Ableman Knocks Speech Out of the Park, and Other Highlights from the 2013 Annual Conference

By Jason Walker • Communications Coordinator

It's an inspirational sight to see SFA's Farmer-to-Farmer Network™ in action, and the Annual Conference is the best example. Our 2013 version, held Feb. 15-16 at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum in Chaska, was our first two-day conference and attracted a great range of attendees: young and expert, urban and rural, male and female.

The diversity in the crowd bodes well for sustainable agriculture in Minnesota and the Upper Midwest – to sustain our movement we need both expert and aspiring farmers of all stripes.

Some highlights from the conference:

- **Michael Ableman's** speech dazzled. Ableman, who has farmed sustainably for decades and has been on the vanguard of the urban farming movement, called for every urban center to
develop city-run sustainable farming systems. He advocated for neighborhood gardening, an end to America's obsession with grassy lawns, and for us all to use our brief time on Earth to create and inspire change. If listening to his keynote speech didn't get you fired up about sustainable agriculture, nothing will.

The Leaders Breakfast on Saturday was an intimate way to catch up on the inner workings of SFA. Executive Director John Mesko gave a "State of SFA" address, and our award winners were honored: Distinguished Service awards went to Linda Meschke (at left nominated by Kelly Firkins) and Sue Wika (Kent Solberg). The Farmer Emeritus Award was given to Joel Rosen (Mary Hanks).

The sessions were an educational trove, at least according to most attendees I talked with. The main thing I kept hearing was that the sessions were the best they've ever been, and it's nice to know our two-day format didn't water down the content.

Dr. Mark Seeley gave a fascinating presentation on climate change, noting that somewhere in Minnesota has been in drought every year since 2005 and that we've been encountering tropical dew points in recent summers. We are lucky to have scholars like him to educate the masses on climate change in Minnesota.

We're also going through all the feedback forms we received – thanks to those who turned them in. Putting on a conference is something SFA is known for, but we can't do it successfully year after year without our members and their feedback.

Thanks to all who attended, and thanks for your support of SFA.

Executive Director's Note

By John Mesko

Each year, during, and in the 1-2 weeks following our SFA Conference, I get energized and motivated about our work. This year is no different. If you were there, you felt the energy and excitement about sustainable agriculture and the future of our work. It's really motivating to be around so many people who are focused on Farmer-to-Farmer Networking and impacting our food system for the good.

Each year, I'm also making notes for next year. We are always looking for ways to improve upon our work and strengthen our Farmer-to-Farmer Network™. If you were at our conference, and you have suggestions for next year, please send them to me at: john@sfa-mn.org. Our 2014 Annual Conference is already set for 2/8/2014, so mark your calendars!

If you were unable to attend this year's conference, presentations will be available on the...
Attend Special Farm Transitions Workshop with John Baker

SFA and Renewing the Countryside are excited to present a special four-day Farm Succession and Estate Planning workshop with internationally known farm transition expert John Baker. The workshop, to be held March 4-5 and Marcy 25-26 at Villa Maria in Frontenac, will include expert guidance and legal assistance to help ensure that you have a sound plan in place for the eventual transfer of your farm to your family or non-family successor.

How important is the farm transition issue? Read this article from Minnesota Public Radio that quotes SFA Executive Director John Mesko.

Thanks to the generous support of USDA-Risk Management Agency, we are able to Baker to Minnesota to conduct this multi-day workshop. Baker's 30 years of experience working with families on planning for the future has made him the "go-to" guy on farm transitions. Baker has conducted workshops in Iowa, Alaska, Nebraska and North Dakota, and is now coming to Minnesota. Don't miss this rare opportunity to get extensive assistance and hands-on help with developing your farm succession plan.

The two-part, four-day workshop will assist farm families to plan for the eventual transition of their farm. The workshops are planned as a multi-generational event for current farm owners and for their heirs or non-family members to whom they hope to transfer the farm. We are capping attendance at 60 people to ensure that everyone has access to individualized assistance.

Cost is $95 for first person and $75 for each additional person; all meals are included in the price. Accommodations are available at the Villa Maria or in nearby Lake City or Red Wing. To register, click here. For more information, email info@rtcinfo.org or call 612.910.7601.

Chapter Update: Central

By Robert Bauer • Chapter Coordinator

Central Chapter members are busy with plans for the coming year. A meeting to plan the Festival of Farms is planned for March 11 at the Farm Market Cafe in Onamia and all are invited. A grant from the Central Regional Partnerships and help from the Staples Area Farmers Market Association will support a workshop on Organic Management for vegetable and fruit growers on March 19 at the Community Center in Aldrich.

Direct marketing is a big interest of our members and the keynote panel at our annual meeting on "Making the Farmer-Chef Connection" with Chef Matthew Jensen, author Beth Dooley, and producers Mike Stine and Arlene Jones brought a lot of energy to the group.

To this end, several SFA members will participate in a Farm to Cafeteria Workshop in Staples on Wed., April 3. For interested parties, the event includes a local-foods dinner and time to network with representatives of hospitals, schools, restaurants, and colleges. Registration is available through University of Minnesota Extension at this link.

Annual Conference Photo Feature

Minnesota Dairy Initiative
For information about MDI and its ongoing projects, contact Kent Solberg at mdi@sfa-mn.org.

Meat Processing
The Northeast Regional Correctional Facility has a meat processing plan that is inspected for part of the year. See a slideshow of the facility here.

Planning For Your Farm's Future
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The Farm Transitions project is in conjunction with Renewing the Countryside.

Public Policy
Are you interested in state and federal ag policy? Offer your feedback by taking our Public Policy Survey. It will take about 10 minutes, and will really help us determine the interest of our members and your thoughts about the future of SFA.
Photographer Crystal Liepa documented our SFA Annual Conference again in 2013 at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum. Watch for a new photo each issue of SFA Connect and learn more about Crystal [at her website](#).

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**Take a Photo, Win a Free SFA T-Shirt Winner: Dayle Reinke**

Who doesn't want to win a free T-shirt, let alone a cool SFA one? Here's your chance. Send communications coordinator Jason Walker your photos, and the best each month, chosen by a panel of distinguished judges, gets an SFA T-shirt. Send your photos to [jason@sfa-mn.org](mailto:jason@sfa-mn.org), and we'll include the winner in SFA Connect. Check out our [Facebook page](#) for all the photo submissions.

**January's winner: Dayle Reinke of Wadena**
Great Lakes Indigenous Farming Conference Set

The White Earth Land Recovery Project is hosting the 10th annual Great Lakes Indigenous Farming Conference March 4-7 at Maplelag Resort in White Earth, Minn. The main conference sessions are held March 5-6 and include sessions led by several SFA members:

- Season Extension and Solar Heated High Tunnel with Dallas Flynn
- Winter Greenhouse Construction and Use with Sue Wika
- Goat Milk Production with Sue Wika

There will be multiple other sessions, a seed swap, meals galore, keynote speakers Sammie Ardito Rivera and Scott Shoemaker, and a welcome from Winona LaDuke. Register at 218.375.4466 or for more information email weseedlibrary@gmail.com.

Farmers Market Educational Event Planned in Princeton

Attend a Farmers Market Educational session from 6:30 to 9 p.m. March 5 at East Central Regional Library, 100 4th Ave S, Princeton. The event is designed to showcase services and assistance available to Farmers Market organizations and producers to promote locally grown foods and the creation of jobs and small business.

This event is free and open to the public. Information: 320.679.4065.

Workshop: Producing and Selling Eggs and Poultry

Have a few extra eggs you want to sell? Interested in expanding your flock and marketing your eggs locally? Not sure what the rules, requirements and expectations are for producing and marketing eggs? Attend a workshop from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. March 16 at the University Center Rochester, 2129 Heinz Center.

This workshop, from the University of Minnesota Extension and the Minnesota Dept. of Ag, will
cover the basics of egg food safety requirements, including everything from protecting your flock from unwanted diseases to a hands-on opportunity to learn candling and grading, as well as practical application of the labeling requirements.

Cost is $20/person and $10 for student or business partner; pre-registration is highly recommended as seating will be limited. Information/registration: Wayne Martin at 612.625.6224 or marti067@umn.edu.

Farm to Cafeteria Workshop This Thursday in Bloomington

Join us for a chance to build and strengthen Farm to School throughout the greater Twin Cities metro area – Renewing the Countryside and the University of Minnesota Extension are hosting a Farm to Cafeteria workshop from 2 to 7:15 p.m. Feb. 28 at Christ the King Lutheran Church, 8600 Fremont Ave S, Bloomington. The workshop is designed to help break down barriers to Farm to School for school food service professionals, school administrators, institutional buyers/wholesalers, farmers, growers, Statewide Health Improvement Program coordinators, and other community partners. New informational and hands-on, practical training sessions include:

- Post-harvest handling and on-farm food safety with Michelle Schermann - UMN Extension
- Navigating Farm to School contracts between growers and school food service with Greg Reynolds, Riverbend Farm and Barb Mechura, Hopkins Schools
- Overview of the new National School Lunch Program regulations, the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, and the Simply Good Eating Program with Kathryn Grafsgaard of South Washington County Schools, Gail Anderson of MDE and Cindy Gerdes of UMN Extension
- Networking with institutional food buyers (schools, hospitals, etc) facilitated by Brett Olson, Renewing the Countryside
- A chance to share your thoughts on Farm to School challenges and opportunities at one of the very first Minnesota Healthy Food Charter events!
- A Farm to School meal featuring real school recipes with locally sourced ingredients served by Hopkins School District Catering
- Resource tables with information about Food Safety, School Gardens, NEW USDA/MDA Farm to School Grants, Farm to School Documentary, Food and Nutrition Education, Salad Bars, Local Food Marketing, the Minnesota Institute of Sustainable Agriculture, Minnesota Grown, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy and more!

Cost: $20, meal included. Click here to register or email Molly Turnquist at molly@rtcinfo.org for more information.

Standing Out: Harnessing Social Media for Your Farm

Increasingly, farm marketing involves use of social media tools that reach customers in a faster, more effective way than traditional strategies like brochures and email. But for those who aren’t well versed in these technologies, it can be challenging to harness them effectively. In this presentation, SFA members and beginning farmers Karla Pankow and Elizabeth Millard describe how they used social media to build up a customer base and sell out their first-year and second-year CSA for their farm, Bossy Acres. They share insights on how farmers can develop a "story" for their farms, get press, reach more customers through Facebook and Twitter, and integrate social media into other marketing efforts.

If you attended their session at the SFA Annual Conference in Chaska, this is an advanced opportunity to build on the things Pankow and Millard presented there. The workshop is from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. March 9 at Gardens of Eagan's Organic Field School, 5680 290th St W, Northfield. Cost is $25 and includes lunch, refreshments and materials. RSVP to bossy-acres@hotmail.com by March 4.

Plan a Successful Farm Business at Hands-on Workshop
Specialty crop growers and small farm operators can take part in an intensive, one day business plan writing workshop from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. March 9 at Ridgewater College in Hutchinson. Heading into a farm venture without a business plan is like setting off on a trip without a map. Having a business plan can help you make sound decisions, and if you veer off course, it can help you get back on track.

Ridgewater College Farm Business Management Instructors Steve Zenk, Mike Mastey, and several others will teach the hands-on workshop. By the end of the day, you can expect to have a full business plan in a form that is ready to be implemented on your farm. Spouses or farm partners are strongly encouraged to attend together.

Cost is $50, and additional people from the same farm operation pay only $25 each. The fee includes noon lunch, breaks, materials and 1/2 credit at Ridgewater College. Information: Steve Zenk at 320.523.5468.

Valley Natural Foods of Burnsville Community Food Day

The public is invited to Valley Natural Foods' Community Food Day: An event designed to aid discovering, understanding and participating in our local food system, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. March 2 at Nicollet Junior High, 400 East 134th Street, Burnsville.

Sessions include a facilitated conversation of food system discovery and a community open house, and a broad range of food system exhibitors will be present to provide the community with information on locally grown produce and products along with gardening resources.

Information: Gary Johnson, Community Relations Developer, community@valleynaturalfoods.com.

Want to Farm? Attend LSP’s Farm Beginnings Workshops

Are you trying to figure out if a farming career is right for you? The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings program is offering 2 Farm Dreams Workshops: 1-5 p.m. March 17 at the Eastside Co-op in Northeast Minneapolis (2551 Central Ave NE) and 1-5 p.m. April 14 at the Good Earth Food Co-op in St. Cloud (2010 Veterans Dr). This workshop is designed to help people who are seeking practical, common sense information on whether farming is the next step for them. In this workshop you will assess your resources, skills and motivations for farming; plan your educational path toward farming; learn about regional training opportunities and support networks, and prioritize your next steps.

Fee is $20 for Land Stewardship Project (LSP) members and $40 for non-members. Pre-registration is required. For more details or to register click here.

Good Food Summit Set in Duluth

The Lake Superior Good Food Network is pleased to invite you to join our upcoming Good Food Transforming Our Region Summit March 8-9. The Summit will feature and raise the visibility of regional leaders, innovative organizations and businesses that together with food citizens are transforming the health and economic sustainability of our region.

Events will take place from 1-4 p.m. March 8 and 9 a.m.-5 p.m. March 9 in the Ballroom at the University of Minnesota Duluth. For more information, a conference schedule and registration details, click here or email summit@isfusa.org.

Mill City Market Looking for Pork Vendor

Mill City Farmers Market is looking for a pork farmer vendor. Interested SFA farmers should apply at the Mill City Farmers Market website. The market, held in Minneapolis between the Guthrie Theater and Mill City Museum on Saturdays from spring to fall already has grass-fed beef and bison vendors, as well as a host of other farm and food vendors.

Application/information here.
The Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota 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 of Minnesota (SFA)
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