Annual Conference Member Discount Ends Jan. 31;
Don't Forget to Sign Up Your Budding Farmer for Just $10

SFA's Annual Conference, "Loving the Land: 25 Years of Sustainability," is set for Feb. 14 in the Gorecki Center at the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph. Registration opens at 7:15 a.m., programming begins at 8:30 a.m., and sessions run until 4:20 when the after-party with local beer and cheese begins.

**SFA members: Register through Jan. 31** at the rate of $55 for members (registration is $65 for nonmembers). Current SFA members should have received a separate email with discount registration instructions. Only SFA members will receive this separate email – if you recently joined online, you should have received the email at that time.

If you need a reminder of the discount code or to check your membership status, email jason@sfa-mn.org.

More Annual Conference Tidbits:

- **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. We already have a good number of kids registered – this is a very exciting addition to the festivities and for just $10 per child it’s a great deal! [Click here to register.](#)

- **You can still sign up to volunteer** – all 2015 volunteers receive a newly designed SFA t-shirt. Contact SFA Volunteer Coordinator Gretchen Boyum at 218.535.1567 or boyumfarms@gmail.com.

- **There is still time for Vendor/Exhibitor Registration** as well. [Visit our Annual Conference homepage](#) to download the proper form.

- **Join us during lunch for a viewing and discussion of "Grow,"** a short film that captures the stories of young farmers around Fergus Falls and shares their visions for the local food movement and the future of Minnesota’s rural communities. The session will be hosted by SFA Sustaining Member Katy Olson, who is featured in the film. Katy is a farmer, beginning farmer mentor, activist, and owner of Body Mind Center with a focus on holistic health.

- **The Seed Swap is returning!** Bring your seeds and swap away.
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 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.

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.

SFA EVENTS


July 11, 2015:
Lo! I’ve been picking through Fred Kirschenmann’s *Cultivating and Ecological Conscience* (2010, The University Press of Kentucky), a collection of many of his best writings on ecology, sustainable agriculture and life. Many of these writings are from the 1990s, the decade when SFA and several other organizations around the country were forming a new approach to farming and rural life. In these articles we see the foundations behind the development of some of our current practices which are becoming mainstream. In a 1997 article “The Role of Independent Beef Producers in Rural Development” (P. 63-65), Kirschenmann tackles the issue of the size of cattle farms, and at what size they become “real” farms (I found it interestingly similar to issues we face today, actually). He describes his own North Dakota farm and how it benefitted from integrating livestock grazing on to row crop land, and how a vision for a renewed focus on local food, local meat and the ensuing economic development would be a boon for rural areas. His closing is relevant even today, “Wealth generated by beef enterprises that stays in local communities instead of being drained off to distant investors is real rural development” (p.65). Today, more than ever, we need to apply Kirschenmann’s wisdom. In the years since that article was written, a whole new science of agroecology, promoting the soil-building practices which basically add cover crops to the mix has developed, and with it, great promise for the future.

What I found most interesting is it has taken almost 20 years for Kirschenmann’s vision of livestock and row crops in harmony restoring rural communities to become widely understood, first of all, and now has the potential to be widely adopted. Sometimes good ideas simmer a while before going viral. If that’s the case with ideas in agriculture, then we should be thinking 20 years or more into the future. The great ideas for where we want our brand of agriculture to go need to be put forth now. We need to be ahead of the curve, far enough in front so the river of conventional thinking doesn’t sweep us away.

I’ll be sharing some thoughts on the future of sustainable agriculture at the 2015 SFA Annual Conference, Feb. 14, 2015 in St. Joseph. I hope you can make it. In addition, through our breakout sessions, you’ll be able to take in a modern view of Fred Kirschenmann’s vision for integrated, sustainable farms. You’ll be able to see where we’ve been and where we are going.

MSHS: Added Programming, Discussion Tables, & More

The schedule is set for this year’s expanded Midwest Soil Health Summit, and we’ve added additional programming on the conference’s first day to buttress a second day that’s chock-full of expert soil health programming from the likes of Gabe Brown, Dr. Allen Williams, and more.

New learning and networking opportunities for the Summit’s first day include a session led by SFA Executive Director John Mesko on Soil Health Basics as well as an International Roundtable. Other programming the first day includes our popular social time with buffet and cash bar, the return of “Gab With Gabe,” a film screening, and more.

Our impromptu discussion tables were such a hit last year, they’re returning as well. Look for discussion tables throughout the day Feb. 19 featuring Summit experts, or suggest one you’d like to see – if you’re a dairy producer, maybe you want to network with other dairy producers; if you’re from North Dakota, maybe you would like to chat with others in your region. Discussion tables are the perfect format. Make a suggestion to jerry@sfa-mn.org or talk to an SFA staffer at the Summit and we’ll do our best to make it work.

View the schedule and register here – SFA members save $50!

Lake Agassiz 'Good Food' Event is Jan. 27 in Bemidji
SFA Lake Agassiz chapter is hosting the third event in its recurring “Good Food From Good Farms” series, this time from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Tues., Jan. 27, at Rail River Folk School, 303 Railroad St SW, Bemidji.

Again, local chef Sue Doeden will prepare menu items using local food, and there will be a round-robin of four lightning workshops: Lake Agassiz Chapter/Chicken Festival information; Cheese Press for Your Kitchen; Headwaters Food Sovereignty Council and Sustainable Tuesdays; and High Tunnels.

This will be the Lake Agassiz Chapter’s Annual Membership Meeting as well, so you can help to elect their new board of directors (you don't have to be a member to attend).

This event is free and open to the public, but registration is required. Click here to register. For more information, call Marie Petry at 218.995.2002.

Thank you to the NW Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships for providing funding to support this event.

Lake Superior Chapter Annual Meeting is Jan. 31

Lake Superior Chapter is hosting its annual meeting, “Bringing Your Farm to Market,” from noon to 3 p.m. Sat., Jan. 31, at Peace Church, 1111 N 11th Ave, Duluth.

Join us for our yearly report of what great things are happening in our regions food system. Enjoy locally farmed soup and fresh bread and network with other local growers about seeds, season extension or just your crazy new idea for next season.

Also, learn about opportunities to sell your farm or garden products to local institutions, schools and restaurants. Board President Charlie Danielson will be announcing the USDA Healthy Northland Farm to School grant that was awarded and will help our region’s children connect with the food they eat.

Speaking will be Max Kane from FarmMatch.com on what his company is working on to help connect farmers in our region with a virtual food hub.

Stick around for our business meeting, vote in and welcome our new board members and Chapter Coordinator. See you there!

Cost is $10 or $5 for SFA members; registration is not required and the public is welcome. If you wish to eat lunch, an additional $5 is required. Children under 10 get in free. For more information, contact Charlie@upnorthfarm.com or 218.464.2272.

U. of M. Vegetable Study Seeks Central MN Participants

University of Minnesota Extension is focusing on the economics of small vegetable farms in Central Minnesota and is looking for study participants. During February and March a team of extension educators will collect the farm finances of produce growers and market gardeners to both assist growers with business planning and measure the economic impact of small farms and the food hub SPROUT in the region.

The project promises to shed light on the economic health of small-scale vegetable operations which have blossomed with the increased consumer interest in local foods. A great deal is known about the finances and profitability of traditional commodities in Minnesota, which allows for rich benchmarking and comparisons. This is not the case with small vegetable operations.

University of Minnesota Extension is seeking 10 farms which grown 0-3 acres of vegetables and 10 farms which grow between 4-12 acres of vegetables to participate. Farm operators should have detailed and reliable records they are willing to share (all records will remain confidential).

In return, participating farms will receive benchmarks to assist their farm business and a $75 gift card. Contact Ryan Pesch, Extension Educator, at pesch@umn.edu or 218-770-4398 for

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.

Deep Roots Farmer Development Program is a much-needed beginning-farmer curriculum that emphasizes all three tenets of sustainability, plus provides extensive skills training.

New Crops Project SFA's New Crops Project aims to expand the availability of local foods in Minnesota and help farmers expand their markets.

Minnesota Dairy Initiative For information about MDI and its ongoing projects, email SFA Livestock and Grazing Coordinator Kent Solberg.
This project is a partnership of the University of Minnesota Extension with SPROUT food hub, SFA Central Chapter, Central Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, and the Minnesota Farmers Market Association.

Crow River Annual Meeting is Jan. 31

The SFA Crow River Chapter is hosting its Annual Meeting, “Local Foods – The Journey Continues: Expanding the Breadth and Depth of Eating Local,” from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sat., Jan. 31, at Buffalo United Methodist Church, 609 8th Street NW, Buffalo.

Building on our last Annual Meeting, Crow River Chapter will bring together area farmers, food advocates, chefs, and others to discuss the potential for moving local foods further into the mainstream, revisiting and exploring topics including:

- Reforming and/or reinstating culinary education in public schools
- Working with area news media to promote the message of local foods
- Encouraging restaurants and groceries to purchase more local foods, regardless of the extra price they may have to charge to consumers
- Creating a support network for growers who would like to produce and process specialty crops. This network could include: processing facilities; community kitchens; markets; etc.
- Organizing the ‘alphabet soup’ of sustainable farm and food organizations around a common message
- And the Sneak Preview of the new CROW RIVER LOCAL KETCHUP!

And we’re pleased to announce that two of our featured speakers will be Dara Moskowitz Grumdahl, Twin Cities’ premier expert on food, and a critic at Minneapolis/St.Paul Magazine; and Jenny Breen, a preeminent Minnesota chef and local foods advocate.

Enjoy a potluck with Mary Jane’s fabulous Mac & Cheese – bring a dish to share.

Cost is just $10. [Click here to register.]

Crow Wing River Basin Forage Council Meeting is Feb. 20

The new Crow Wing River Basin Forage Council, which has recently joined SFA as its inaugural Networking Group, is hosting its winter meeting.

The Forage Council gathering will be Friday, Feb. 20, 2015, at Central Lakes College in Staples and will feature Dr. Allen Williams as the keynote speaker. Bluffton, Minn., beef producer Steve Flanagan will also be speaking on how he uses rotation grazing and cover crops on his farm.

Look for more information in future editions of SFA Connect.

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.
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, 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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