More Keep Cattle in Minnesota Series Events Announced

SFA is partnering with Crow Wing River Basin Forage Council to host a Keep Cattle In Minnesota Event from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Jan. 11 at Central Lakes College in Staples. The event features Josh Dukart and Ken Miller, district technicians from Burleigh County (N.D.) Soil Conservation District, who will focus on soil health and profitability as related to cattle production – a perfect fit for the mission of Keep Cattle In Minnesota.

Registration for the event begins at 9 a.m. Cost is $15, which includes lunch. Crow Wing River Basin Forage Council is a group of graziers in the Staples area who work to promote soil health techniques. Click here to register.

Also, three more workshops hewing to the Keep Cattle In Minnesota themes of outwintering, bale grazing and other innovative management techniques have been added to the schedule. These events are all free and no registration is required (all events begin at 1 p.m.):

- Nov. 22 at the Wadena County Courthouse Auditorium, 415 Jefferson St S (U.S. 71), Wadena. Attendees will view a presentation from SFA's experts then caravan to the Ivan and Dayle Reinke farm southwest of Wadena to observe “bale grazing” of their cow/calf herd.
- Dec. 9 at the VFW, 115 N Franklin St, Lake City. Event includes presentation and caravan to tour Ralph Lentz's farm in Lake City.
- Dec. 11 at Cromwell Pavilion, 5577 Cromwell Park Dr, Cromwell. Event includes presentation and caravan to tour Steve Risachers farm in Cromwell.
- Dec. 17 at Grant and Dawn Breitkreutz farm, 38270 Kenwood Ave, Redwood Falls.
- Jan. 17 at Moose Lake Library, 313 Elm Ave, Moose Lake. Event includes presentation and caravan to tour Abe Mach's farm in Sturgeon Lake.

For more information, visit our Keep Cattle In Minnesota homepage.

Free Annual Conference Registration Deal Ends Nov. 31

SFA Members: Sign up by Nov. 31 to volunteer at the Annual Conference and receive FREE registration for the conference AND a flagship SFA t-shirt.

After Nov. 31, all volunteers will receive the t-shirt, but members must register at the discounted member rate.

To volunteer, contact SFA Volunteer Coordinator Gretchen Boyum at 218.864.5104
Thanks to All Who Survived Give to the Max Day Woes

A heartfelt thanks goes out to our network of supporters who donated on Give to the Max Day despite the devastating problems that occurred to the system.

The Give to the Max Day website was notably down nearly four hours and was running slow all day – so patience and dedication was required to actually post a donation.

If you were trying to donate to SFA on Give to the Max Day and couldn't, you can make your donation 24/7/365 on our homepage.

Executive Director's Note

Over the weekend, SFA hosted a grant-writing workshop for farmers called Grant Writing Essentials. The goal was to help farmers to understand the grant writing process and to consider and prepare for one of the many farmer or rancher-focused grant programs out there. Jean Ciborowski from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture was on hand to offer some specific information about the MDA Sustainable Ag Demonstration Grant program.

It was a great program and several of the 23 participants indicated so.

But something really fun also happened. We had participants from all corners of the state there in St. Joseph. None of them new each other at the beginning of the day. By the end of the day, however, after listening to each other’s questions, sharing breaks and lunch together, and enjoying shared experience, they were networked!

Farmer-to-Farmer Networking is SFA’s role in sustainable agriculture. It’s why our organization was formed, and its what we do best. Grant Writing Essentials is a great example of how we do Farmer-to-Farmer Networking. The process of writing a grant is itself a collaborative effort, and very well suited to a Farmer-to-Farmer Network like SFA. Everyone who has ever written a grant understands the importance of not being a “Lone Ranger.” SFA and our chapters offer members a truly collaborative environment in which to develop, test, and implement new farming ideas and techniques.

Does membership in SFA pay off? Well, the 23 people at the grant writing workshop last weekend experienced a Farmer-to-Farmer Network and learned the importance of being a part of a larger organization. When it comes to implementing all the great grant ideas that were discussed, they are going to want to share the results of their projects widely. And they’ll be able to, because they are in the Network!

Mesko Highlighted in Seedstock Conference Recap

By Jason Walker • SFA Communications Coordinator

SFA Executive Director John Mesko spoke about SFA’s farmer-to-farmer networking at the second annual Seedstock Sustainable Agriculture Innovation conference on Nov. 6 at the UCLA Anderson School of Management in Los Angeles.

An excerpt from the Seedstock recap:

"The day continued with a panel on growing new farmers. The panel, moderated by new farmer Paul Greive of Primal Pastures looked at the challenges of attracting new talent and the reasons why a new farmer should choose to embrace sustainable practices. "Why should
farmers get into sustainable ag? Because it's the only type of ag that will exist in the future," said panelist John Mesko of the Sustainable Farming Association.

The event featured a broad lineup of speakers from urban agriculture experts, sustainable farmers and aquaponics entrepreneurs to investors, crowdfunding experts and organic and local buyers and distributors.

The magazine profiled SFA state board treasurer Josh Reinitz's family farm in 2012.

Read the whole recap here.

Cannon River Chapter Hosting 'Farmer-to-Farmer Exchange'

The SFA Cannon River chapter is hosting a "Farmer-to-Farmer Exchange" at 6 p.m. Dec. 5 at the home of Mary Ellen Frame, 612 1st St W, Northfield. All are welcome and the event is free – attendees are welcome to bring beverages and/or snacks.

The concept for the event is simple: local farmers gathering in an informal, discussion-based setting to share ideas and enjoy each other's company. The conversation theme will be "Marketing (and Markets):" What are your most successful forms of marketing, and what tips can you share? Social media, word of mouth, print material, etc? Who buys from you, and who doesn't? Are there opportunities to expand and reach new markets?

Please note that this address is Mary Ellen's new house in Northfield, not the farm on Highway 3.

For more information, contact SFA Cannon River Coordinator Kathy Zeman at kzeman@kmwb.net.

Minnesota Project Fruit Tree Pruning Class Set for Dec. 7

The Minnesota Project's Fruits of the City program is offering a class on Fruit Tree Pruning from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Dec. 7 at the Minnesota Project, 1885 University Ave W, Suite 315, St. Paul.

This class will consist of two sessions: an indoor classroom lecture on the latest theory and practical applications for pruning and training and an outdoor demonstration and hands-on practice session at a nearby private orchard in Maplewood, with a one-hour lunch break in between.

Specific topics to be addressed include fruit production and tree longevity optimization, maintenance minimization, ease of harvest, and pesticide applications. During the outdoor session, students will be guided in a hands-on experience, working on trees using hand pruners, handsaws, pole saws, and spreaders.

The first session will be held at the Minnesota Project and the afternoon session will be outdoors and a short drive from the Minnesota Project. Directions to the afternoon site will be provided. Bring warm clothes, gloves, and footwear. Free parking is available behind the Minnesota Project off of Charles Avenue.

Cost is $35. Register at www.eventbrite.com/event/8882707417.

Bieber, Fuhrer Added to Midwest Soil Health Summit Agenda

By Jason Walker • SFA Communications Coordinator

We're still putting together the slate for the Midwest Soil Health Summit, to be held Feb. 19-20, 2014, at Arrowwood Resort in Alexandria, and we're proud to announce the participation of two of the Upper Midwest's most respected experts: Richard Bieber and Jay Fuhrer.

Note to SFA members: Registration is available at a $50 discount for current SFA members. You should have been emailed a discount code; if you need help or a reminder about the code, email Jason Walker at jason@sfa-mn.org.
As it develops, the Summit is becoming what we intended: the bridge between what SFA stands for and what soil health experts practice every single day.

Bieber, a producer from South Dakota, has been practicing no-till for 27 years and cover cropping for over a decade. Bieber says, “When it comes to soil health, you are speaking directly to my passion.” Bieber will give a second keynote address after Gabe Brown.

Fuhrer, District Conservationist with the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) in Bismarck, N.D., will lead a session on how to make soil health principles work on your farm.

As you can see, the Summit is going to deliver some of the most innovative farmers and researchers in the Upper Midwest for two days of networking, speakers, panel discussions and breakout sessions – all geared at improving your soil health.

Also slated to appear: Wendy Taheri, Research Microbiologist with the North Central Agricultural Research Laboratory, who will present on cover cropping and mycorrhizae in soils; and Kent Solberg, SFA Livestock and Grazing Coordinator, will be leading a session on designing and customizing cover crops.

More information, registration and exhibitor/sponsor applications are available at our MSHS homepage.

SFA is Lead Sponsor of GLCA's Annual Videoconference

SFA is proud to be the lead sponsor of the Grazing Lands Conservation Association's annual videoconference, to be held Dec. 5 at nine sites around Minnesota. Click here to register. Agenda and topics include:

- Opening Addresses on why NRCS and DNR encourage grazing – Don Baloun, NRCS State Conservationist & Dave Schad, DNR Deputy Commissioner

- Importance of soil health and ways to incorporate soil health strategies – Gene Groven, North Dakota farmer

- Keynote: “Keep it Growing, Keep it Green: Soil Health and Water Protection are the Answers:” New research on managing soil biota, Dr. Kristine Nichols, USDA-ARS (from Mandan, ND)

- Using Livestock to Enhance Prairie: Opportunities to graze public and private conservation lands. Monitoring to see the results of grazing – Carmelita Nelson and Greg Hoch, DNR

- Producer Panel and Discussion: Strategies MN farmers are using to improve soil health to improve pastures and increase farm income, including "Options for increasing soil health and profitability for your farm or ranch" with SFA Livestock and Grazing Coordinator Kent Solberg.

- Introduction to SFA's Keep Cattle in Minnesota Project

The videoconference is held at locations in Crookston, Lamberton, Morris, Inver Grove Heights, Rochester, Winona, Austin, Pine City and Staples.

Annual Conference Session Schedule Being Compiled

By Jason Walker • SFA Communications Coordinator

The SFA Annual Conference, set for Feb. 8, 2014, at the College of Saint Benedict in St.
Joseph, Minn., has a theme: "Back to Our Roots." Drawing from the wisdom of the SFA community, our annual gathering will be a more laid-back affair focused on farmer to farmer networking and education – the bedrock of SFA since our inception over 25 years ago.

That's why we asked you, our members, to help determine session topics at the Annual Conference. Using an online tally system we received over 3,000 votes on a variety of topics – from root cellaring to cover cropping, fence management to weed control strategies.

Now, we're taking the voting results and coordinate the Conference schedule accordingly – and identifying session leaders and experts to help guide the discussion. **Look for a schedule announcement in the next edition of SFA Connect.**

Of course, [Annual Conference registration is open](#), and a discounted price of $45 is valid through Nov. 31 for SFA members, who should have received an email with a discount code. Starting Dec. 1, the cost goes up to $55 for members and $65 for everyone else; if you need help or a reminder about the code, email Jason Walker at [jason@sfa-mn.org](mailto:jason@sfa-mn.org).

Also, family programming is returning, so that the entire farm family can come enjoy our farmer-to-farmer showcase. Admission for children ages 3-12 is just $10, while kids under 3 are free. [Click here to register today](#).

Annual Conference Photo Feature

Photographer Crystal Liepa documented our SFA Annual Conference again in 2013 at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum. Watch for a new photo each issue of SFA Connect and learn more about Crystal [at her website](#).

Submit Cool Photo, Win SFA T-shirt

Who doesn't want to win a free T-shirt, let alone a cool SFA one?

Here's your chance. Send communications coordinator Jason Walker your photos, and the best each month, chosen by a panel of distinguished judges, gets an SFA T-shirt.

What kind of photos are we seeking? Simply anything from your farm, family, garden or kitchen
– anything that's related somehow to sustainable agriculture that you'd like to share with SFA members.

Send your photos to jason@sfa-mn.org, and we'll include the winner in SFA Connect. Check out our Facebook page for all the photo submissions.

**Sustainable Food Production Program Deep Winter Class**

A new class from the SFA Sustainable Food Production Program, "Deep Winter Production of Greens and Livestock Fodder Utilizing Passive Solar Energy," will be held from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Jan. 25, 2014, in Ashby, Minn.

During the class, 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. The greenhouse provides greens for local consumers. In addition, the structure is utilized to produce fodder for the farm livestock. Students will be in the greenhouse to see how greens and fodder are planted and harvested.

Cost is $100/person. Bring a sack lunch. Beverage and fresh winter salad (grown on site) provided.

The class will be held at Paradox Farm, 11643 State Hwy 78, Ashby, MN 56309 (Directions: 7 miles north of Ashby; 10 miles south of Battle Lake).

For more information and to register, click here.

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**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)**
Box 192, Princeton, MN 55371
763-260-0209 • info@sfa-mn.org

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