May 14, 2012

SFA Welcomes Libby Wyrum to Board of Directors

At its last board meeting April 13, the SFA Board of Directors voted to elect Libby Wyrum to an open at-large position on the board.

Libby works with Gardens of Eagan as their office and outreach coordinator. In 2011, Libby worked as a project manager with Grassroots Solutions, a consulting firm specializing in political and public affairs grassroots engagement campaigns. While there her clients included Minnesota Public Radio, the Northwest Area Foundation and SEIU. From 2005 to 2011, Libby served the Minnesota House of Representatives as the committee administrator and assistant to the Public Safety Finance Committee and its chair.

In addition to managing the day-to-day activities of the committee, she had oversight of all public relations, budgetary and administrative concerns affecting the office. Libby was honored to receive a fellowship at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs in 2008-2009. She has served on several nonprofit boards and political organizing committees in the Twin Cities.

Libby is a certified permaculturist and is currently a volunteer intern with the Master Gardener program in Washington County. Libby and her husband reside on a farm in Afton with their dog, Frank.

Local Meat Survey for Northern Minnesota Now Online

SFA and the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture are working on a project to expand availability of locally raised meat and poultry in Minnesota, particularly in the northern part of the state.

Please take a few moments to answer this consumer interest survey if you live in northern Minnesota – and if not, please circulate to any friends, family or colleagues who are northern Minnesota residents. For the purposes of this study and survey, "northern Minnesota" is essentially considered as north of Hwy 210 on a line from Fergus Falls to Wadena, Brainerd and finally Duluth.

To take the survey, click here. These survey results will help us understand consumer interest and preferences for purchasing locally raised meat and poultry in Northern Minnesota.

Also, complete the survey and be entered into a drawing for great prizes. Three copies of the Minnesota Homegrown Cookbook and two SFA caps will be given away to survey respondents. Thanks for helping us take the crucial first steps in solving a problem facing the sustainable ag community.

Executive Director's Note
SFA’s New Crops Project has received additional funding! Thanks to continued support from Lakewinds Co-op, and new support from the Blooming Prairie Foundation and the 4th Generation Fund, we’ll be bringing information to you about demand for hard to find, locally produced crops.

These crops, such as quinoa, spelt and currants, can be grown here in Minnesota, and through our work in Phase 1 of the New Crops project, we’ve determined a significant demand.

Next up are educational materials and contacts with producers and consumers leading up to our 2013 Annual Conference in Feb. 2013.

Thanks to everyone who has participated in this project so far, and if you are a producer, looking seriously at finding some alternative crops to add to your farm, drop me a line at john@sfa-mn.org

Annual Conference Photo Feature

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.

Dinner on the Farm at Bruce Bacon's Crandall Garden Farme

Spend the evening of June 10th at SFA member Bruce Bacon's 95-acre Crandall Garden Farme in Ramsey for an installment of the Dinner on the Farm series. In the family since 1913, Garden Farme supplies wildflower honey, specialty greens and vegetables to many Twin Cities restaurants. Bacon (right) practices permaculture and uses a hand tool system in lieu of tractors, resulting in quality, flavorful, beautiful produce.

For the dinner, Aaron Uban will use the skills he's been perfecting over the years at local favorites The Strip Club, Heartland Market and Muffuletta to create an early summer spread for us. We'll enjoy locally brewed beer from Harriet Brewing, and a portion of your ticket price will support Eureka Recycling's backyard composting program. Tickets are available here.

Bacon's background and interest in permaculture have led him to grow diverse products including leafy greens, Asian mustards, edible flowers, basil, other culinary herbs, rhubarb,
garlic, horseradish, plums, crabapples and pie cherries. The farm produces five-gallon bulk wildflower honey for select restaurants, Seward Co-op and The Wedge Co-op.

The Garden Farme is also developing as a host site for agritourism: private parties, picnics, painting, photography, workshops, seminars and non-profit retreats.

Pollinator Conservation Planning Course Set in Duluth

The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, the Sustainable Agriculture Project at the University of Minnesota Duluth and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service will host a Pollinator Conservation Planning Short Course, teaching the latest science-based approaches to reversing the trend of pollinator declines, and equip attendees with the recipes necessary to protect and manage habitat for these vital insects.

Workshop is 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. June 13 at the UMD Library, 416 Library Drive, Duluth. Cost is $45 per person; bring a sack lunch. Registration is required for this course. Click here to register or for more information.

Green Ideas & Ham Breakfast to Discuss Urban Farming

Join the Urban Farming revolution by participating in Environment Minnesota's next Green Ideas & Ham, held from 8 to 9:30 a.m. May 22 at Red Stag Supperclub, 509 1st Ave NE, Minneapolis. Speakers are Kirsten Saylor, executive director of Gardening Matters; Anna Cioffi, program organizer for community based food systems with Land Stewardship Project; and Minneapolis urban farmer Eric Larsen. We will discuss the new policies recently passed by the city of Minneapolis that helps to make it easier for urban farming to expand as well as learn from experts about various methods that can help us all become better managers of our own land. The event costs $15. Register here.

Minnesota Organic Advisory Task Force Seeks Members

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture is seeking members to fill eight scheduled vacancies on the Minnesota Organic Advisory Task Force. The OATF advises the Commissioner of Agriculture and the University of Minnesota about policies and programs that will improve organic agriculture in the state.

Minnesota is a leader in organic farming in the U.S, with more than 700 certified organic farms and more than 200 organic processors, according to MDA estimates. Minnesota Agriculture Commissioner Dave Frederickson says this growing agriculture and food sector needs and deserves support from public institutions like the Department of Agriculture and the University.

Members from the following categories or sectors are needed: Two farmers using organic agriculture methods; one organic processor; one organic wholesaler and/or distributor of organic products; one member of the University of Minnesota faculty; one member representing a nonprofit producer organization; one member representing the interests of the public; and, one member representing the interests of consumers. All members must be residents of Minnesota willing to serve a one-year term. Half-day meetings are held three or four times per year; members receive reimbursement for travel.

The application form is available at www.sos.state.mn.us (click the Open Commissions/Appointments icon) or by calling the Secretary of State's office at 877-551-6767. Applicants should specify the category/sector they represent and submit a cover letter with their applications. Deadline to apply is June 26.

Women Caring for the Land Meeting May 17 in Glenwood

Women Caring for the Land Initiative Attend an upcoming Dairy Labor Management Workshop conducted by the U of M Extension at the following locations:

- Pipestone, May 31
- Worthington, June 1
- Glencoe, June 7
- Rochester, June 21
- St. Cloud, June 26

More information to follow through regular Extension media channels. For more information contact Chuch Schwartau at cschwart@umn.edu.

Meat Processing

Our meat processing survey is now live. Anyone living in northern Minnesota can benefit from this project, and the first step is gathering your feedback. Help us expand access to local meat and poultry in our state. Take the survey here.

Farm Transitions

Our Browerville and Clearwater workshops are behind us. Next stop: Northfield, probably in June. There’s already been plenty of interest in a Northfield workshop, so we’ll keep you posted when there’s an official date and site set. Meanwhile, visit our Farm Transitions homepage.

The Farm Transitions project is in conjunction with Renewing the Countryside.
Are you a woman who rents out farmland and is interested in knowing how to be certain good conservation practices that protect and build your land resource are in place on those acres? The Chippewa 10% Project is hosting a free "Women Caring for the Land" meeting from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. May 17 at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, 105 N Franklin St, Glenwood. This meeting is for women who own and rent out farmland and who would like to learn more about conservation, how to participate in conservation programs and how to talk to their tenants about improving conservation on their land.

A free lunch sourced from local foods will be served. To reserve a spot and for details, call Julia Ahlers Ness at 320-269-2105 or e-mail janess@landstewardshipproject.org.

Join Minnesota Organic Network for Local Ag Updates

The Minnesota Organic Network connects people who want to share information about organic agriculture, kick around ideas, ask each other questions, and work together on projects. It includes farmers, researchers, extension people, and nonprofit organization representatives, along with people from public agencies who also work in organic agriculture. Subscribe by emailing Meg Moynihan at meg.moynihan@state.mn.us or click here.

Organic Farm School 2012: Farming and Food Justice

Join the Women's Environmental Institute for ten weeks of exciting lectures on organic food production and agriculture from environmental, social, and historical perspectives, connecting environmental justice with agriculture and food justice. Participants will also have the opportunity to develop practical skills in organic horticulture through hands-on workshops at the WEI alternative farm campus and farm field trips.

Held weekly from June 11 through Aug. 20, speakers include Atina Diffley of Gardens of Eagan, Prof. Bud Markhart of University of Minnesota School of Horticulture, Meg Moynihan of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, and Reginaldo Haslett-Marroquin of the Rural Enterprise Center in Northfield.

Registration includes three Saturday field days. Classes start at 6 p.m. June 11th at the Midtown Global Market, 920 E Lake St, Minneapolis. Full class registration is $120; a drop-in class costs $20. Information: 651.583.0705 or register online at w-e-i.org.

Workshop Series on Chickens, Pest Management

Always want to raise chickens, start a hive, or add mushrooms to your homegrown meals? Then check out this Permaculture Research Institute workshop series of hands-on practicums that give participants real skills. The remaining sessions include: Urban Chickens, 9 a.m. May 19; and Using Pest Management Tools in the Garden Plot, 9 a.m. May 26.

To learn more, click here or email Emily@pricoldclimate.org.

Winona Co-op Seeking General Manager

Bluff Country Co-op, a 3,500 square-foot store staffed by 26 employees who help to generate about $2 million in annual sales, is seeking a General Manager to lead the co-op so that it achieves the vision determined by our Board of Directors. Qualifications include: knowledge of natural foods industry, understanding of the local and sustainable food movement, experience working with a Board of Directors and experience with policy governance.

Please send your cover letter addressing the qualifications above, a resume, and contact information for professional references to: gmsearch@bluff.coop, or mail it to GM Search, c/o Bluff Country Co-op, 121 W 2nd Street, Winona, MN, 55987.

Attend Free Screening, Discussion of Farm to School Doc

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.
Attend a Free Screening & Discussion of Farm to School Documentary

Attend a special screening and discussion of "Farm to School: Growing Our Future." This 30-minute documentary provides an in-depth look at Farm to School Partnerships in Minnesota and how communities can work together to improve children’s health and education. Don’t miss this opportunity to come together as community leaders, schools, farmers, and parents to build healthy, sustainable communities. There will be seven regional screenings and discussions scheduled around Minnesota this spring.

To RSVP and for more information, click here.

USDA Seeks Applications for Farm to School Grant Program

The USDA released a Request for Applications (RFA) for a new farm to school grant program on April 17. The RFA is now posted on grants.gov and the USDA Farm to School website. **Deadlines are nearing, so act soon.** There will be two types of grants available:

- Planning grants are intended primarily for K-12 school food authorities who participate in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Program that are in the beginning phases of their farm to school efforts.
- Implementation grants are geared towards advancing existing farm to school initiatives. K-12 school food authorities who participate in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Program, along with State and local agencies, Indian tribal organizations, agricultural producers or groups of agricultural producers, and non-profit entities working in partnership with school districts, may apply for implementation grants.

USDA will offer grants webinars at 2 p.m. May 15 and at noon May 17 to help explain the details of the grant. Both will include a brief Q&A session. To register for the webinars, please visit http://vovici.com/wsb.dll/s/17fb9g4f5f4. Direct questions to Deborah.kane@fns.usda.gov or farm2school2013@fns.usda.gov.

For more information, visit the USDA Farm to School website.

Minnesota DNR Stream Habitat Program Hosting Workshops

Registration is open to farmers, landowners and other citizens for the following two Minnesota DNR Stream Habitat Program workshops:

- *The Science of Healthy Waters, The Dam Dilemma:* Designed for anyone involved in watershed issues including water quality (rivers, lakes, wetlands), aquatic and terrestrial habitat, land use, wetlands, and flooding. This workshop will unpack the science and implications involving dams in terms of: effects on connectivity, hydrology, geomorphology, water quality, and aquatic habitat; societal and ecological implications of these structures; and the challenges, benefits and design approaches of dam removal, dam modification, and bypass fishways. Class is May 21-23 in Fergus Falls. Cost is $300.
- *The Science of Healthy Waters, The Ditching Dilemma:* This workshop unpacks the science and implications of ditching in terms of: effects on hydrology, geomorphology, water quality, and aquatic habitat; societal and ecological implications of these practices; and alternative design concepts and approaches that work towards accomplishing sustainable agricultural goals while improving water quality and restoring channel stability and ecological health. Class is July 16-18 in Fergus Falls. Cost is $300.


Driftwatch Registry Now Available to Organic Growers

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture is making the Driftwatch sensitive crops registry available to certified organic growers in the state in an effort to reduce the risk of crop damage from pesticides and fertilizers that are applied nearby.
This new, voluntary program is offered by the MDA through a partnership with Purdue University. Farmers can identify the locations of their certified organic fields and pastures using Google Maps. Commercial fertilizer and pesticide applicators can then check the database and take special care to avoid affecting the certified organic land.

The registry is available to growers and applicators at www.driftwatch.org. In addition, the MDA offers metal “Organic Farm – Please Do Not Spray” signs. Click here to learn more.

Join Online Market for Sustainable Ag Buyers, Sellers

Have something to buy or sell? Post it to the "SustAgMarket" listserv. SustAgMarket was set up to handle buying and selling activity related to sustainable agriculture. For subscription information, click here.

Join Slow Food Minnesota for Spring Foraging Dinner

Slow Food Minnesota is hosting its 2012 spring foraging dinner May 20 at Hazelnut Valley Farm in Lake City. There will be tours and talks so guests can learn about foraging and what makes a healthy farm ecosystem, followed by a hearty and delicious dinner designed around foraged foods, with wine and beer included. Chefs are Greg Jaworski of Nosh Restaurant and Dan Patterson of Rabbit's bakery, both in Lake City. Tickets are $40 for members and $50 for non-members. Children 12 and under are free. Information and reservations: www.slowfoodmn.org/events.html.

NCR-SARE Call for Professional Development Preproposals

The 2012 North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program's (NCR-SARE) Professional Development Call for Preproposals is now available. NCR-SARE provides funds for professional development projects that provide sustainable agriculture training to agricultural professionals and educators in the Cooperative Extension Service (CES), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), other governmental agencies, and educators in the profit and nonprofit sector serving the food and fiber system.

Projects can be up to three years in duration, and funding level is capped at $75,000 for each project, but projects requesting less than full amount are encouraged. Approximately $400,000 will be available for funding projects.

Any questions regarding the North Central SARE PDP program should be addressed to PDP Regional Coordinator, Dr. Rob Myers at 573-882-1547 or myersrob@missouri.edu. The deadline for preproposals is 4:30 p.m May 16.

Scholarships for Transitioning and Recently Certified Organic Farmers

While transitioning to organic farming can present financial uncertainty for farmers, there’s a special program in Minnesota to help them accomplish their goals. The "Tools for Transition" program, led by the University of Minnesota (UMN), Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) and other partners, provides farm business management scholarships of up to 90 percent to qualifying farmers.

"Tools for Transition" is aimed at helping clarify the cost and process of transitioning to organic. Minnesota field crop or dairy farmers who have any acres in transition or who have been certified fewer than three years are eligible to apply, and project leaders are eager to expand the program to more farmers this year.

Farmers in "Tools" work directly with a farm business management instructor on a personally designed program to help them understand and better manage their own cost of production, profitability, and other financial measures. UMN agricultural economists analyze the data to look for patterns and trends, while carefully protecting the privacy of all participants' financial
Program participants get the chance to participate in special workshops and to receive a discount to attend the annual Minnesota Organic Conference. To learn more about the scholarships, call administrator Meg Moynihan at 651-201-6616.

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
763-260-0209 • info@sfa-mn.org

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