Get A T-shirt When You Volunteer at the Annual Conference

By Jason Walker • Communications Coordinator

A sure cure for the winter blues, the SFA Annual Conference is less than one month away. On Feb. 15-16, our SFA members and supporters will gather at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum to learn, listen, eat, drink and chat. The Annual Conference is the ultimate expression of the value of our Farmer-to-Farmer Network, and we're getting pretty darned excited about it.

What could make it better, you ask? A nifty T-shirt, that's what. Check out our new duds:

These longsleeve beauties are printed locally and Made in the USA, and the best part is that they're free – if you sign up to volunteer at the Annual Conference by contacting Volunteer Coordinator Karen Couné and letting her know how you would like to participate. She can be reached at karen.coune@gmail.com or 612.202.7201. All volunteers should wear their T-shirt at the Conference as a beacon to attendees who may have questions.

Can't volunteer? A few T-shirts will be available for purchase at the conference.

In addition, Mary Jane Miller has unveiled the details on sessions at her Culinary Workshop, to be held from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Feb. 16. The schedule:
Go Nuts – The Rutters of Badgersett Farms join Mary Jane to cook with and taste the nuts they grow. See examples of each kind of nut and do unique-to-nuts work: toasting and skinning hazelnuts and chestnut prep, as well as take a look at the best nutcrackers and techniques for cooking with chestnuts.

In a Pickle – Adrienne Logsdon of Kiss My Cabbage will pickle up some kimchee and take a look at some of the kinds of fermented pickles and a few different ways to enjoy them.

Full of Beans – Paula Foreman from Encore Farms talks about growing heirloom beans in Minnesota and will talk about how local chefs are using her beans, then she and Mary Jane will cook up a few ideas to make at home.

If it Quacks Like a Duck – Mary Jane will talk with Larry Marquette of Chatham Preservation Farm about his free-range Muscovy ducks. Together they’ll sear a breast and confit a leg then venture into homemade charcuterie by making duck prosciutto, a country style pate, and sausage to stuff into a casing or shape into simple patties.

Grown your own Cornmeal – Mary Reynolds of Riverbend Organic Farm will discuss the organic corn she and her husband, Greg, raise on their farm. The resulting cornmeal is beloved of restaurant chefs, and she and Mary Jane will talk about how they grow and process the com, then cook up a creamy polenta that is great soft and cheesy, but also superb chilled then sliced and fried up crisp. We’ll also try a breakfast porridge and taste the corniest tasting cornbread hoecake ever.

Minnesota Mushrooms – Kevin Doyle, owner of Forest Mushrooms, will be on hand to show off his mycological beauties. Mary Jane will have fun cooking with the pristine oyster and shiitake mushrooms he cultivates on his farm and also discuss the foraged wild mushrooms he sells.

The entire schedule is being updated as we move forward. The sessions are going to be updated at this link on our homepage, and registration is currently under way here. Please check back often as I will be updating the schedule with session information and presenter biographies as they roll in.

Executive Director's Note

By John Mesko

As you can see, the 2013 SFA Annual Conference is shaping up to be another great connection opportunity for everyone interested in sustainable agriculture. As the Upper Midwest's Farmer-to-Farmer Network™, SFA is pleased to provide this important opportunity.

I'd like to personally invite you to this year's event. In addition to the very popular culinary workshop highlighted above, we have a host of valuable information to share with our network, and we are eager to see that network grow!

One of the most popular sessions will no doubt be "Who's Next? Farm Succession and Transfer". This session will be held at 1:15 on Saturday, 2/16. If you are a farmer planning to exit the business in the foreseeable future, or are someone looking for an opportunity to start farming, this session will be one you want to seriously consider. We had an overflow of participants in a similar workshop at the MN Organic Conference last weekend, and we anticipate continued interest at our conference in February.

Again, our conference is intended to stress the Farmer-to-Farmer Network aspect of our work, and to that end, our sessions tend to include plenty of Q & A time, and lots of interaction among participants. One session, that is bound to generate LOTS of interaction will be the "Farmers Facing Challenges and Change" at 3PM on Saturday. This session is where we will announce our plans for the Adjust 2015 Project. Farmers who have experienced difficulties and challenges in launching their farm business and are interested in participating in our survey should come and learn more about the project and how they can be involved in this very important work.

I’m looking forward to this conference, and I hope to see you there!
Chapter Update: Southeast

By Edgar Hansgen • Southeast Chapter Coordinator

We are working on scheduling some meetings. We want an annual meeting on Feb. 6 at St. Charles with Fred Kirschenmann from Iowa State and someone on tillage from there also.

We do have a meeting on Feb 19 scheduled in Altura with Bob Yanda on plant nutrition. It is to help us work with Mother Nature better. We may also have one in March depending on the weather. We are not dead and not consider becoming so.

Lake Superior Chapter Annual Meeting Slated for Jan. 26

The LS-SFA 2013 Annual Meeting is Sat., Jan. 26 at the Peace Church (11th Ave E & 11th St, Duluth). Chapter members (and members of the public) are welcome to attend. Our focus is seed saving and seed banks. It's also a great time to renew your membership in LS-SFA. The schedule includes:

- Noon-1:30 pm – Workshop and panel: seed saving and seed banks. Featuring LS-SFA members Deb Shubat, Charlie Danielson, and David Abasz.
- 1:30-2:30 p.m. – Midday meal of soup, bread and dessert
- 2:30-3:30 p.m – Business meeting and board elections
- 3:30-4:30 p.m. - Keynote address by Seed Savers Exchange

Suggested donation: $12 meeting, $5 meal. To RSVP, contact chapter coordinator Jean Sramek at info@lakesuperiorfarming.org.

Central Chapter Annual Meeting Set for Feb. 2

SFA's Central Chapter is hosting its Annual Meeting starting at 9:30 a.m. Sat., Feb. 2, at Legacy Hall at M-State Fergus Falls. Central Chapter's group of healthy foods farmers, gardeners, educators, and promoters works on many levels to provide good food to our region.

The keynote address is "Making the Farmer-Chef Connection" with Lucia Watson and Matt Annand. Other breakout sessions include:

- Lucia Watson, "The Future of Local Foods"
- Jim Oberton, "Honey Production in Minnesota"
- John Mesko, "SFA History and Future of "
- Kathy Connell, "Seed Saving"
- Barbara Allen & Arlene Jones, "Local Food Distribution Models"
- Jim Chamberlin & Robert Bauer, "Managing Water as an Asset"
- Sustainable Food Production Students, "Bringing New Farmers Into the Fold"

The public is welcome. Cost is $15 and includes lunch. Register by calling the M State Service Center at 218.736.1700 by Jan. 30.

Nominations Sought for SFA Distinguished Service Awards

SFA award season has begun: We're seeking nominations for the Farmer Emeritus and Distinguished Service awards, to be presented at the Leaders Breakfast during the 2013 SFA Annual Conference on Feb. 16 in Chaska.
Criteria are pretty simple: Farmer Emeritus nominees should have a distinguished career history of farming in Minnesota; Distinguished Service nominees must have a demonstrable strong connection to local food or sustainable agriculture.

If you know someone who fits either or both of these descriptions, please consider nominating them. Our SFA awards are special honors that reward the backbone members of our sustainable agriculture community, and we value a wide range of nominees. Last year's winners were Kent and Linda Solberg (Farmer Emeritus) and DeEtta Bilek and Mary Ellen Frame (Distinguished Service).

Please download the nomination form here, complete and send to: SFA, c/o Mary Hanks, 10500 295th Street W, Northfield, MN 55057, or email your nomination to Mary.Hanks@state.mn.us.

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**Annual Conference Photo Feature**

Thanks to Heavy Table photographer Crystal Liepa, we have a stockpile of awesome photos from our 2012 Annual Conference, held Feb 18 at the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph. Look for a new photo in each SFA Connect, and read Heavy Table writer Tricia Cornell's story about the conference here.

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**Take a Photo, Win a Free SFA T-Shirt? You Might.**

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, and we'll include the winner in SFA Connect. Check out our Facebook page for all the photo submissions.

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**Rental Land Posting: Watertown Area**

Land for Rent: 60 tillable, certifiable organic acres available in the Watertown area. New drain tile, cover crop of red clover and manure application last fall. Short- or long-term lease. Contact JackWMcCann@gmail.com, 612-217-1770, for more information.
FACT's Fund-a-Farmer Project Call for Applications

Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT) is now accepting grant applications for its Fund-a-Farmer Project, which provides small grants to qualifying humane farmers who need assistance in improving the welfare of their farm animals. Grants of up to $1,500 will be awarded for projects that (1) help farms transition to pasture-based systems, (2) improve the marketing of their humane products, or (3) more generally enrich the conditions in which farm animals are raised. Working, independent family farmers that raise pigs, broiler chickens, laying hens, dairy cows and/or beef cattle are eligible to apply for any of the three types of grants. Projects involving goats and sheep are only eligible for marketing grants.

Applications must be submitted online or postmarked by May 1, 2013, for awards made in August 2013. View guidelines and apply online at www.fundafarmer.org. Contact Lisa at grants@foodanimalconcerns.org or 773-525-4952 with questions.

Save-the-Date: 2013 Third Crop Producer Meetings

Join Rural Advantage and University of Minnesota Extension for the 9th annual Third Crop Producer Meetings at the Knights of Columbus, 920 East 10th St, Fairmont. The schedule (each is from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.):

- Feb. 11 – Soil Health
- Feb. 25 – Alternative Energy
- March 11 – Local Foods and Third Crops
- March 18 – Marketing and Economics of Local Foods and Third Crops

Presentation topics will cover it all from cover crops to geothermal heating and cooling to food handling, harvest, and storage to financial management tips. There will be something for everyone. For information, contact Jill Sackett at 507-238-5449 or sacke032@umn.edu.

Extension Workshops for Small Farm and Acreage Owners

Do you have the dream of owning acreage in the country? Do you have an existing acreage that is in need of a plan and strategies for the best possible results? The Living on the Land Workshop Series, offered by University of Minnesota Extension, will equip you with the education and resources to be successful.

The eight-week course is designed to arm landowners with agricultural information to enable them to be good stewards of their land. The course will begin with goal-setting and individual property inventory, then address soil, plant, water and animal basics.

The series will be taught by Extension educators and natural resource professionals at two locations: in Gaylord at the Sibley County Service Center on Monday evenings from Feb. 4 to March 25; and in Northfield at the Northfield Community Resource Center on Thursday evenings from March 7 to April 25. Both workshops will run from 6 to 9 p.m. with light meals provided at each session.

For more information about the series in Gaylord, please contact Julie Sievert at 507-237-4100 or schu0944@umn.edu; or Christian Lilienthal at 507-934-0360 or lili0004@umn.edu. For questions regarding the Northfield location, please contact Mike Donnelly at 507-332-6109 or donne099@umn.edu.

FDA Asks for Comment on Science-Based Standards Rule

On January 4, 2013, FDA released for public comment its proposed rule to establish science-based standards for growing, harvesting, packing and holding produce on domestic and foreign farms. The proposed rule is one of five proposed rulemakings that would lay the cornerstone of the prevention-based, modern food safety system we need.
Immigrant and Minority Farmers Conference Planned

Minority and immigrant farmers are invited to participate in the 8th Annual Immigrant and Minority Farmers Conference. Hosted by the Association for the Advancement of Hmong Women in Minnesota, Minnesota Food Association, USDA-Farm Service Agency and USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Services, the two-day conference provides education and resources to small farm operators and fosters relationships between farmers and community partners. The conference will be held Feb. 2-3 at the North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters Event Hall, 710 Olive Street, St. Paul.

Registration is available by calling MFA at 651-433-3676, or Panukoochi Yang at the Association for the Advancement of Hmong Women in Minnesota at 952-388-3275. The conference is free to farmers. Language interpretation is available. The cost for other interested parties is $50 per day.

Permaculture Research Institute Hosting Event Series

The Permaculture Research Institute is hosting several workshops in the next few weeks that may be beneficial to SFA members:

- **Growing Food 101** - 6-8 p.m. Jan. 22. $20 members/$25 general public.
- **Site Assessment for Beginners** - 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Jan. 26. $45 members/$50 general public.
- **Computer Aided Site Assessment** - 2-5 p.m. Jan. 26. $45 members/$50 general public.
- **Preparing and Planning Crops** - 6-8 p.m. Jan. 29. $20 members/$25 general public.
- **Choosing and Starting Seeds** - 6-8 p.m. Feb. 5. $20 members/$25 general public.

For questions or more information, email Emily Duma at emily@pricoldclimate.org.

Minnesota Farmers Eligible for GAP Certification Cost Share

Food safety has become a front-page issue all across the country, resulting in increased requirements being placed on farmers by many wholesale buyers such as distributors, restaurants, schools and grocers. To help Minnesota farmers become Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certified, the MDA is using AGRI funding to reimburse Minnesota farmers for 75 percent of the cost of receiving GAP certification up to a maximum payment of $2,500. Cost share payments are available for farms who incurred GAP certification expenses between Jan. 1, 2012 and May 15, 2013.

Applications and details are available online or by calling Cassie Boadway at 651.201.6134.

Workshops Set on Wholesale Success with Produce

Join Atina Diffley, former co-owner of Gardens of Eagan and now official Wholesale Success trainer, for a daylong workshop devoted to learning about wholesale marketing and post-harvest handling of fruits and vegetables: cleaning, cooling, packing, storage, transport, sanitation, and more.

Diffley draws on her decades of experience in large-scale vegetable production and marketing to provide operators of produce farms of any size with useful, practical, profit-making guidance on how to achieve the highest quality produce for sale. The workshop is set for 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Jan. 26 at Community Resource Bank, Northfield

Farmer-Buyer Networking will be part of the day’s events, coordinated by Renewing the Countryside. Farmers and potential wholesale buyers will have an opportunity to meet, learn about each other's interests in locally grown produce, and exchange contact information. These
sessions will take place during the last hour and a half at each location. Farmers and buyers who want to attend just the networking session may attend that session only for free. Workshop co-sponsors and collaborators include the SFA Crow River Chapter.

Cost is $15 and refreshments and lunch are provided. Register at www.misa.umn.edu, 800-909-6472, or email misamail@umn.edu.

For more information, contact Kathy Zeman, (507) 664-9446 or kzeman@mfma.org.

Farmers, Ag Businesses Target of New Grant Program

Minnesota agricultural producers and processors can now apply for grants to implement value added projects to their operations. A total of $700,000 in funding was made available through the Agricultural Growth, Research and Innovation Program (AGRI), established by the legislature to advance Minnesota’s agricultural and renewable energy industries. Specifically, these grants are intended to:

- initiate or expand livestock product processing;
- create feasibility, business, marketing and succession plans for existing and new businesses;
- purchase equipment to initiate, upgrade, or modernize value added businesses;
- increase on-farm food safety, such as implementation of a food safety plan
- increase farmers’ processing and aggregating capacity to enter farm-to-school and other markets

Proposals that have a meat processing, farm-to-school (or other institution) component, or are addressing Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) or similar type of food safety plan will receive priority, but all value-added proposals are encouraged to apply. Small to medium sized operations will also receive special consideration.

Apply here. For more information, contact David Weinand, MDA grants administrator, at 651-201-6646 or david.weinand@state.mn.us.

Back to Basics Sustainable Living Fair Set for Jan. 26

Happy Dancing Turtle will be hosting its annual Back to Basics sustainable living event from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Jan. 26, 2013, at Pine River-Backus school in Pine River. This year’s theme will be "Steps Toward Sustainability: The Solution Is YOU!" Chuck Marohn, President of the Community Growth Institute, will be the keynote speaker.

Happy Dancing Turtle is looking for sponsors, exciting new ideas and knowledgeable presenters for workshops as well as quality vendors and exhibitors, providing quality products and information to help participants lead more sustainable lives.

Join the workshop for a fun filled day of learning, networking, and inspiration. For more details please visit the Happy Dancing Turtle website.

SFA Connect is your bi-weekly link to the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota

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)
Box 192, Princeton, MN 55371
763-260-0209 • info@sfa-mn.org