Upcoming Festival of Farms to Showcase SFA Member Farms Around Minnesota

Our showcase on-farm event, Festival of Farms is set for July 13 at locations around Minnesota. Each year, SFA chapters who choose to host a Festival of Farms invite the public onto certain farms for demonstrations, farm tours, food, fellowship and networking.

Here’s a roundup of the Festival of Farms plans for several SFA chapters. For more information, contact your chapter coordinator or visit our Festival of Farms homepage.

Also, don’t forget that Minnesota Garlic Festival is not far away – the event is set for Aug. 10 at the McLeod County Fairgrounds in Hutchinson.

Central

Attend SFA Central Chapter’s 4th Annual Festival of Farms at the Farm Market Café in Onamia. Adult admission is $25 per person, kids ages 3-12 are $5, and kids 2 and under are free. SFA Members receive $5 off adult admission. Admission covers breakfast, lunch, two farm tours, kids activities, presentations, and live music.

“The Festival of Farms is a family-friendly event with local Chapters of SFA hosting field days and providing farmer-to-farmer and farmer-to-consumer networking opportunities throughout Minnesota” said Jim Chamberlin, SFA Board Member from Deerwood, Minn. “On July 13th we will showcase family farms that use environmentally and economically sound agricultural practices.”

Register here or by calling SFA Coordinator Robert Bauer at 218-296-6732. Registration is also available at the event.

Agenda includes:

- 8:30 a.m. Registration; Beverages, Muffins
9 a.m. Presentation: “Farm Market Café Business Model”
10 a.m. Tour: Farm Market Café High Tunnel
11 a.m. Tour: Eller Family Farm/Dutch Fury Farm
1 p.m. Lunch: Box-Picnic, Farm Market Cafe; Entertainment by Alan Lee & Friends (country /w a little bit of blues)
2 p.m. Tour: Dutch Fury Farm/Eller Family Farm
4 p.m. Presentation: “Soil Health” by Shannon Carpenter, Mille Lacs NRCS
5 p.m. Dinner: at the Café (on your own)

“The Farm Market Café’s goal is to serve products from local farmers to our customers,” said the cafe’s Barb Eller. "The Café serves locally grown products that are produced without pesticides: fruits and vegetables, grass-fed meats, wild rice, maple syrup, honey, as well as fresh roasted coffee and fresh baked bread. We believe that everyone deserves to eat well. Our guests on July 13th will experience the best food that local farmers have to offer."

The event is made possible by the support of the Farm Market Café and festival sponsors: Minnesota Grown Program, Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA), North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NC-SARE), Northwoods Forestry Co-Op of Aitkin, Mille Lacs Soil and Water Conservation District, Mille Lacs USDA-NRCS, Central Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships, Mille Lacs Lake Watershed Management Organization, and Agnew Hardware Hank of Onamia.

Crow River Chapter

Join us for tours of four farms in the Montrose and Watertown area, with an end-of-the-day social gathering at a fifth farm, all happening on July 13. The entire event is free to the public, with donations to SFA's Crow River Chapter accepted at each location. You can see a diverse array of sustainable farming techniques including vegetables, sheep, turkeys, chickens, cattle, and more. There are three tour times at three of the farms, so you can pick and choose which ones you want to visit at 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. True Cost Farm in Montrose (below) will only tour at 11 a.m., so if you want to see them, go there first. Participating farms include:

TRUE COST FARM, located at 4432 County Road 12 S., Montrose, 55363, will do one tour only, at 11 a.m. Owners Jack and Betsy McCann raise a variety of rare livestock breeds, selected for their deep flavors and excellent health. Grown in natural living conditions, the animals are treated with care and respect, and are regularly rotated to fresh fields of pasture, ensuring their access to the most nutritious organic feed possible. Pork, beef, chicken and eggs are available monthly through their delivered seasonal packages.

The second farm near Montrose, JPR ACRES, located at 10389 Baker Avenue SW, 55363, is a family owned & operated farm built around producing food that is nutrient-rich and tastes great. Emphasizing an environment-friendly approach, the Skelton family uses a rotational grazing system to improve soil life and animal health. All of the farm’s livestock and poultry – turkey, duck, chicken, lamb – are traditional heritage breeds chosen for their ability to thrive on pasture as well for their reputation for outstanding flavor.

SWEET BEET FARM, located at 11549 Highway 25 SW in Watertown, 55388, is a fourth-generation family farm founded in 1883. Young farmers Nick and Amelia Neaton and their family are in their fifth year supplying quality, 100-percent naturally grown produce, eggs and lamb to the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Also near Watertown, PRAIRIE SUN FARM (10330 Highway 25 SW, Watertown, 55388) owners Julie and Dan Geiger have been transitioning their 40-acre farm from conventional corn and soybeans into a diversified, productive landscape. In 2010 they received organic certification and started a 25-member Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operation. They believe that this constantly evolving farm continues to teach them how to live with nature and grow great vegetables.
At the end of the tours, all Festival of Farms attendees are invited to a “post-festival social” at NATURE’S NEST FARM BED & BREAKFAST, 5412 Brighton Avenue SE, Montrose, MN 55363. Festivities begin at 4 p.m., and will feature light refreshments using products from the participating farms. Feel free to bring a dish or beverages to share.

For further information, call Nick Neaton at 952.807.8324.

Lake Agassiz

Lake Agassiz Chapter will be hosting a Farmer-to-Farmer Networking event July 13 at Marie and Bob Petry’s GrassStain Farm in Wolverton.

The event begins at 10:30 a.m. at the Petry farm, 1762 160th St, Wolverton. There will be a farm tour showcasing GrassStain Farm’s grazing paddocks, eggmobile, pastured pen poultry, small jersey herd, new cover crop project and new high tunnel.

A potluck lunch will follow at noon – please bring a dish to share. After lunch, there will be a chicken processing demonstration and then plenty of time to network and enjoy the farm.

Using online maps or GPS directions to find the Petry farm is not recommended, as they may mislead you. Directions from Wolverton: Drive 4.5 miles east on Hwy 30. Turn right on 170th Ave (Hwy 3). South for 1 mile. Turn left (east) on 160th St and go 1/2 mile; GrassStain Farm is the second house on the left. Directions from Sabin: Take Hwy 11 south about 20 miles to the second stop sign (road turns into Hwy 3 at county line). At that second stop sign, go one more mile south, then turn left on 160th St. Go east for 1/2 mile, and GrassStain Farm is the second house on the left.

For more information or to RSVP, contact Lake Agassiz Chapter coordinator Marie Petry at 218.995.2002 or grass@wtc-mail.net.

Executive Director’s Note

By John Mesko

Summer is here. We know that because SFA’s Festival of Farms is taking place later this month. You can read all about it in this newsletter. What a great opportunity to enjoy a weekend away.

July 1 marks the start of a new fiscal year for SFA. Thank you to everyone who donated to our year-end fundraising drive. As our network continues to expand and strengthen, our impact expands right along with it. In the next edition of SFA Connect, you’ll hear all about the expansion of SFA’s network and what we are doing to make farmer-to-farmer networking available and effective across a broad range of farms, interests and communities.

At SFA, we continue to pursue our mission of the development and enhancement of sustainable farming systems through innovation, demonstration, education, and farmer-to-farmer networking. You can participate in that mission by joining SFA today. As a member-based network, our goals include helping you succeed in your farming, informing you about ways you can affect real change in agriculture. And it’s working! Join SFA today. Join the Network!

Lake Superior Chapter Hosting Farm to Cafeteria Workshop

Join farmers and food service professionals at a Farm to Cafeteria Forum July 11-12 as we learn from each other how our respective systems are complementary for mutual economic and health benefits. By establishing a network of farmers and food service professionals, we will
work to increase the health and food value chains of our region.

The event is 12:30-4:30 p.m. July 11 and 9 a.m.-4:30 July 12 at Lincoln Park Middle School in Duluth. Cost is just $20 for both days or $15 for Friday only. Note: Friday's event includes a bus ride to Food Farm in Wrenshall, but the day's events will begin and end at Lincoln Park Middle School. Click here to register or for more information; you may pay online or at the door but please register online to ensure a proper headcount.

We'll also discuss food quality and safety from field to cafeteria: production, harvesting, and post-harvest handling.

The event is co-sponsored by the Lake Superior Chapter of the Sustainable Farming Association alongside Renewing the Countryside, MISA, Minnesota Dept. of Health, Duluth Community Garden Program, SHIP, and the Lake Superior Good Food Network.

Note: The Lake Superior Chapter is hosting this Farm to Cafeteria Forum as a special project for its Festival of Farms.

Chapter Update: Central

By Robert Bauer, Chapter Coordinator

Congratulations to Lisa Baker of Cold Spring, Minn. – the Central Chapter Board selected Lisa as the incoming Chapter Coordinator. Lisa brings eight years of experience as a strategic integrated marketer to her role with SFA. Lisa is one of the most enthusiastic and energetic people I know – in addition to her other work, Lisa is owner of Bakers’ Acres, LLC, a 15-acre sustainable farm selling eggs and produce to CSA customers and restaurants.

I will be stepping down from my duties in July to pursue a graduate degree in Agronomy – studying the science of pasture grasses. I hope to use this new experience to benefit farmers through research and extension. SFA members are truly leading the way in sustainable agriculture and I am glad to have been involved in the lives and work of many SFA members through my role as Chapter Coordinator.

Lisa and I will work together over the next month to transition duties and provide support to SFA members in the central region. Going forward, I set up new contact information for the Chapter Coordinator – phone number 218-296-6732 and email sfaofcentralminnesota@gmail.com. The contacts are currently forwarded to me and will transition to Lisa in July. Please be in touch with any questions about SFA activities including Festival of Farms, New Crops Project Demonstration Plot, and the 2014 Annual Meeting.

Cover Crop Fact Sheet Now Available for Download

With our unpredictable weather, soil health is more important than ever for sustainable farmers. At SFA, we are ramping up our commitment to soil health education – it's the bedrock of not only sustainable food production but also environmental stewardship.

Alongside our ongoing GrazeFest series of pasture-based events, SFA's Livestock and Grazing Coordinator Kent Solberg has prepared a Cover Crop Fact Sheet, a one-page guide to the basic tenets of cover cropping, the four main groups of cover crop varieties, and additional resources graziers and farmers should utilize.

The downloadable fact sheet is available on our GrazeFest page. Please feel free to spread the Fact Sheet with friends and neighbors.

SFA GrazeFest Series Pasture Walk Event Set for Aug. 10
Attention dairy and beef producers: A pasture walk and farm tour will be held at 9:30 a.m. Sat., Aug. 10, 2013, at Joe Gans' Wellspring Farms north of Aitkin as part of SFA's GrazeFest series of grass-based livestock events. We will be looking at Joe's energized fence and watering systems, grazing management, and soil health in relation to pasture management.

Gans is currently custom-grazing 25 angus cow/calf pairs at this farm under a planned grazing program. They are installing a "frost-free nose pump" this summer - there aren't many of these in Minnesota. The pumps are developed in Alberta, Canada, and designed to deliver water to cattle year-around without electricity.

"An opportunity to see one of these frost-free pumps is worth the trip," SFA Livestock and Grazing Specialist Kent Solberg said.

**Annual Conference Photo Feature**

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.

**SFA Photo Contest Winner: Dale and Sharon Nummi**
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.

What kind of photos are we seeking? Simply anything from your farm, family, garden or kitchen – anything that's related somehow to sustainable agriculture that you'd like to share with SFA members.

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.

June's winner: Dale and Sharon Nummi of South Range, Wis., sent this shot of daughter Katie and grandson Liam saying hello to their sow, "Bandit."

Take Part in Quick Survey for SFA; T-shirt Up for Grabs

Thanks to all who participated in the recent SFA Stress Survey, a simple, two-question survey. We will use this data to assess the need for stress-related programming at future SFA Farmer-to-Farmer Network events.

We're collecting data with another super-quick survey on the new topic of SFA members' use of mobile technology and how it pertains to SFA. The survey is now available at this link, so please take a few minutes to respond. A random survey-taker will receive an SFA T-shirt. Thanks!

LSP Farm Beginnings Accepting 2013-14 Applications

The Land Stewardship Project (LSP) is now accepting applications for its 2013-2014 Farm Beginnings course. Farm Beginnings class sessions will begin this fall and LSP is providing participants two options for getting involved in one of the most successful beginning farmer training initiatives in the country. Classes will be offered in the Minnesota communities of Winona and Saint Cloud.

The application deadline for the 2013-2014 Farm Beginnings course is Aug. 1. For application materials or for more information, see www.farmbeginnings.org or contact Karen Benson at 507-523-3366; lpsse@landstewardshipproject.org.

In 2013, LSP's Farm Beginnings program is marking its 16th year of providing firsthand training in low-cost, sustainable methods of farming. The course is tailor-made for people of all ages just getting started in farming, as well as established farmers looking to make changes in their operations. Farm Beginnings participants learn goal setting, financial planning, enterprise planning, marketing and innovative production techniques.
New 'Job Wire' Connects Farmers With Veteran Job-Seekers

Introducing the Growing Veterans’ Job Wire, a new resource for you! Growing Veterans has created a new tool for sustainable farmers to increase their labor pool by connecting them with military veterans. With a wave of veterans returning to civilian life, many have already begun farming, others who want to just need a way to get connected - that’s where the Job Wire fits in. Use the Job Wire to gain access to hardworking, team driven, detail oriented, military veterans near you! They served our country overseas, now let them serve back home with you.

How’s it work? Simple, visit www.growingveterans.org/jobwire and submit the details of your opportunity. Growing Veterans will review your submission and post it, utilizing their growing online presence to help get the word out to vets near you. Not a farmer but work in support of sustainable agriculture? Post job opportunities on the Job Wire as well! Growing Veterans exists to empower veterans to help strengthen the sustainable agriculture movement across the land, visit their website to learn more: www.growingveterans.org.

Apply for USDA's Farm Service Agency Microloans

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) developed the Microloan (ML) program to better serve the unique financial operating needs of beginning, niche and the smallest of family farm operations by modifying its Operating Loan (OL) application, eligibility and security requirements. The program will offer more flexible access to credit and will serve as an attractive loan alternative for smaller farming operations like specialty crop producers and operators of community supported agriculture (CSA). These smaller farms, including non-traditional farm operations, often face limited financing options. For more information, click here.

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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