Registration Now Open for SFA's Morris, Wadena Events With Cattle Breeding Expert Gearld Fry

As part of our ongoing Keep Cattle in Minnesota project and GrazeFest series of grass-based livestock events, SFA is proud to announce two farmer networking and educational events with cattle-breeding expert Gearld Fry.

The events will take place Aug. 14 in Morris and Aug. 15 near Wadena. Cost is $40 for SFA members and $50 for nonmembers; registration includes lunch. Current SFA members received a discount code in a members-only email; questions about membership status should be directed to jason@sfa-mn.org.

The Morris day will begin with Gearld leading a beef genetics discussion at the West Central Research and Outreach Center. Next, the group will caravan to the Mark Erickson farm, where Gearld will lead a hands-on session on how to pick breeding stock for grassed beef.

The Wadena day will begin with a discussion with Gearld on dairy genetics for grass-based dairy operations, followed by a caravan to Midd-Minn Dairy, 17784 Country Road 7, Verndale, where Gearld will lead a hands-on session on picking dairy animals for grass-based dairies.

Fry has decades of experience around the world in selecting and breeding cattle that will perform on a 100 percent forage diet. He is the founder of Bovine Engineering & Consulting and the American Herbataurus Society, and his wisdom and understanding in the field is greatly valued.

Space is limited, so register today by Aug. 10 – click here for Morris and click here for Wadena.

For more information, contact Keep Cattle in Minnesota coordinator Wayne Monsen at wmonsen@gmail.com.

Executive Director's Note

Wow, what a great Festival of Farms Weekend! From the reports I've been getting, the 2014 Festival of Farms was the best one yet! Clearly, our brand of agriculture is gaining and holding the attention of many in our communities across the state.

Its no surprise, really. Sustainable agriculture has all the components of a compelling story, and SFA chapters and members are doing a fantastic job of telling that story! I hope you had a chance to take in one or more of the great opportunities we made available over the weekend to see and taste what can happen when people come together to bring about a revolution in agriculture.

It may sound cliche, but I believe we are just getting started. Together, we are making a difference, and the best is yet to come!

I was at Bruce Bacon’s Garden Farme over the weekend. He pulled a very interesting and knowledgable group together to discuss soil, its health and where we need to go to preserved the advances of the last 20 years.
Check This Out

A new SFA Connect feature, “Check This Out” is a section of links to articles and videos chosen by SFA staff that you might enjoy. Consider:

"The Secret to Richer, Carbon-Capturing Soil? Treat Your Microbes Well": From Grist.org, a detailed account of a simple idea that could allow farmers to begin reliably pulling carbon out of the atmosphere and into their soil.

"Map: Here's How Much Each Country Spends on Food": From Vox Magazine, a report with substantial graphics on food spending worldwide.

Voting Update: 2015 Annual Conference Topics

It's time to start thinking about topics for our next SFA Annual Conference, set for Feb. 14, 2015, again at the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph.

We have opened voting for the 2015 Annual Conference session topics – click this link to begin voting. The more votes we tabulate, the more accurately we can tailor the session schedule around your wishes. One thing we hear a lot during an after the Conference is, "there were so many good sessions I had a hard time choosing." If there was a session you missed in 2014 but still are interested in, be sure to input that topic into the website.

We're up to 53 topic ideas and nearly 3,000 votes! The top ten vote-getters as of July 13, 2014:

- Deep Winter Solar Greenhouses
- Salvaging, Repurposing, Upcycling, and Restoring farm equipment and buildings
- Animal Husbandry Large Animals
- Integrating Crops & Livestock
- Cover Crops & Soil Health
- Direct Marketing Meat
- Fencing
- Multi-Species Grazing
- Value-Added Processing
- Root Cellaring
Make your voice heard – submit your own ideas and vote early and often. Also, photo galleries from both the 2014 Annual Conference and inaugural Midwest Soil Health Summit are available on each conference’s homepage. Check them out!

Fall 2014 Farm Skills 101 Spots Still Available

By Jason Walker • SFA Communications & Membership Coordinator

Spots are still available for the Fall 2014 edition of SFA’s Sustainable Food Production Program, Farm Skills 101, which teaches various real-world sustainable farming skills in an on-farm environment. Not only does Farm Skills 101 teach students the hands-on skills needed to become successful sustainable farmers, it’s a great value, too – SFP also boasts a low student-teacher ratio that leads to a fairly intense, in-depth experience.

Farm Skills 101 consists of around 50 hours of on-farm education in three weekends of fun and fulfilling learning. As instructor Dr. Sue Wika is fond of saying, “These are days in the field, not field days.” Students must dress properly: pants, closed-toe shoes, gloves and safety glasses are required. Topics include Fencing Strategies for Forage-based Livestock Systems, Compassionate Animal Husbandry and Handling, Pasture Management and Grazing Basics, and Farm Equipment and Tools.

Tuition for the Fall 2014 semester of Farm Skills 101 is just $1,025, and scholarships are available. For the sheer amount of useful knowledge packed into this course – students learn in practice, not in theory – Farm Skills 101 tuition is a smart investment in the future of anyone considering a sustainable farming career.

Fall 2014 classes are Oct. 3-4, 10-11 and 17-18 at farms near Alexandria, Minn. All students receive a free one-year SFA membership.

To enroll, visit this link and view payment information. To learn more or view a more detailed curriculum, visit the SFP Program homepage or contact Dr. Sue Wika at paradoxhomestead@gmail.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.

Renters Workshop for Women Farmland Owners

More and more women in Minnesota own farmland on their own. Many women wonder whether their tenant is doing all he or she can to improve soil and water quality on the land; many others wonder who will farm their land once their current tenant retires. Renters may have rented the land for decades with no formal contract in place that addresses soil and water quality.

To help women landowners learn more about these topics, the Cannon River Watershed Partnership (CRWP) and Renewing the Countryside invite you to join us for a workshop on Working with Renters from noon-3 p.m. July 16 at Northfield Senior Center, Room 106, 1651 Jefferson Parkway, Northfield, Minn.

The meeting is FREE and the agenda will include:

- Lunch and time for visiting with other women landowners. We’ll provide some sandwiches and drinks, you bring a
dessert, salad or side dish to share.

- A presentation by the Farmers' Legal Action Group, Inc. on laws that govern contracts and leases in Minnesota, including ways to use farm land leases to achieve financial and sustainability goals.
- Discussion time for specific questions you might have on contracts with your renters.

Please RSVP by July 14 to Beth Kallestad at beth@crwp.net or call (507) 786-3913.

2014 Minnesota Organic Dairy Day is Aug. 12

The University of Minnesota West Central Research and Outreach Center's Organic Dairy Day will be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Aug. 12 at the Center, 46352 State Hwy 329, Morris. Educational programs will feature Hue Karreman, Organic Livestock Veterinarian from the Rodale Institute, on organic dairy health and supplementation strategies, outwintering, and grazing summer annuals with Brad Heins, U of MN Organic Dairy Specialist.

Beginning at 1 p.m., there will be field tour stops that will discuss cover crops and summer annuals for grazing, the new organic dairy fodder system, walk-thru fly traps and summer fly control, and animal health.

Field tours will be presented by Hue Karreman, Brad Heins, WCROC, James Paulson, UMN Extension, and Roger Moon, UMN.

The field day will include free lunch, with plenty of time to network with others.

The Organic Dairy Day is free and open to the public. If you plan to attend, or would like more information, contact WCROC at 320-589-1711 or by sending an email to: hein0106@umn.edu.

Workshop: Perennial Plantings to Improve Water Quality

A workshop, “Using Perennial Plantings to Improve Water Quality: A Landowner and Resource manager Workshop,” is set from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. July 16 at the Lakeside Ballroom in Glenwood.

Session topics include:

- Agroforestry Options for Your Farming Operations
- Channel Restoration: Implications for Water Quality
- Determining Perennial Vegetation – Wetland Effects on Water Storage & Pollutant Treatment
- Alternative Cropping Systems
- Integrating Herbaceous and Woody Perennials
- Decision Support Tools for BMPs Identification and Selection
- Channel Restoration Tool
- Hydrologic and Economic Models
- Using Agroforestry and Perennial Systems to Address Emerging Issues
- Field Visits: BMP's and watershed conservation practices

Registration is $20 (includes meal, handouts & transportation). Pre-registration is requested. This workshop is sponsored by an MPCA 319 Grant and the University of Minnesota Extension for landowners and resource managers. To register, go to z.umn.edu/wq.

For questions, contact Dietmy Zamora at 612-626-9272 or zamor015@umn.edu or Gary Wyatt at 507-389-6748 or wyatt@umn.edu.

Farm Beginnings Now Accepting Applications

LSP’s Farm Beginnings works to get more successful farmers on the land and organize for a system in which family farmers can flourish. Do you want to farm and be a part of this change? This training program is for you! The Land Stewardship Project’s Farm Beginnings program is now accepting applications for the 2014-2015 courses. The courses will be held in three locations: Watertown, Minn.; La Crosse, Wis.; and Ashland, Wis.

Farm Beginnings is a training program focused on getting more farmers on the land, farming sustainably. The year-long program is intended for people of all ages interested in starting a farm business as well as established farmers pursuing a new farming enterprise. Farm Beginnings participants learn goal setting, financial planning, enterprise planning, marketing, sustainable farming methods and become connected to a supportive network of farmers and resource personnel.

Farm Beginnings classroom sessions run from late October 2014 to April 2015 (approximately two classes per month) and are led by farmers and other agriculture professionals. The in-class portion of the program is followed by an on-farm educational component that includes farm tours and field days. The course fee is $1,500 for two people on the same farm enterprise (partial scholarships and flexible payment plans available).
The application deadline is Sept. 1, 2014; Early bird applications received by Aug. 1, 2014, save $100.

For more information on LSP’s Farm Beginnings course and to apply, please visit www.farmbeginnings.org or contact LSP’s Karen Benson at 507-523-3366 or lspse@landstewardshipproject.org.
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.

Sustainable Farming Association (SFA)
Box 192, Princeton, MN 55371
763-260-0209 • info@sfa-mn.org