SFA Hosting Two 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. Registration will be required and lunch will be included; look for a registration link and cost information in an upcoming edition of SFA Connect.

The Morris event will begin with Gearld (right) 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, 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 Herbatusaurus Society, and his wisdom and understanding in the field is greatly valued. To learn more about Gearld, click here.

For more information, watch your email and SFA Connect for updates, or contact Keep Cattle in Minnesota coordinator Wayne Monsen at wmonsen@gmail.com.

Festival of Farms is Next Saturday, July 12; Coteau Ridge Event Added Near Pipestone

As the official start of summer nears and the growing season is in full swing, SFA chapters are gearing up for Festival of Farms, set for July 12, 2014.

The following is a compendium of SFA chapters that are participating in Festival of Farms. For complete details and scheduling, please visit our Festival of Farms homepage. Please note that of the tours below, the Coteau Ridge, Picnic Scientifique and the Central Chapter event require an RSVP.
Pipestone Area

SFA Coteau Ridge Chapter is hosting its Festival of Farms event from 1 to 4 p.m. July 12 at 1826 70th Ave, Pipestone. Visit the diverse farm of Don and Beverly DeWeerd, who have been farming organically and sustainably for more than three decades.

Dr. Kristine Nemec, Postdoctoral Research Entomologist with the USDA Agricultural Research Service in Brookings, S.D., will present on the research project she is conducting at the DeWeerd farm that studies the response of pollinators and natural enemies to oilseed crops.

Dr. Christina Mogren, Research Entomologist at USDA-ARS in Brookings, will share the research she is conducting on the effects of landscape level habitat on native pollinator diversity and honeybee health.

This event is co-sponsored by OCIA MN #1. A lunch will be served.

The event is free and open to the public, but please RSVP at 507.215.7291 for food-preparation purposes.

Northwest Metro

SFA member Bruce Bacon is hosting a special Festival of Farms event, the “Picnic Scientifique” Soil Field Day. The event, from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Sat., July 12, 2014, will be held at Bacon’s Garden Farme 7363 175th Ave NW, Ramsey.

The event’s tour schedule:

- 11 a.m. Garden Walk with the Garden Farme Soil Committee
- 12:30 p.m. Bumblebee & Pollinators Walk with Sarah Foltz Jordan, Xerces Society
- 2 p.m. Garden Walk with the Garden Farme Soil Committee

To learn more, click here. To RSVP, click here.

St. Cloud Area

SFA Central Chapter is hosting tours of four farms:

- Bakers' Acres, 36861 Co. Rd. 9, Avon, MN 56310
- Emmerich’s Produce, 34114 Peach Dr, Albany, MN 56307
- Dancing Bears, 12822 County Road 51, St. Joseph, MN 56374
- Common Ground Garden & Central MN Sustainability Project Market Garden, College of St. Benedict, 104 Chapel Lane, St. Joseph, Minnesota 56374

To learn more and to register, click here.

Northfield Area

In the Northfield area, the SFA Cannon River Chapter and Just Food Coop are sponsoring tours of two farms near Webster. The tour begins at 9:20 a.m. at Waxwing Farm; a free bus ride is available and leaves at 9 a.m. from Just Food Co-op in Northfield. The farms on the tour include:

- Waxwing Farm, Anna Racer & Peter Skold, 4800 Dent Ave, Webster, MN. Waxwing Farm is a 40-acre diversified farm located in Webster that raises a wide variety of vegetables, laying hens, and market hogs that are marketed through a 70-member CSA and the Fulton Farmers Market in Minneapolis.
Sweetland Orchard, Mike & Gretchen Perbix, 26205 Fairlawn Ave, Webster, MN. In their five-acre orchard, the Perbixes grow 49 varieties of apples, many of them heirloom, not counting the cider apples. They also have a few pears and plums. They sell apples at the Kingfield market in Minneapolis, but most of their business is Pick-Your-Own on weekends in September and October.

For more information, click here.

Hutchinson Area

The Crow River Chapter will host two sets of farm tours at three different farms – tours are set for 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. July 12 at these farms:

- **The Farm of Minnesota**, Dan and Donna Moe, 24618 State Hwy 15, Hutchinson. The Farm of Minnesota offers CSA shares, fresh produce at farmers markets, service to local restaurants and co-ops – and you can get their fruits and vegetables right there at the farm.

- **New Story Farm**, Daniel Zetah & Stephanie Usery, 19778 235th St, Hutchinson. Farmer/operators Daniel Zetah and Stephanie Usery are actively working toward forming a “cooperative farming village,” a place where others with similar values and visions can work cooperatively on diverse endeavors.

- **Living Song Farm**, Jerry Ford & Mariénne Kreitlow, 7616 25th St. SW, Howard Lake. Living Song Farm operates on land that has been in the Kreitlow family since 1898. Of the family’s 288 acres, Jerry and Mariénne have 70 acres in transition to certified organic, where they are managing 40 acres of rotational grazing for cattle and pastured laying hens, and growing garlic, onions and potatoes for market.

Festival of Farms 2014 is sponsored by OCIA-MN #1.

Executive Director's Note

Summer is in full swing to be sure, and I trust your summer is fruitful and rewarding. It's hard to believe we are at the end of June already! The end of June is also a reminder that we have reached the end of our fiscal year 2014!

That's right, today is final day to make a donation to SFA to help round out our expenses for this fiscal year.

Better still, if you haven't already, why not take the time to become a sustaining member of SFA today? It's a convenient way to support the important work we are doing, and save yourself the reminder emails!

Speaking of important work, mark your calendars for 2 very important conferences in February 2015. First, on Valentine's Day, Feb. 14, 2015, at the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph, we'll host our SFA Annual Conference. Then, just a few day's later, on Feb 18, 2015, we are again hosting the Midwest Soil Health Summit at the Arrowwood Resort in Alexandria. Stay tuned for more information and opportunities to register.

Finally, let me mention again the 2014 SFA Festival of Farms events which are going to be held on July 12 at various locations throughout the state. This newsletter contains more information on specific locations.

Thanks for all your support, and more importantly, thanks for all you do to promote sustainable agriculture!
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:

“Lakewinds Food Co-op in Richfield”: From the Heavy Table, this story previews the new co-op from Lakewinds and General Manager Dale Woodbeck, an SFA board member. It also mentions a cool connection with the Linden Hills Farmers Market, which is managed by SFA board secretary Libby Wyrum.

“Community-Supported Agriculture a Win for Farmers and Members”: From Grit Magazine, writer and farmer Nathan A. Winters, this is a practical guide for those starting a CSA operation and includes tips on marketing, pricing, and lots more.

“40 Maps That Explain Food in America”: From Vox Magazine, 40 maps, charts, and graphs that show where our food comes from and how we eat it.

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.

The top ten vote-getters as of June 29, 2014:

- Deep Winter Solar Greenhouses
- Salvaging, Repurposing, Upcycling, and Restoring farm equipment and buildings
- Integrating Crops & Livestock
- Cover Crops & Soil Health
- Animal Husbandry Large Animals
- Direct Marketing Meat
- LLC, LC3 and 501c(3) – which one is right for me? A conversation about limiting liability and your business
- Value-Added Processing
- Root Cellaring
- Maple Syruping

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.

For Rent: 80 Acres Near Princeton

SFA was contacted by a landowner looking to rent up to 80 acres of land near Princeton to a sustainable farmer. The landowner, Myron Angstman, lives in Alaska but spends a few months a year on the farm, dubbed Long Pond Elk Farm; a caretaker, Dave Price, looks after it while they are gone.

The land, located two miles east of U.S. 169 off County Road 9, is currently rented for corn, beans and alfalfa. To learn more or set up a showing, contact Myron (on Alaska time, three hours earlier than Central Time) at 800.478.5315, or caretaker Dave at 763.389.2742.

Local Food Festival, 'FEAST!,' Headed to Rochester
FEAST!, a celebration of local foods, will premiere Nov. 2-3, 2014, at the Rochester Civic Center. The first day of this two-day event will be open to the public with a Sunday showcase of the best of local food by producers and makers from Minnesota, Iowa and Wisconsin. Sunday's theme, "Homegrown for the Holidays," will feature over 150 exhibitor booths plus chef demonstrations, tastings, live music, workshops on healthy eating and holiday cooking, activities for kids, and sampling of local beer, wine and craft liquor.

The public FEAST! event on Sunday will be followed by a trade event on Monday, "Grow It, Make It," planned exclusively for food growers, makers and buyers. The conference will offer multiple tracks and give producers and buyers opportunities to meet, network, discuss sales, and forge supply-chain relationships. A first of its magnitude in the region, this conference will offer buyers workshops and connections to accelerate local sourcing. The day's educational workshops will include industry panels providing technical assistance and access to funding opportunities, plus timely, in-demand classes for market-ready producers as well as aspiring farming and food business beginners.

Event partners include Mayo Clinic Foundation, Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation, Minnesota Department of Agriculture and Renewing the Countryside. Other organizations and individuals are invited to join as sponsors and volunteers. To learn how you can participate, please contact Devon at Renewing the Countryside, devon@rtcinfo.org or call 507-353-0407.

To learn more about FEAST! visit its homepage.

Safe Food Sampling at Farmers’ Markets Workshop

Come and learn about the ‘new safe food sampling at farmers' markets' legislation passed this year. Farmers' market managers and vendors should attend. Besides learning the provisions of the new law, food safety principles will be covered in the Safe Food Sampling at Farmers’ Markets workshop. Suzanne Driessen, University of Minnesota Extension Food Safety Educator, will provide an overview of the safe food sampling legislation allowing vendors and food demonstrators to prepare and offer food samples. Attendees will have an opportunity to complete a Safe Food Sampling Worksheet to comply with food safety regulations.

The workshop will be 1-3 p.m. July 9 at Morrison County Government Center, Basement Meeting For more information contact, Connie at (507) 337-2819 or schwa047@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 Diomy 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.

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