SFA Makes Impact at 'American Meat' Screening

By Jason Walker • Communications Coordinator

SFA has been helping filmmaker Graham Meriwether promote his documentary, "American Meat," ever since Executive Director John Mesko viewed the film and was impressed by its message. John was also asked to participate in a panel discussion after a screening of the film, and about 75 people were in attendance July 12 at Edina Cinema for the event.

The film was documentary journalism at its best: presenting a balanced, informational report while highlighting the humanity of those interviewed and featured in the film. "American Meat" truly lets viewers draw their own conclusion, although it's hard to imagine anyone walking away without a newfound commitment to sustainable meat production.

During the panel discussion after the film, Mesko encouraged the audience to eat locally, and to have their lives reflect their values. Meriwether recounted John's comments on his "Chew the Issues" blog: "John's pragmatic, passionate tone rang through the theater as the night

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concluded – we can no longer separate what we say from what we do. We must truly make every effort to support the type of agriculture that our community wants. He gave each person three actionable items: 1) To tell a friend about our film. 2) Meet a farmer and buy food directly from a farmer or a locally sourcing business. 3) To cook, or learn to cook and cook a meal."

Also on the panel were Meriwether, chef Lucia Watson of Lucia's Restaurant, Todd Lein of Thousand Hills Cattle Company, and Jan Joannides of Renewing the Countryside. In his final comments, Mesko exhorted the crowd to not only support sustainable agriculture but to live their lives in a way that both helps the planet and our local-food economy through shopping, working and day-to-day habits.

Before the screening, Watson prepared a feast of small bites and wine at her restaurant (right). Watson has been a Minnesota sustainable agriculture pioneer among restaurateurs and has used locally grown products since she opened her restaurant three decades ago.

If you still want to see the film, there are several chances left in Minnesota:

- July 25 – Blue Heron Coffeeshouse/Winona State
- July 27 – Dream Acres Farm, Pizza on the Farm, Wykoff
- July 31 – Traverse des Sioux, St. Peter

Click here to keep up-to-date on the dates/sites and learn how to buy tickets for each screening when they become available.

"American Meat" chronicles America's grassroots revolution in sustainable meat production. The film explains our current industrial meat system and shows the feedlots and confinement operations, not through hidden cameras but through the eyes of the farmers who live and work there. It then shifts to the burgeoning sustainable, local-food movement of farmers, food advocates, chefs and everyday folks who could change everything about the way meat reaches the American table.

Executive Director's Note
I hope you had opportunity to take in SFA's Festival of Farms on July 14! Lisa and I attended the Lake Superior SFA event in Wrenshall, and got a tour of Rick and Karola Dalen's farm. (Karola is a former board member). Nice turnout, good educational value. The group at Dalen's was interested and engaged. I would estimate a total of 100+ people attended the Fundraiser for LSSFA Farm Beginnings program, but I'm sure they would have a more accurate figure. Nice job, Lake Superior!

There are some pictures of that and other FOF events on the SFA Facebook page.

**Chapter Update: Crow River**

By Jerry Ford • Chapter Coordinator

Minnesota Garlic Festival has been our primary summer focus for the past seven years, and it just gets better and better – more on that below. But we also wanted to try something different with Festival of Farms this year, so we took a "salad bar" approach and offered tours at 12 farms from Dayton to Montgomery, and St. Paul to Litchfield, where visitors experienced a wide range of sustainable farming practices, including CSA operations, rotational grazing, multi-species livestock, agri-forestry and permaculture. The tours went very well, despite the hot weather, and we estimate attendance at over 200.

**MN Garlic Festival**, the best stinking festival in the state, is Aug. 11 at the McLeod County Fairgrounds in Hutchinson. Here are some highlights:

- Get first pick of the very best of the 2012 garlic crop from sustainable and organic growers.
- FOOD! The festival’s own cafe, The Great Scape, features a menu of local foods prepared by Minnesota chefs; and a variety of food vendors round out a wide range of culinary choices, with the vast majority coming from local sources.
- No fewer that eight COOKING DEMOS featuring popular Minnesota chefs go on throughout the day. Plus you can pick up your copy of the OFFICIAL GARLIC FESTIVAL COOKBOOK, and have it signed by the author and contributing chefs.
- Our MINNESOTA WINE & CRAFT BEER tasting includes wineries and breweries from across the state.
- Are you a garlic grower or gardener? Enter the GARLIC GROWING CONTEST and win fabulous prizes.
- The festival is a Zero-Waste Event, and through a comprehensive recycling/composting/reusing plan, we're striving to generate no trash on festival day.
- ENTERTAINMENT: From Flamenco dancers to Japanese drums, old-time music to a "village of idiots," there’s something for even the most eclectic taste. An entire schedule of kids activities, kite making and flying, bocce ball, the Eco-Frenzy Upcycle Fashion Show, and the Peculiar Pragmatic Promenade – a parade that every one can participate in – add to the fun.
- Artists can compete in the POSTER DESIGN COMPETITION.
- ASK THE EXPERT is a series of presentations by authorities on a range of topics, including garlic growing, cooking, and health uses; and there will even be a garlic tasting!

So, come on out to farm country and taste the bounty! MN Garlic Festival supports sustainable agriculture education programs for farmers and eaters through the Crow River Chapter, Sustainable Farming Association of MN.

**Annual Conference Photo Feature**

**Meat Processing**

The Northeast Regional Correctional Facility has a meat processing plan that is inspected for part of the year. See a slideshow of the facility here.

**Planning For Your Farm's Future**

Our Northfield, Browerville, and Clearwater workshops are behind us. Next stop: Fergus Falls. Check future editions of SFA Connect for registration details.

The Farm Transitions project is in conjunction with Renewing the Countryside.

**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.

**Advertisement**

Grazing Dairy Herd For Sale: Prairie Wind Dairy in Western North Dakota is dispersing due to farmers’ health issues and lack of feed. There are approx. 40 head of Reg. Brown Swiss, grade Swiss, Holstein, and Holstein/Brown Swiss cows. There are also four close-up heifers. No TMR and limited grain fed. Need a good home. Asking $1,400 for Reg. Swiss and bred heifers, and $1,200 for others. Price may be negotiable if all go. Please call Melissa at 701-938-3106 and leave message. E-mail
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*.

Longtime SFA Member Chris Barnier Shares His Story

Current SFA member and former SFA board member and treasurer Chris Barnier has contributed a lot to our organization over the years. He's also done a fair amount of organic farming, and recently shared his story with a website based in his hometown of Little Falls.

From the article: "It seemed obvious to me that we should minimize or reduce the amount of damage to the natural world. In fact, I felt that it was not just obvious, but morally proper to treat creation with respect. In agriculture, that meant avoiding pesticides and chemical fertilizers, even though none of the agriculture professors seemed to believe that."

[Read Chris's entire essay here](#).

MOSES Seeks Farmer of the Year Nominations

The Midwest Organic & Sustainable Education Service is seeking nominations for its 2013 Organic Farmer of the Year award. Take advantage of this opportunity to properly acknowledge the outstanding efforts of an organic farmer or farm family. The award will be presented at the MOSES Organic Farming Conference, Feb. 21-23, 2013, in La Crosse, Wis.

[Click here](#) for more information. Previous award winners include SFA members Martin and Atina Diffley.

Farms, Volunteers Needed for RTC State Fair Showcase

Renewing the Countryside needs your help spreading the word about Community Supported Agriculture at the Minnesota State Fair. RTC is working to showcase a different CSA farm each day of the fair, giving fairgoers the opportunity to meet their farmers.
If you are looking for a great opportunity to attract new members, get the word out about your farm, and give thousands of Minnesotans the opportunity to learn about our rich local foods landscape, this free opportunity is for you.

We will provide one free ticket to the fair, parking during your time slot, a 3-foot-by-3-foot cocktail table in the Healthy Local Foods Exhibit of the EcoExperience, and a full day (8:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.) to engage fairgoers. Show them what an early fall CSA box from your farm looks like and/or provide samples of your produce.

Also, RTC is seeking volunteers to help greet visitors as they enter the exhibit, prepare food, pass out food samples, staff interactive games/exhibits and more. Volunteers receive one admittance ticket to the State Fair for the day you volunteer, a T-shirt and the opportunity to spread the word about a strong, local food system.

This year, the fair runs from Aug. 23-Sept. 3, and we have plenty of days still open. To sign up or for more information, contact Marjorie Hegstrom at 612-239-5290 or marjorie@rtcinfo.org.

Sustainable Food Program Plans Special Enrollment Event

Anyone with a desire to grow food, learn more about sustainable food systems or start a farm is invited to attend a special enrollment event for the Sustainable Food Production program from 6-8 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 7, at Minnesota State Community and Technical College in Fergus Falls.

At the 1Stop2Farmin’ event, students will be able to apply to M State, learn specific program information, get financial aid information and register for fall semester classes.

In addition, the 31-credit diploma program provides students with an opportunity to form the solid social network that’s critical for success in today’s re-emerging local food systems. A network of regional farmers provides students with meaningful farm experiences, and during the coming year students in the program will be involved in the construction of a low-energy, deep winter greenhouse.

To sign up, contact Kyle Johnston at 218.7361544 or Spartan@minnesota.edu. For questions about the SFP program, email sue.wika@minnesota.edu.

View Hazelnut Research Trials During Walk-n-Talk

Join University of Minnesota researchers, Rural Advantage, and University of Minnesota Extension for an afternoon of hybrid hazelnut discussion. The Hybrid Hazelnut Research Update Walk-n-Talk will be held from 2 to 4 p.m. July 26 at the Rosemount Research and Outreach Center at UMore Park in Rosemount.

University of Minnesota hazelnut researcher Lois Braun will lead the walk-n-talk and cover three research trials currently being conducted at the field site. The main research focuses on vegetative propagation methods that would allow for growers to have more uniform stock to choose from.

Also, join International Ag. Labs, Rural Advantage, and University of Minnesota Extension for a discussion on how to increase the productivity, nutrient density, and taste of your garden fruits and vegetables. The “Tips for Increasing Garden Productivity Walk-n-Talk” is set for 5:30 p.m. Aug. 1 at the Fairmont Community Gardens. Those with plots at the Community Gardens are encouraged to attend, but all are welcome to this free event.

No pre-registration is required. Info: Jill Sackett, 507.238.5449 or sacke032@umn.edu.

CERT Extends Clean Energy Grant Deadline

The Clean Energy Resource Teams want to help communities kickstart a clean energy project, and therefore have extended the application deadline to Aug. 6, 2012. Each of the seven CERT regional teams are looking to seed innovative, community-based clean energy projects. The application process is simple and straightforward, and tools and resources are available to help
Applications must be submitted no later than 4 p.m. Aug. 6. To learn more and apply, visit http://rfp.mncerts.org.

Three-Day Permaculture Event Sept. 14-16 in Geneva

The Center For Deep Ecology is hosting three days of permaculture skill-shares, workshops and networking Sept. 14-16 at Harmony Park, Geneva. Gates open at noon Friday – come early to set up camp and help create the event.

Organizers will provide the infrastructure and logistical planning, but attendees provide the knowledge. All skill levels are encouraged at this gathering, which will offer local permaculturists, farmers, gardeners, activists, and others a chance to spend a weekend sharing skills, making connections, and learning.

Volunteers are needed to facilitate a workshop or share a skill. Some ideas include Sheet Mulching, Animals in Permaculture, Hugelkulture, Composting, Urban Permaculture, Bees and Pollinators, Mushroom Cultivation, Vermiculture (Worms eat my garbage), Seed Saving, Freezing, Canning and Drying, Fruit Tree Grafting, Humanure, Wild Edibles Walk, Grey Water Systems, Rainwater Catchment, Storage and Use, & Seed and Plant Swap.

This is a family-friendly drug- and alcohol-free event. There is onsite tent and RV camping, a Community Kitchen to provide six meals (bring your garden surplus to contribute), and a kids' space with ongoing activities. We request a $20 donation to cover toilets, kitchen staples, and site rental. Information: http://centerfordeepecology.org.

Organic Dairy Day Planned Aug. 7 in Morris

The University of Minnesota West Central Research and Outreach Center's Organic Dairy Day will be from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Aug. 7, in Morris. Educational programs will feature Francis Thicke, Iowa Organic Dairy producer; Fly Management for Organic Dairies by Roger Moon, UMN; and Nutrition for Grazing and Organic Cattle by Dr. Silvia Abel-Caines, Organic Valley.

Beginning at 2 p.m., there will be field tour stops that will focus on supplementation of grazing cows; fly management; group feeding of organic dairy calves; and raising organic dairy steers. Field tours will be presented by Jeff Duchene, NRCS, James Paulson, UMN Extension, Roger Moon, UMN and Brad Heins and Elizabeth Bjorklund, WCROC. The field day will include 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 hein0106@umn.edu.

U. of M. Study Seeks Organic Dairy Farmers

Dr. Lisa Wolff, a veterinarian conducting a Master of Science project at the College of Veterinary Medicine at University of Minnesota, needs help for a study about management practices and disease on organic dairy farms in Minnesota.

The project involves one visit to your herd, where Wolff's team will complete a survey about management practices, herd health concerns and commonly used treatment options. There are no right or wrong answers and all answers will be handled in a confidential way. The researchers are simply trying to find out which management practices or treatments work on organic farms and which might not. In addition to the survey, we will score the adult cow herd for lameness, hygiene and hock lesions and we will collect samples for free laboratory testing.

Information: Lisa Wolff, wolf0370@umn.edu or 612.625.6906.

Big River Farms Hosting Local Food Harvest Dinner

Attend an afternoon of fun, learning and great food with a harvest dinner event starting at 2 p.m.
Sept. 23 at Big River Farms in Marine on St. Croix. The event, to benefit immigrant organic farmers, includes farm tours, a silent auction, and interviews with immigrant farmers.

Dinner will be cooked by Lucia Watson of Lucia’s Restaurant, Nick Rancone and Thomas Boemer of Corner Table, Joe Hatch-Surisook of Sen Yai Sen Lek and John Kraus of Patisserie 46. Your purchase benefits Big River Farms and Slow Food MN and is partially tax deductible.

Information/reservations: [www.slowfoodmn.org/events.html](http://www.slowfoodmn.org/events.html).

### Urban & Small Farm Conference Slated for September

Will Allen’s Growing Power first hosted the National-International Urban & Small Farm Conference in West Allis, Wis., in 2010, when nearly 1,500 participants gathered to share ideas for building healthy and resilient community-based food systems. It included farmers, aspiring farmers, renewable energy experts, urban planners, corporate executives, politicians, academics, chefs, microbiologists, and people from countless other walks of life. One of the great outcomes of the first conference was the cultivation of new relationships, and the sharing of knowledge. This year’s conference will build on efforts from two years ago.

In 2012, we expect to have even more breakout sessions, more speakers, and more tours at our event Sept. 7-9. We anticipate over 2,000 participants will attend, and 200 of the nation’s most well-known food-system experts will share their knowledge.

For registration, visit [www.growingpowerfarmconference.org](http://www.growingpowerfarmconference.org).

### Organic Valley Seeks Sustainability Program Coordinator

Organic Valley is looking to hire an On Farm Sustainability Program Coordinator who will be responsible for the oversight and implementation of the On Farm Sustainability Program. This role works with farmers to implement a variety of sustainability initiatives on their farms; including renewable energy, ag plastic recycling, water conservation, nutrient management and ecosystem services. This position is responsible for working with media sources and within CROPP to message this work. This role also works with the cooperative to promote and source sustainable alternative fueling sources. Position is in La Farge, Wis.

For information, [click here](http://www.growingpowerfarmconference.org) or email hr@organicvalley.coop.

### Tri-State Conservation Grazing Workshop Slated

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture is encouraging natural resources professionals and livestock producers to attend the 2012 Tri-State Conservation Grazing Workshop set for Aug. 21-22 in Hankinson, N.D. The workshop will link natural resource professionals and livestock producers from Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota to learn more about the application of livestock grazing as a grassland management and conservation tool. Early registration for the two day event is $40 per day until July 15. After July 15, registration is $50 per day.

Register [here](http://www.growingpowerfarmconference.org) or by phone at 800.627.0326 ext. 456.

### Cover Crop Cost-Share Dollars Available

Rural Advantage is seeking farmers willing to establish cover crops. Funding is available for up to $20 per acre for up to 20 acres ($400 maximum per farm). Participating farmers may plant the cover crop(s) of their desire. A demonstration aspect and simple reporting will be required. Funding for the project runs from Fall 2009 to Fall 2012, and farmers from all areas of Minnesota are welcome to participate. Cost-share dollars are available. This project is funded by NCR-SARE.

Information: Jill Sackett at 507.238.5449 or sacke032@umn.edu.
Participate in Survey to Help Farmers Protect Hearing

Hearing loss and ringing in the ears is a big problem among farmers, now here’s your chance to do something about it. HEAR on the Farm is a study to test several programs designed to help farmers to make good decisions in protecting their hearing. For a limited time, adult farmers who have e-mail are eligible to participate. Simply go to www.hearonthefarm.org and enter the access code saveears. Farmers can earn up to $40 for participating, and they will be contributing to the future development of better safety programs for farmers.

For more information, contact study administrators at hearonthefarm@umich.edu or 734.763.3211.

Farmers: Obtain Free Animal Welfare Approved Status

Animal Welfare Approved is a free third-party certification and food label that audits and certifies family farms that utilize high-welfare methods of farming, outdoors on pasture or range. Certified farms use the AWA label as a way to add value and to assure customers of high-welfare farming practices, and have access to free expert technical and marketing support.

Here is a quick summary of the free resources Animal Welfare Approved offers farmers:

- **Free AWA marketing materials** including brochures, signs, pens, magnets, note pads, post-it notes, banners and metal gate signs.
- **Technical Advice Fact Sheets** and access to direct guidance from our expert technical staff.
- **Good Husbandry Grants**, available exclusively to AWA certified farmers (and applied farms) to help improve farm animal welfare (look out for new application details in summer of 2012).
- **Farm-to-Farm sales** between AWA farmers.
- **Listings for farms, retailers, restaurants, and more offering AWA products in our online directory**.

AWA also has resources for consumers, including comprehensive and regularly updated guides to food label claims, including Food Labeling Guide for Dummies and The Grassfed Primer; and an online searchable database of farms, restaurants and retail locations offering AWA products. For more information, visit www.animalwelfareapproved.org.

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**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.

**Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota (SFA)**
Box 192, Princeton, MN 55371
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