SFA Annual Conference: Last-Minute Details & Updates

The 2015 SFA Annual Conference will be this Saturday, Feb. 14, 2015, in the Gorecki Center at the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph, Minn. Some last-minute details:

- Pre-Registration has closed but you may still register at the door – all walkup registrations are $65. Registration begins at 7:15 a.m.
- Children 3-12 who wish to attend the Budding Farmers programming may also register at the door for $10 each. Budding Farmers children must be potty-trained.
- The Conference program and full schedule is now available for download at our Annual Conference homepage.
- Mary Jane Miller's Culinary Sessions include "Cooking for Kids," "Start With a Rotisserie Chicken," "Grassfed Beef 2: The Art of Braising," and "Stump the Sommelier." Then our popular after-conference reception will include beer from 612 Brewery and Mankato Brewery as well as cheese from Caves of Faribault.
- There may be a limited amount of Leaders Breakfast spots available at the door for $12.50. If you wish to purchase a Leaders Breakfast ticket, make sure you arrive before the breakfast begins at 7:30.
- Lunch is not included in conference registration. The bountiful and delicious St. Ben's Cafeteria is in this building; there are restaurants across Minnesota St (which are listed in the conference program); and if you brought your lunch there are plenty of spots to enjoy that, including the Lunch Hour Sessions. Lunch is also a great time to visit our fabulous exhibitors and the ever-popular Seed Swap.
- Want to set up a carpool? The SFA Annual Conference has a Facebook page.
- Parking is available in Lot 5 across from the Gorecki Center at St. Ben’s. Enter the campus at the North Entrance on NW 3rd Ave off Minnesota St (be careful, blink and you can miss it). Just look for the SFA signs.

Nearly 200 people have already registered for the SFA Annual Conference. If you haven’t yet, make plans to attend!
New Programming Added to Midwest Soil Health Summit

New programming has been added and registration is still open for the Midwest Soil Health Summit, set for Feb. 18-19 at Arrowwood Resort in Alexandria, Minn.

The MSHS begins at 1 p.m. Feb. 18 with registration opening and the first session, “Soil Science Basics,” with SFA Executive Director John Mesko. Additionally, we’ve just added a BRAND-NEW session to the MSHS, “Soil Science Basics II: Mycorrhizae,” with Dr. Wendy Taheri that will take place from 2:30 to 4 p.m. Feb. 18. This session is in addition to Dr. Taheri’s other session, “Understanding the Diversity in Agricultural Ecosystems,” set for Feb. 19.

Details have also just been finalized for our International Roundtable, set for 2:30 p.m. on Feb. 18. Attendance at the Roundtable is free but attendees must fill out a special registration form. The intended audience for this event includes internationally focused agriculturalists and funders with global ties and an interest in networking around the issue of soil health. To learn more, click here.

Also, the MSHS program has been finished and is now available for download on the MSHS homepage.

If you need to reserve a room at Arrowwood, contact the front desk at 320.762.1124 and be sure to request the MSHS rate.

Another Keep Cattle in Minnesota Webinar on March 6

"Strategies for Implementing Cover Crops," a SFA Keep Cattle in Minnesota webinar led by Livestock & Grazing Specialist Kent Solberg, is scheduled for 1-2:30 p.m. March 6. The webinar is free and open to all.

Cover crops are a powerful tool farmers can use to improve soil health. Cover crops can play a key role in implementing soil health principles. Specifically, cover crops aid in keeping soil covered, adding diversity to the rotation, keep a living root in the soil, and serve as the “bridge” between cropping systems and integration of livestock.

In the webinar, Kent will review the principles of building soil health, integration of cover crops and real world examples of how adding cover crops to your farm can move you toward productivity and profitability.

This webinar is the second in a series of KCIM webinars SFA has planned. Others are slated for April 3 and Nov. 6; keep watching SFA Connect for details about all upcoming KCIM webinars and programming.

Click here to sign up. For more information, visit our Keep Cattle in Minnesota homepage.

SFA Deep Roots Program 'Nuts and Bolts' Workshop

"Nuts and Bolts," a workshop designed for those with a desire to farm but with little or no experience with common farm tools and equipment, is set for 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m., Sat., March 21 at Paradox Farm, 11643 State Hwy 78, Ashby, Minn. In this workshop, students will gain practical experience with farm tools and materials.
Get prepared for the upcoming season of food production by participating in this Deep Roots Farmer Development Program workshop. You will increase your handiness while developing competence with farm tools and materials. Get the edge for summer farm internships by listing this course on your resume! This is also an appropriate preparatory course for Farm Skills 101.

Small class size guarantees that all students receive ample individual attention. Course instructors are seasoned farmers. Students should have gloves and safety glasses and wear closed-toe shoes and long pants.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

- Common hand tool identification and use on the farm
- Hands-on operation of common tools
- Ergonomics and body mechanics
- Common hardware identification & use: nails, nuts, bolts, staples, screws
- Building materials, such as lumber
- Small carpentry project completed during class

Directions: Paradox Farm is 7 miles north of Ashby; 10 miles south of Battle Lake. Bring a sack lunch. Cost: $99 early bird registration by Feb. 14; $129 thereafter. No walk-in registration.

Questions? Email sue@sfa-mn.org or call 218.747.2202.

**Crow Wing River Basin Forage Council Meeting Feb. 20**

The [Crow Wing River Basin Forage Council](http://www.crowwingforagecouncil.org), an SFA Networking Group, is hosting its annual Winter Workshop, "Energizing Pastures and Forages," from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Feb. 20 at the Assembly Room, Central Lakes College, 1830 Airport Rd, Staples, Minn.

The featured speaker is Dr. Allen Williams, who will give a detailed presentation on “Gaining Vigor” in soils, pastures, genetics and crops.

Following Dr. Williams is local producer Steve Flanagan, whose presentation, "Lessons From the Ground Up," will detail transforming depleted ground into a richer, more viable grazing system.

Also planned are Q&A sessions, a trade show, and more.

Cost is $25. To register, send your name and contact information, along with a check made out to Crow Wing River Basin Forage Council, to Jim Chamberlin, 2331 Dancing Wind Rd SW, Pine River, MN 56474. Or for more information contact Jim at 218.831.0528 or jchamberlin@hugllc.com, or visit the [Forage Council’s homepage](http://www.crowwingforagecouncil.org).

**Small-Scale Sheep Event in Lake Agassiz on Feb. 21**

SFA Lake Agassiz Chapter is co-sponsoring a Small Scale Sustainable Sheep Farming Event from 10:45 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Feb. 21 at Northern Woolen Mills, 803 11th St. NW, Fosston, Minn. Learn about raising sheep as part of a holistically managed farm, for meat, milk and fiber as well as connect with established shepherds and those wanting to keep sheep, local markets and...
people interested in sheep products.

Informational booths providing education, information on programs through NRCS and services for shepherds are planned, as well as a tour of Northern Woolen Mills, and lunch will be catered by Quinn Olson, Manager Fosston Farmers Market

Cost is $15 for the public and $10 for SFA members. Under 16 free. For more information or to register by Feb. 14, contact Alethea Kenney at 218.657.2502 or allie@reedbird.com, or visit www.reedbird.com.

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, who we are so lucky to say again will photograph this year’s Annual Conference, visit her website.

Asking for your Input on Ugly Fruits and Veggies

Many growers aren’t able to sell significant volumes of fruits and vegetables that are too big, small or misshapen to meet today’s tough purchasing standards. A new initiative by JoAnne Berkenkamp of Tomorrow’s Table and Terry Nennich of U. of M. Extension is seeking growers’ input about your cosmetically imperfect “seconds” and your interest in generating a return for them through a potential market with colleges and universities.

If you grow produce in Minnesota for the fresh market and not everything you grow is perfect, the initiative would like to hear from you! Please click this link to take our survey (which should take about 20 minutes to complete). The first 40 growers who respond are eligible for a $40 stipend.

This project is supported by the USDA Specialty Crop Program through the MN Dept of Agriculture. For more information, contact JoAnne at 612.354.2235 or JoAnne@tomorrowstable.com.
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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