Conference programs are now online and ready for download for both the SFA Annual Conference and SFA Midwest Soil Health Summit, so get a head start before the conferences and see how each day is shaping up.

- Remember that the SFA Annual Conference does not provide food with registration; instead, you'll enjoy a lengthy break, eat at St. Ben's terrific cafeteria, walk to one of the local-foods restaurants in St. Joe, or bring a sack lunch.

- HOWEVER, there are informational sessions held during the lunch hour, and a limited number of lunches will be provided to those who RSVP. Learn how to RSVP on our AC schedule page.

- Registration for the SFA Annual Conference begins at 7:15 a.m. on Feb. 13.
Space is still available for our Leaders Breakfast, set for 7:30 a.m. on Feb. 13 at the Annual Conference. You MUST purchase a $15 ticket for this breakfast and may do so online or at the door. Only those possessing paper tickets will be admitted; online ticket-buyers will find a ticket in their name tag at St. Ben’s. Don't get hangry (hungry-angry) that morning – join us for breakfast!

Are you sensing a food theme here? Lakewinds Co-op is providing a bevy of cheese for our Annual Conference end-of-day social hour, and Kelsey Wulf has planned a great lineup of local drinks to sample from, including Goat Ridge Brewing and Third Street Brewhouse. To continue the fun after the social hour ends, St. Joseph has several fine bars and restaurants across the street from the campus.

Switching to the Midwest Soil Health Summit, we are expecting a sellout, and though we will not turn anyone away from the programming there may be latecomers who do not get lunch due to catering constraints. If you are still thinking about registering for the MSHS, do so NOW by noon on Feb. 16 and guarantee your lunch ticket.

MSHS registration opens at 9:30 a.m. Feb. 17 and programming begins at 1 p.m. with "Soil Science Basics" with John Mesko. This class is geared toward nonfarmers and soil beginners and is completely free and open to all – veteran farmers, soil educators and experienced soil students will likely not benefit from this class. If you are registered for the MSHS but do not wish to attend "Soil Science Basics," note that the first session, "Intro to Soil Biology" with Dr. Michael Lehman, is at 2:30 p.m.

Remember that both conference facilities have food and beverages available all day. The St. Ben’s snack bar is right next to the registration desk at the Annual Conference; its superb cafeteria is right in the Gorecki Center; and McGlynn’s Sport Café, located in the Haehn Campus Center, opens at 11 a.m. Arrowwood’s Lake Cafe is on the main floor of the resort across from hotel registration, and the upstairs Rafters Lounge is open in the evenings for drinks and food.

Finally, rooms are still available at Arrowwood for the conference rate of $105. Call the resort at 1.866.386.5263 to reserve.

If you have any other questions or wish to register, please refer to the SFA Annual Conference or Midwest Soil Health Summit homepages. We will see you soon!

Executive Director's Note

In just a few days, SFA members and others will be gathering for the SFA Annual Conference in St. Joseph. If you’ve not registered, you really should. Every year, we’ve seen increasing numbers, and this year is no different. To make sure you get a program and a seat, go ahead and pre-register now before Thursday.

One of the topics we’ll be discussing at the conference is Farm Incubation. Even in what most people would consider the most likely scenario for success, the situation where an existing successful farm business is being passed on to someone in the family who has grown up on the farm, the incubation period is quite long.

When I was in college, I met dozens of farm kids who were planning to “take over the family farm” upon graduation. These were mostly large, corn-soybean farms in the heart of the corn belt. Today, nearly 30 years after graduating, only a few of my friends have actually completed the transition. To be sure, this extended transition is due in part to the exiting generation and their timetable, but its also due to the fact that every year, farming is different; success this year doesn’t mean success next year, or the year after. Family farm transitions are just as difficult as new startups. Farm incubation, regardless of the circumstances surrounding the transition, is a critical component of launching that farm under new ownership and management.
SFA is working to develop successful farm incubation models, particularly for those prospective farmers who are not in line to inherit a farm business from within the family. Are you interested in learning or sharing your story? Come on Saturday and join us!

**Just Three Spots Remain for Spring 2016 Farm Skills 101**

Are you ready to learn Reality Farming?

Only three 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.

Spring 2016 classes will be held on April 15-16, 22-23 and 29-30 at farms near Alexandria, Minn.

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.**

- **Introduction to Homestead Dairy Class Added for May 1, 2016:** Anyone wondering about adding a dairy component to their farm enterprise or who would like more information to guide their current dairy practices should consider this class. Registration options include two milking labs. Look for registration details in an upcoming SFA Connect or coming soon on our Deep Roots homepage.

- **Deep Winter Greenhouse Short Course Sold Out:** Also, the Feb. 21 Deep Roots short course on deep winter production has sold out; future classes will be announced in SFA Connect.

**Forage Council Winter Workshop: 'Bull Session'**

The Crow Wing River Basin Forage Council, a Networking Group of SFA, is hosting its annual winter workshop, “Bull Session; Bulls, Cows, Calves,” from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Feb. 11 at Central Lakes College, 1830 Airport Rd, Staples.

The featured speaker is Dr. Kris Ringwall, a North Dakota State Extension Livestock Specialist who works in genetics and reproductive physiology for beef, sheep and goats. At the workshop, Dr. Ringwall will discuss selecting the right sires for your operation, ideal cow size, early vs. late calving season, and much more.

Cost is $25 and includes lunch; registration begins at 8:30 a.m. at CLC or online at [www.sfa-mn.org/forage-council](http://www.sfa-mn.org/forage-council).

**Lake Agassiz Seed Swap is March 13 in Itasca State Park**

SFA Lake Agassiz Chapter is hosting a seed swap from 3-5 p.m. Sun., March 13, at HI Mississippi Headwaters Hostel, 27910 Forest Lane, Itasca State Park. Bring extra seeds you have been saving from your crops or leftover purchased seeds, all clearly labeled. Please, no treated or GMO seeds. Cuttings, scion wood, etc. are welcome.

No seeds? No sweat! Come anyway and learn about how to start saving seeds.

This event is free and open to the public, although a $5 state park entrance fee may apply. Coffee and refreshments will be served. Info: [lakeagassiz@sfa-mn.org](mailto:lakeagassiz@sfa-mn.org).
Directions to the Itasca Youth Hostel: From the east entrance, take a right on Main Park Dr. & drive 3 1/2 miles. From the north entrance, take a left on Main Park Dr. & drive about 1/2 mile. Follow the Hostel blue triangular signs.

**Check This Out**

- The Gazette of Redwood Falls, Minn., wrote a recent feature on SFA member Dan Tiffany and recapping the field day we held at his farm last fall. [Read it here.](#)

- The soil health message is resonating with the national media – The New York Times wrote a lengthy piece this week, "Cover Crops, a Farming Revolution With Deep Roots in the Past." [Read it here.](#)

- Washington State University researchers "have concluded that feeding a growing global population with sustainability goals in mind is possible." [Read it here.](#)

**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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