The Farmhouse Market in New Prague.”

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.
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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