Ready to Learn 'Reality Farming?' Enroll This Fall in SFA's Deep Roots Farm Skills 101

Are you ready to learn what it’s really like to be a forage-based livestock farmer? Do you need boots-on-the-ground farm experience in a relaxed environment led by farmer educators?
Are you ready to learn “reality farming?”

SFA’s Deep Roots Farm Skills 101 fall semester provides the hands-on skills new farmers need to succeed once they’re on the land. Registration for our fall semester is now open, and a few spots remain for anyone looking to build competence while learning from experienced teachers in a student-focused environment.

The hands-on Farm Skills 101 course teaches pasture management and grazing basics; fence construction, both permanent and temporary; compassionate animal husbandry and handling; and farm equipment maintenance and operation.

Farm Skills 101 students gain experience and build confidence as part of a supportive learning community, which continues as students join SFA's Farmer-to-Farmer Network™ organization. Farm Skills 101 classes take place on two farms in central Minnesota – these are days in the field, not field days. Farmer-educators Sue Wika, Ph.D., Tom Prieve, DVM, and Kent Solberg, MS, lead a class limited to 6-8 students, creating an outstanding learning environment.

New this fall: In addition to the on-farm instruction, students will also have opportunity to discuss some of the classic literature relative to sustainable farming via an online learning community. One exciting component of the online curriculum is the Adjust 2015 New Farm Reality Check, a comprehensive project led by Executive Director John Mesko.

The on-farm classes meet Oct 2-3, 9-10, and 17-18. The online learning community commences the last week of September.

Tuition is just $1,250 and includes lodging and local foods suppers. Scholarships are available. To learn more about the curriculum, the teachers or to register, visit deeprootsfarmer.com or contact Dr. Sue Wika at sue@sfa-mn.org.

Executive Director's Note

During the month of August, Restaurant Alma will donate $1 from every tasting menu purchase to SFA!

Just today, I met with staff and management at Restaurant Alma to let them know more about the kind of work we are doing at SFA to ensure a strong, sustainable agriculture future. They were impressed with our Farmer to Farmer Network, and are excited to see what we can do together to advance our mission!

Restaurant Alma is located at: 528 University Av. SE, Minneapolis. Their food is hand crafted with fresh, seasonal, organic and local ingredients. They serve dinner only, starting at 5PM, 7 days a week.

If you are a regular Restaurant Alma customer, please go there during the month of August. If you’ve never been, I can think of a better time to check them out!
Thank you to everyone at Restaurant Alma for this great opportunity! I know for sure I'll be there for dinner during August, see you there!

'Homestead Dairy' a Sellout; Deep Winter Still Open

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, which was held July 24, sold out. More classes will be added and announced in SFA Connect and our Deep Roots homepage.

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."

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, 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, 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. Speakers include Dr. Allen Williams, Jay Fuhrer, Dr. Wendy Taheri, Todd McPeak, John Mesko, Kent Solberg, Dr. Shannon Osbourne, Grant Breitkreutz, and more. 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.

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.

Grazing Field Day Set Near Clearwater

University of Minnesota Extension, NRCS and Thousand Hills Cattle Company are hosting a free grazing management field day from 5 to 8 p.m. Aug. 18 at the Matt Maier farm near Clearwater. Dinner is included, and the program will include discussion from graziers, a pasture walk, techniques to improve production, tools to measure forage quality, and more.

Information: http://z.umn.edu/augustgrazing or 763-682-7381.

Organic Food Processing Workshops Planned in September

In collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, the Organic Processing Institute will bring food processors together to discuss what it takes to manufacture organic food products at three workshops this September.

Instruction will cover what qualifies a product as “organic”, processing both organic and conventional in one facility, the organic certification process, organic system plans, ingredients and processing aids allowed in organic, and cleaning agents allowed. Speakers will also address specific issues raised by processor attendees.

Workshops are: Sept. 21 in St Cloud; Sept. 24 in Chaska; and Sept. 25 in Rochester.
Info/registration: organicprocessinginstitute.org/workshops or 888-635-0411.

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.

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.
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.