**Enjoy This Special Edition of SFA Connect**

To better spread the word about the Annual Conference, as well as our upcoming intensive Farm Transitions workshop with guru John Baker, we've added an extra edition of SFA Connect to the schedule. Enjoy!
Profile: Annual Conference Keynote Michael Ableman

By Jason Walker • Communications Coordinator

We're excited to have farmer, author and photographer Michael Ableman as the keynote speaker for the SFA Annual Conference on Saturday, Feb. 16, at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum in Chaska. A recognized practitioner of sustainable agriculture and proponent of regional food systems, Ableman will be of interest to everyone in the room.

He has written several books and numerous essays and articles, and lectures extensively on food, culture, and sustainability worldwide. Michael is currently farming at the Foxglove Farm on Salt Spring Island in British Columbia.

Ableman told The Vancouver Sun that his farm is "a compilation of everything I've seen and been inspired by around the world. One of my great missions is to show that farming is an art and a craft, not drudgery. It is a very honorable profession."

According to his website, Ableman has started food gardens at the Santa Barbara AIDS Hospice, an 11-acre farm at a California boarding school, and a market garden at the Jordan Downs housing project in Los Angeles. His work as an educator and consultant has helped to inspire dozens of projects and initiatives throughout North America and the Caribbean.


Also, for a more intimate experience, Ableman will be hosting breakout sessions on both Friday and Saturday at the conference. From 3-4:30 p.m. Friday, he'll host "Rural and Urban Ag Connecting Through the Food System;" and from 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Saturday he'll host a forum on the role of a Twin Cities Ag Alliance.

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.
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.

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.

Executive Director’s Note

By John Mesko

Are you planning on attending the SFA Conference Feb 15-16, 2013 at the MN Landscape Arboretum in Chaska?

If you are still undecided, let me ask a few other questions:

1) Are you a beginning farmer interested in learning from other farmers?
2) Are you an experienced farmer with a desire to connect with others in the sustainable agriculture community?
3) Are you a member of the sustainable agriculture support community, who needs to connect with on-the-ground farmers, who are really doing it?
4) Do you like to learn, and have fun?
5) Do you want to be a part of shaping the future of food, farming and communities in Minnesota?

If you have answered “yes” to any of these questions, you really don’t want to miss this conference. SFA conferences are where the Midwest’s largest sustainable agriculture community meets and grows and makes a difference.

Don’t miss out. We’ll see you in Chaska!

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 …"

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.
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.

Cannon River Annual Meeting Planned for Feb. 9

Join the Cannon River SFA Chapter at its annual meeting from 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Feb. 9 at UCC Church, 300 Union St, Northfield. Just Food Co-op will cater a completely local food meal (as well as refreshments during the breaks). Paid members eat free – just pay your dues that day & you're in. All others will pay $11.

JFC will provide both an omnivore and a vegan option for lunch. Since the meal is catered, you must RSVP to kzeman@kmwb.net by Feb. 4.

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.

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.
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.

Coming in next issue: January's winner. We've had some great submissions!

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.

MDA Seeks Farms, Markets for Minnesota Grown Directory

Minnesota farmers and farmers markets that sell products directly to consumers are invited to purchase a listing in the new Minnesota Grown Directory. The cost for a listing in the 2013 directory is $40 and interested farmers and markets must sign up by Feb. 15. Over 940 farms and farmers markets were included in last year’s edition of the directory.

More information at www.minnesotagrown.com, or by contacting Jessica Miles at 651.201.6170 or Jessica.miles@state.mn.us.

Soils 101 Course Offered in Lafayette

The University of Minnesota Extension in Sibley and Nicollet counties are collaborating to offer a Soils 101 course Feb. 22 at the Community Center in Lafayette. This course is an intensive, seven-hour class that provides a hands-on teaching environment for producers who want to learn more about the soils they farm. The objective of the class is to understand and manage
soil quality, which will enhance yield production, decrease fertilizer inputs, and decrease tillage operations. The class is from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; cost is $75 per person.

Information/registration [here](#), by email at [schu0944@umn.edu](mailto:schu0944@umn.edu) or call 507-237-4100.

### Annual Southern Minnesota Organic Crops Day Planned

The University of Minnesota Extension is inviting those involved with organic crop production to the 8th Annual Southern Minnesota Organic Crops Day on Feb. 12 at the Steele County Community Center in Owatonna. New in 2013, the Organic Crops Day will include a Q&A Panel Discussion featuring some of Minnesota’s most distinguished in organic crop farming. Registration starts at 2:30 p.m., with the program beginning at 3 p.m. Cost is $15 and includes an all-organic supper will be served.

Information/registration [here](#) or call 507.444.7685.

### Workshop: Managing the Uncertainty of Specialty Crops

As with other businesses, fruit and vegetable growers must deal with changing consumer demands and expectations, but fruit and vegetable producers must also work around unpredictable weather conditions, changing insect pests and increased disease pressure. An upcoming workshop on the topic, “Business Feasibility: Managing the Uncertainty of Specialty Crops,” will be led by Thaddeus McCamant, Specialty Crops Instructor with Central Lakes College. Growers will learn key decision making components to start or expand their business. There are three workshops planned around the state: Feb. 9 in Brainerd, Feb. 16 in Anoka, and Feb. 23 in Mankato.

Download the registration form [here](#) or call 763.434.0400.

### LSP Hosting Annual Farm Breakfast at Capitol

You are Invited to the Land Stewardship Project’s 8th Annual Family Farm Breakfast & Day at the Capitol. The event is set for Feb. 26 at Christ Lutheran Church across from the Capitol in St. Paul. Breakfast is from 7 to 9 a.m. with lobbying at the Capitol afterward. Cost is $10 at the door. Info [here](#) or contact Jeanette Torkelson at jtorkelson@landstewardshipproject.org or 612.722.6377.

The breakfast features milk and cream from Cedar Summit Farm of New Prague and Organic Valley Midwest; bacon and sausage from Pastures A Plenty of Kerkhoven, Farm on Wheels of Kenyon, Hidden Stream Farm of Elgin, Kalliioe Farm of Montevideo, and many others.

### 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](http://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.

For more information, visit the FDA homepage.

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 two workshops in the near future that may be beneficial to SFA members:

- **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.
- **Intro to Permaculture** - 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Feb. 9. $50.

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.

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.

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.