Options Abound Across State for Festival of Farms 2015: Duluth, Pelican Rapids, Alexandria, Ramsey, & More

SFA's Festival of Farms™ is an opportunity to learn about sustainable agriculture, network within the community, and have fun at various farms across the state. The Festival is unique to each event, but the goal is the same – to build a unified sense of SFA's presence in communities across Minnesota and tighten connections within the local food community.

The following is a compendium of the six events SFA has planned for 2015 Festival of Farms. For expanded information on these and any updated or additional events, visit our Festival of Farms homepage.

LAKE SUPERIOR CHAPTER is hosting a tour of Charlie Danielson's Up North Farm and Restoration from 1 to 3 p.m. Sat., July 11 at 6551 Bergstrom Rd, 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 his partner 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. Idea for those with a new piece of land or looking at ways to creatively grow on others.

Topics covered will be soil health, animal husbandry with rotational grazing, biomimicry, and how to start small with big ideas. This is geared toward beginning farmers but would benefit any farm. Information/RSVP: charlie@upnorthfarm.com.

LAKE AGASSIZ CHAPTER Festival of Farms, "Building a Community of Farms in Lakes Country," will be 1-4 p.m. July 11. The event, which is free and open to the public, will begin at Lida Farm, 44593 25th Ave, Pelican Rapids; and then move to Lost Farm just a few miles down the road.

Lida Farm is a 20-acre vegetable farm in operation for over 10 years that features diverse marketing strategies, integration of small-scale livestock production, and innovative methods of season extension including a deep winter greenhouse; Lost Farm is a beginning-farm operation focused on self-sufficiency while exploring local markets for sustainable products. Enterprises include pastured livestock, market gardening, sustainable woodworking, and value-added food preservation.

Please RSVP online here or by calling Noelle Harden at 218.280.5253.
CENTRAL CHAPTER is hosting Festival of Farms from 12:30-8 p.m. on July 11 with a bus tour to and from three local farms, a local foods dinner, and more.

The event begins and ends at the City Park in Alexandria (118 City Park Rd). Buses will transport attendees to each of three SFA farms: Lakeside Prairie Farm, Berry Ridge Farm, and Fruitful Seasons Dairy. These farms feature draft-horse power, grass-fed beef and dairy, pastured pork and chickens, berry production, vegetables, high tunnels, oats and wheat. Then, at 6 p.m., a local foods dinner will be prepared for attendees by chef Eugen Wittemann. To register, or for more information, visit www.sfa-mn.org/central.

SFA is hosting a free GARLIC GROWERS FIELD DAY & GATHERING from 2-6:30 p.m. Sun., July 12, with Plum Creek Farm. The event begins with a field day at the farm, 2547 195th St, Clearwater, MN 55320, for a look at Chris and Joanne Kudrna's garlic, and have some open Q&A time. Dr. Carl Rosen will be there for the really technical questions.

Around 3:30 or 4 p.m., the group will head to Chris and Joanne's house, 3655 Plum Creek Drive, St. Cloud, MN 56301, for potluck and more conversation. The possibility of starting a "garlic growers association" under SFA's nonprofit umbrella will also be discussed. The event will end by 6:30 p.m.

RSVP: Jerry Ford at jerry@sfa-mn.org or 763.244.6659.

Garden Farme is again hosting its PICNIC SCIENTIFIQUE, “Soil as System,” from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sat., July 11 at 7367 175th Ave NW, Ramsey. The event is free and no registration is required. The day will include a garden walk with Garden Farme’s Soil Sci Committee on "Testing for Soil Health;" Ken Meter of Crossroads Resource Center will present a summary outline of aboveground impact in "Soil, Society, Economics;" and another garden walk on "Soil System Linkages - Determined or Stochastic?"

Information: Bruce Bacon at bbacon@mtn.org or 763.753.5099.

WARM-UP TOUR ON JULY 9: University of Minnesota Extension and Natural Resources Conservation Service are teaming up with SFA to sponsor a special “warm-up tour” on “Grazing Management and Pasture Forage Quality” from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Thurs., July 9, at Living Song Farm, 7616 25th Street SW, Howard Lake, MN 5534. This event is free and no registration is required. Jerry Ford, who has been rotationally grazing since 2006, will be the host. Other speakers include Tom Gervais, NRCS grazing specialist; Julie Reberg, NRCS District Conservationist; and Rod Greder, Wright County Extension Educator.

Information: Rob Greder at 763-682-7381 or gred0014@umn.edu.

Executive Director's Note
SFA has completed the Adjust 2015 Project!

Adjust 2015 was designed to uncover the common issues farmers face in launching farm operations. Our survey findings from farmers all over the country have helped us to develop the New Farm Reality Check Curriculum.

Many of the most common issues, including soil health education and the importance and need for community building have been incorporated into SFAs Deep Roots Farmer Development Program.

Our website is home to several tools and templates farmers can use to navigate issues like, employee management, defining family roles, working with children, and establishing financial benchmarks to measure farm success.

Adjust 2015 was funded by NCR SARE and was a product of our collaboration with Renewing the Countryside and the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture.

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. 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.

Deep Roots Farmer Development Program is a much-needed beginning-farmer curriculum that emphasizes all three tenets of sustainability, plus provides extensive skills training.

New Farm Reality Check: Look Before You Leap is now being presented at various conferences and other forums as a result of our Adjust 2015 project.

Our ongoing GrazeFest series of grass-based livestock and cover cropping events is led by Livestock and Grazing Coordinator Kent Solberg. Visit our GrazeFest homepage and watch SFA Connect for updates on our upcoming on-farm events.

Keep Cattle in Minnesota
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.

Farm-to-Institution Producer Report, Webinar Published

In 2014-15, SFA, along with Renewing the Countryside, collaborated on a project led by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, “Building Minnesota's Farm-to-Institution Markets: A Producer Survey.” The goal of the survey was to determine the resources Minnesota growers — specifically specialty crop growers — need to engage with institutional markets in a consistent and economically viable manner. It also identifies some of the key “next steps” that farmers feel are needed to ensure the state’s emerging farm-to-institution markets work for them.

Project leader Pete Huff published a final comprehensive report from this project that includes a wealth of data and producer comments on this issue.

To learn more about the project and access the report, click here.

To simply download the report, click here.

Further, a recent webinar that discussed the project findings can be viewed in our webinar archive.

Next SFA Deep Winter Production Class Announced


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 more information, contact sue@sfa-mn.org.

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.

Lake Superior Farm Tour Set for Aug. 15

SFA Lake Superior Chapter is hosting a free farm tour at Clare Hintz's Elsewhere Farm, 16550 Nicoletti Rd., in Herbster, Wis., from 3 to 5 p.m. Sat., Aug. 15.

Clare has been building production permaculture systems on the farm for the last 14 years. The farm features 700 fruit and nut trees, many kinds of berries, heritage and rare-breed pastured laying hens, vegetable market gardens, bees, and lots of red clay. Information/RSVP: elsewherefarmherbster@gmail.com or 715.774.3153.

Check This Out

The St. Cloud Times profiles two area food co-ops, including Minnesota Street Market in St. Joseph and SFA member Lisa Baker. To read the story, click here.

Cass County Organic Farm for Sale

The owners of an organic CSA farm near Longville in Cass County are looking for an individual or family that is interested in a farm mentorship with the idea of living on the farm, buying the original farmhouse, greenhouses and 20-acre field, and taking over the produce operation. Owners are willing to work with a buyer to make the sale financially viable.

Information: John Sumption, 218.363.2942 or sumptionenv@gmail.com.

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.

Sustainable Farming Association (SFA)
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