As 2014 Ends, Help SFA Make Sustainability Happen

By Jason Walker • SFA Communications & Membership Coordinator

What do Albert Lea Seed, the Wallace Center at Winrock International, Organic Valley Co-op, and the Bremer Foundation have in common?

They all support SFA financially, as do dozens of individuals, just like you.

When you donate to SFA, your dollars go directly into farmer education and networking that promotes sustainable farming and environmental stewardship. With low overhead, SFA delivers terrific bang for your buck if you are seeking a charitable organization for improving our agricultural and food systems.

For instance, SFA is working hard to revitalize our Lake Agassiz Chapter in northwest Minnesota. We're doing it by hosting events like "Good Food From Good Farms" in Thief River Falls pictured above – events that help spread awareness of local food while building a farmer network in an underserved area.

Donate to SFA today here and feel good about where your money goes. All donations to SFA are fully tax-deductible. And next time you read about or attend any SFA event where people are networking and learning, you can say with confidence, “I helped make this happen.”
Then, reward yourself for your donation with a conference registration. Sign up now for both the [SFA Annual Conference](#) or [Midwest Soil Health Summit] – SFA members get discounted registration at both conferences.

Plus, [SFA Annual Conference Early Bird registration](#) ends Dec. 31. Sign up now and save!

Finally, thank you for your ongoing support of SFA and our programs. We accomplished a lot in 2014 and are ready to continue promoting sustainable agriculture in Minnesota and beyond.

Here’s to more local food, improved soil health, farmer networking, and fellowship in 2015!

### Executive Director's Note

As a subscriber to SFA Connect, you already know about all the amazing things the leaders of our organization are doing to promote and sustain our brand of agriculture into the future. In wrapping up 2014, I just want to offer a note of thanks to everyone who has been such a support for SFA this year. Now, as we move on to 2015 and SFAs 25 year celebration, we need your involvement more than ever.

Yes, this is a year-end fundraising appeal. However, in reality, its an involvement appeal. Your involvement with SFA really matters. We understand everyone gets involved at a different level in causes and efforts they feel strongly about. Subscribing to SFA Connect is basic level support for SFA and the movement as a whole. At this level, you learn about sustainable agriculture, and hopefully you've come to see the value of Farmer to Farmer Networking as a driving force for change in agriculture.

If you’ve been subscribing for a while, but haven’t actually joined SFA with a paid membership, its time to take your involvement to the next level. At the paid membership level, your involvement helps to support the work of keeping everyone informed of the issues of sustainable agriculture and the work SFA is doing. Currently, only about 1 in 4 of you who are reading this email are actual paid members. Not sure if you are a member? If you did not receive a printed Cornerpost newsletter this month, you are not a paid member of SFA. Still not sure? Contact Jason Walker at jason@sfa-mn.org, and he can check for you. As a reminder, paid members get discounts to events, like Annual Conference and Midwest Soil Health Summit, and the Winter Workshop "Reality Checking Your Farm Plan" at the MN Organic Conference in early January. Become a Sustaining Member today, and you'll never have to wonder if you are a member of SFA.

If you've been a paid member, but haven't yet made a donation to SFA, its time to take your involvement to the next level, and become a donor. At the donor level of involvement, you are actually putting important resources to work, solving major food and farming issues, like having enough successful farmers to produce healthy food for a growing population. We do that at SFA, and you can help make that happen with your donation today.

Finally, if you are a donor to SFA, we Thank You! Your contributions are critical to our success, and we simply cannot complete our mission without the resources you help to provide.

Thank you for your support in 2014, at whatever level. For 2015, let's all move our involvement to the next level and watch amazing things happen, as we take 25 years of success in Farmer-to-Farmer Networking to the next level!

May 2015 be a year of tremendous prosperity for you and yours.

### Chapter Update: Lake Agassiz


July 11, 2015: FESTIVAL OF FARMS

Aug. 15, 2015: MINNESOTA GARLIC FESTIVAL, McLeod County Fairgrounds, Hutchinson, Minn.
By Marie Petry • Lake Agassiz Chapter Coordinator

The food indeed was good at the SFA Lake Agassiz “Good Food from Good Farms” event held Nov. 5 in Thief River Falls, where local celebrity chef Sue Doeden made a delicious wild rice salad using local food.

Following the cooking demonstration, the 35-40 area farmers, food producers and enthusiasts who attended toured four "lightning workshops" which included: Lake Agassiz Chapter, Homemade Cheese Press, Thief River Falls Growing Forward food network, and High Tunnels.

If you missed this FREE event, you have two more chances to attend: 1:30-3:30 Jan. 15 in Detroit Lakes and 5:30-7:30 p.m. Jan. 27 in Bemidji. Check our webpage for details and free registration. All attendees receive the once-in-a-lifetime offer of free SFA Lake Agassiz membership until April 2015.

The Lake Agassiz Chapter Annual Meeting will also be held Jan. 27 at the Bemidji event, where an important and exciting agenda item will be the act of voting in a Chapter Board of Directors.

Also upcoming in Lake Agassiz Chapter is the Small Scale Sustainable Sheep Farming event at 11 a.m. Feb 21 at the Northern Woolen Mills in Fosston. SFA Business/Organization Member Alethea Kenney of Reedbird Farm has put together a wonderful slate of speakers and vendors for those raising sheep or interested in getting started.

For more details on this event and the upcoming Lake Agassiz Chicken Festival, watch our homepage.

SFA Annual Conference Tidbits

- **Chapters:** Take part in our Opening Session Chapter Showcase by giving a one-minute introduction of your chapter, and share your happenings from 2014 and what you’re planning for 2015. Or, foster conversation and promote chapter engagement throughout the conference by preparing a tri-fold display to show all your chapter’s projects. SFA Communications Coordinator Jason Walker can provide chapters with display advice, graphics and fonts; email him at jason@sfa-mn.org. To reserve a spot for your showcase presentation and your display, contact Helen Schnoes, SFA Event Coordination Intern: helenaschnoes@gmail.com or 612.741.1591.

- **Through Feb. 1, 2015,** we will be collecting SFA members’ most important questions for attorneys Jennifer Jambor-Delgado and Amanda Heyman to answer during a special session at the Annual Conference. At the conference, Jambor-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.

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

- **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. 31** 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.

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**Adjast 2015**

Have you had to make changes to your farm plan since you started farming? Your experiences could help other farmers. Check out our survey.

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 Keep Cattle in Minnesota will build on SFA's foundation to grow and sustain the beef and dairy industries in Minnesota while protecting our vast environmental resources.

**Sustainable Food Production Program**

**Sustainable Food Production, formerly part of M State Fergus Falls, is a much-needed beginning-farmer curriculum that emphasizes...**
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.

MSHS Returns With Gabe Brown and Dr. Allen Williams

Tickets are moving fast 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.

The exact schedule will be online soon; note that the event begins at 1 p.m. Feb. 18 with “Soil Science Basics” led by John Mesko.

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 bonus 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 A HANDFUL OF TICKETS REMAIN 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:

- Video testimonials from Sustainable Food Production Farm Skills 101 students are now embedded on our SFP homepage.
- Our recent Keep Cattle in Minnesota Soil Health Webinar, featuring Midwest Soil Health Summit presenters Drs. Wendy Taheri and Michael Lehman, is permanently archived on our KCIM homepage. Click here and scroll down a bit to find the webinar.

Annual Conference Photo Feature
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.

MISA Publishes Guide for ‘Local Food Entrepreneurs’

A new publication by Megan O’Hara and released by the Minnesota institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA), “A Guide to Regulations for Local Food Entrepreneurs,” is now available. The guide, written by O’Hara during her recent tenure as a Senior Fellow in the School of Agriculture Endowed Chair in Agricultural Systems, describes the health, economic, and environmental reasons for growth and highlights diverse businesses – from a granola bar manufacturer to a farmers’ market to a food truck – that are finding innovative ways to overcome obstacles and bring unique food to their communities.

The publication is available for download on the MISA website here. Print copies will be available from the MISA office after Jan. 5, 2015; to request a copy, contact the MISA office at 800.909.6472 or misamail@umn.edu.
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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