Festival of Farms Celebrates Local Farms, Producers

SFA's Festival of Farms was July 9-12 at locations around the state; below are dispatches from several. Also, check out John Mesko's note below to read about Lake Superior's event.

For more photos, visit our Festival of Farms homepage.

CENTRAL CHAPTER: Thank you to everyone who joined us for our sixth annual Festival of Farms, held July 11 at farms near Alexandria! It was a beautiful day and there was a wealth of knowledge shared on sustainable farming options and practices from the hosting farms: Lakeside Prairie Farm, Berry Ridge Farm, and Fruitful Seasons Dairy. Topics included horsepower benefits, grass-fed dairy, high tunnels, low tunnels, composting, cheese making, drip tape, and so much more. A local-foods dinner was prepared and served by Chef Eugen.
Wittemann from Hans House in Elbow Lake, Minn. Thank you to our local producers who provided the food for this wonderful dinner.

For more photos, visit the [Central Chapter Facebook page](#).

LAKE AGASSIZ CHAPTER: Lake Agassiz Chapter’s event drew about 20-25 attendees to the Pelican Rapids area. The Lida Farm tour featured the deep winter greenhouse (above), packing shed, discussion of marketing and cultivation methods, cover crops, and extensive Q&A. Highlights from Lost Farm included a tour of the garden and pastures, kimchi samples, and conversation about challenges and opportunities for beginning farmers.

For more photos, visit the [Lake Agassiz Chapter Facebook page](#).

GARLIC FIELD DAY: Several of the regions’ garlic growers met July 12 for a tour of Plum Creek Garlic near St. Cloud. A lively and in-depth discussion followed that plumbed the depths of northern garlic growing. All agreed to form a new SFA Networking Group for garlic growers.

For more information about the potential Garlic Networking Group, email [jerry@sfa-mn.org](mailto:jerry@sfa-mn.org).

Aug. 15, 2015: **MINNESOTA GARLIC FESTIVAL**, McLeod County Fairgrounds, Hutchinson, Minn.


WARM-UP TOUR & PASTURE WALK: Held July 9 at Living Song Farm in cooperation with Wright County Extension, about 25 people attended a presentation and pasture walk outside Howard Lake. Farmer Jerry Ford described the history of this fourth-generation farm operation and showed his fencing and paddock setup, and attendees helped move the cattle and set up temporary fencing.

Tom Gervais from NRCS discussed soil health and grazing techniques, then demonstrated water infiltration with his rainfall simulator.

Deep Roots 'Intro to Homestead Dairy' Course Announced

SFA's Deep Roots Farmer Development program is offering a new class, "Introduction to Homestead Dairy." If you're wondering about adding a dairy component to your enterprise or would like more information to guide your current dairy practices, this course might be for you.

The first class, set for 6-9 p.m. July 24, is SOLD OUT, although one spot remains in the milking lab (see below). More classes will be added and announced here and our Deep Roots homepage.

This course introduces students to the topic of homestead dairy farming. Topics of discussion will include:

- Holistic management: How dairy can fit with a homestead life
- Animal selection
- Managing the dairy animal (nutrition, breeding)
- Basic equipment
- Buildings/Structures and logistics
- Milk handling and processing

For those who would like hands-on experience with milking and animal handling, two milking labs will be offered: 7-10 a.m., Saturday, 25 July, and 7-10 a.m., Sunday, 26 July. Each lab is limited to 2 people. Milking lab fee: $60 (Farm Skills 101 graduates $30).

NOTE: One spot still open for the July 26 milking lab. Click here to register.

Also, registration is open for our next short course on “Deep Winter Production of Greens and Livestock Fodder Utilizing Passive Solar Energy,” set for Nov. 7, 2015, at Paradox Farm north of Ashby, Minn. During the class, Paradox Farm owners Sue Wika and Tom Prieve will provide a detailed overview of the construction and operation of their deep-winter greenhouse, which utilizes passive solar energy with underground heat storage. Cost is $100.
Farm Skills 101 graduates may register for $30.  
[Click here to register for "Deep Winter Production."](https://example.com/register)

For more information on either class or the Deep Roots program, contact sue@sfa-mn.org.

Registration Open for 2016 Annual Conference, MSHS

Registration is now open for SFA's 2016 winter conferences – get the following dates on your calendar and register NOW for the best prices.

[Click here to register for the SFA Annual Conference](https://example.com/annual-conference), set for Feb. 13, 2016, at the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph, Minn. Until Nov. 1, early bird registration is just $35 for SFA members and $45 for nonmembers. You may also register children 3-12 for the Budding Farmers program and for the SFA Leaders Breakfast.

[Click here to register for the SFA Midwest Soil Health Summit](https://example.com/midwest-summit), set for Feb. 17-18, 2016, at Arrowwood Resort in Alexandria, Minn. The MSHS features soil health experts and farm leaders for two days of education and farmer networking – all geared at improving the health of your soil. Early Bird pricing is $125 for SFA members and $175 for nonmembers until Nov. 1.

Sponsor & Exhibitor registration is open for both conferences on their respective homepage linked above. And remember that SFA Business/Organization members earn significant discounts on sponsorships and exhibitor space at our conferences. To learn more about SFA Business/Organization memberships, [click here](https://example.com).

Executive Director's Note

Another successful Festival of Farms event was held last weekend. Those of you who participated as hosts, volunteers and attendees have all gotten a feel for the importance of telling the world what we are doing in sustainable agriculture. Thank you to everyone who had a hand in this year's event around the state.

Lisa and I were fortunate enough to attend the Lake Superior Chapter event held at Charlie Danielson’s and Kristin Gibbs’ Up North Farm, just north of Duluth.

This permaculture-style homestead shows off the power of diversity and working with animals to build healthy soil while creating many value-added goods. Since 2007, Charlie and Kristin have raised 12 species of animals for milk, meat, eggs, tillers, fertilizers and friends. They grow a mix of annual and perennial plants along with mushrooms – as well as ideas for those with a new piece of land or looking at ways to creatively grow on others.

The day started with an overview of soil health and permaculture principles, followed by a tour of the farm where those principles were demonstrated in action. Up North Farm uses Hugel beds en masse, and many other techniques which drive diversity of plant and animal species.
In photo (from left): SFA board member Joel Rosen, Up North Farm owners Kristin Gibbs and Charlie Danielson, and John Mesko.

Vote Now for 2016 Annual Conference Session Topics

A founding concept of SFA is that there is wisdom in the community, so YOU will help to determine and lead the sessions, which will include casual but focused networking conversations on topics that you choose. Using an online voting system, SFA members choose session topics; we will analyze the data and create the schedule around your wishes.

To enter your topic ideas and vote using our system, visit our Annual Conference homepage.

New SFA Chapter Forming in Driftless Area

SFA is all about grassroots organizing and responding to the needs of local communities. There's been a groundswell of interest in the Driftless Area of Minnesota, Iowa and Wisconsin in starting a new SFA chapter that focuses on the issues of this unique environmental region and its farmers.

A Chapter Organizing Committee has formed, and they will soon schedule a meeting to work on the process of officially forming a chapter.

If you would like to be involved in this at the ground level, please contact: Devon Ballinger at driftless@sfa-mn.org or 612.716.1706.

Local Brewery Seeking Small Grain Farmers

Able Seedhouse + Brewery, a new malthouse & seedhouse in Minneapolis, is building out its farmer/grower network and looking to establish relationships with small farmers. Able’s goal is to pay farmers a premium for their grain, showcase Minnesota’s natural resources, provide an excellent product, and keep it close to home.

If you’re interested in a conversation regarding a small grains contract (barley, wheat, rye), contact Casey Holley at casey@ablebeer.com or 612.382.1627.
Fosston Fiber Festival Seeking Vendors, Teachers

A new fiber festival is being organized in northwest Minnesota: Fosston Fiber Festival will take place Oct. 2-4, 2015, at Northern Woolen Mills in Fosston, Minn. The Festival will feature well-known instructors, local talent, vendors and more.

Anyone interested in vending or teaching a class related to fiber should visit www.fosstonfiberfestival.com or contact info@fosstonfiberfestival.com to request vendor forms or workshop proposal forms.

If you have a talent related to fiber that you’d be willing to demonstrate, please let us know. Crafts for children are always welcome.

Information: info@fosstonfiberfestival.com.

Check This Out

From the USDA circa 1950, this video, “Grass: The Big Story,” is worth your time. A sample quote, that could be a motto from our Midwest Soil Health Summit: “The beauty of grassland is the way it saves the soil, makes it rich and makes money for you at the same time.”

Annual Conference Photo Feature

Photographer extraordinaire Crystal Liepa once again documented our 2015 Annual Conference, held Feb. 14, 2015, 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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