Pasture Profitability Field Day Set for Oct. 6 in Edgerton; Grazing Education Event for Returning Veterans Planned

Continuing our GrazeFest™ series of events to promote grass-fed livestock production, SFA has two grazing-focused workshops coming up in the next few weeks.

The first is a Pasture Profitability tour Oct. 6 in Edgerton at the farm of Bob Schelhass. Planned is a pasture walk and discussion of Bob's grazing system followed by a producer panel discussion of direct marketing opportunities and challenges. This workshop is free, and lunch will be provided by local beef producers. Click here to register. The workshop will be similar to one we hosted Sept. 29 near Wadena, which was well-attended. In photo above, Jeff Duchene, NRCS Grazing Specialist, discusses pasture exclusions and clip plot to monitor forage production. See more photos from the workshop on our Facebook page.
Finally, SFA is sponsoring a farming workshop for war veterans on the benefits of draft animals from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Oct. 20 at Central Lakes College Ag Center, Staples. The event hopes to help returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans get involved in farming, and demonstrations include horse farming methods and other opportunities for working with draft animals. Iraq war veteran Mike Sams will lead a tour of his farm nearby and will deliver a keynote address.

There will also be a hands-on interactive session for the aspiring farmers to assess their goals and dreams, as well as a beginning farmer resource trade show. Lunch is provided, and the event is free for veterans and their families. Click here to register.

For more information on any of these workshops, contact Kent Solberg at 218.445.7580 or sevenpinesfarmandfence@gmail.com. We have also launched a webpage for our Pasture Profitability workshops as well as any other grass-based seminar or event we have in the pipeline: sfa-mn.org/pasture-profitability.

Executive Director’s Note

By John Mesko

By definition, SFA is a collaborative organization. Our Farmer-to-Farmer Network is a collaboration of 9 regional chapters throughout the state of MN. Our collaboration includes other organizations as well. The work of supporting, promoting and enhancing sustainable agriculture is important, and vast; and one organization can’t do it all. We all know there are many organizations working to support and enhance sustainable agriculture in our area, and SFA and our Farmer-to-Farmer Network have working, non-competitive, supportive relationships with them.

In one of our more important collaborations as a fellow member of the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture’s (MISA) Sustainer’s Coalition, SFA works in concert with several other Coalition members to provide a clearly defined constituency, representing and communicating among many aspects of the sustainable agriculture movement in Minnesota. SFAs Farmer to Farmer Network furthers MISA’s networking capabilities and helps to elevate the level of dialogue on sustainable agriculture level across the movement.

MISA staff work closely with SFA in helping us to understand the work going on across the movement. Being a part of MISA helps SFA to avoid duplicating the work of other organizations.

Our work with Renewing the Countryside (RTC) has resulted in some very innovative programming over the past few years. As we’ve been mentioning in Connect, our Farm Transitions project and the Planning For Your Farm’s Future programs around the state have helped exiting farmers begin to think about transitioning land and farm businesses to the next generation. RTC has collaborated with SFA on other projects as well, including our Annual Conference, Public Policy project and Adjust 2015.

The SFA Connect Newsletter is our main regular communication to our members and the sustainable agriculture world. We use it to promote SFA programs and to discuss sustainable agriculture issues. We also support the programs and projects of many, many organizations including M-State Sustainable Food Production Program, Land Stewardship Project, Green Lands, Blue Waters, UMN Extension, MN Food Association, UMN Small Farms Team, Rural Advantage and others. We offer this promotional support to our partner organizations free-of-charge, and often without them even asking.

Through SFAs financial support of programs like the recent Soil Health Workshops held in 7 locations throughout MN, and the Tri-State Grazing Conference held this summer in North Dakota, our members are helping to make a definitive contribution to the success of our movement.

In a general sense, SFAs work is to promote and enhance sustainable agriculture both through our own innovative programming, but also by supporting other organizations.
Would you like to be a part of our collaborative network? By joining SFA, you are supporting at least 3 things:

1. SFAs Farmer to Farmer Network™
2. SFAs innovative educational programming, helping farmers to broader success.
3. SFAs non-competitive, sustainable agriculture movement-building collaboration with many, many other organizations.

Please consider joining or renewing today.

Thanks.

Energized Fence Strategies for Grazers Seminar Set

Attend a fencing seminar Oct. 13 in Fergus Falls led by SFA’s Kent Solberg, owner of Seven Pines Farm and Fence of Verndale and an instructor in the Sustainable Food Production program at M-State in Fergus Falls. Kent has 18 years of professional experience designing and installing energized fence systems for livestock. The seminar will run from noon to 3 p.m. Oct. 13 at the M-State campus in Fergus Falls. Cost is $15 per person and includes a local foods lunch. Please register by Oct. 9 by contacting Marci King at 218.736.1625 or marci.king@minnesota.edu.

The workshop is sponsored by SFA, Sustainable Food Production and the Minnesota Dairy Initiative.

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.

Submit Your Best Photos and Win an 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 looking for? Simply anything related to sustainable agriculture. At an SFA event, on the farm, in the garden, at a meal, a funny-looking carrot, a beautiful sunset at your farm, your family loading hay, an...
antique tool...anything other SFA folks might get a kick out of seeing.

Send your photos to jason@sfa-mn.org, and I’ll include the winner in SFA Connect. Note: We don’t have unlimited quantities of T-shirts, so certain sizes may not always be available. But we’ll try our best. And check out our Facebook page for all the photo submissions.

The first two winners were Ivan Reinke and David Weinand. Readers, send your photos to jason@sfa-mn.org and join the contest.

**Scholarship Created for Sustainable Food Program at M-State Fergus Falls**

Fergus Area College Foundation has established a scholarship to provide financial assistance to a second-semester student in the Sustainable Food Production program at M-State Fergus Falls. Program faculty will recommend eligible candidates, and the final determination of the scholarship recipient will be made each December.

Those interested in helping students pursue study in the sustainable agriculture field may make a tax-deductible donation to the Sustainable Food Production program scholarship fund. Checks should be sent to Fergus Area College Foundation, 1414 College Way, Fergus Falls, MN 56537. Or donate online at www.minnesota.edu/fact; click on “Making Donations” and write “Sustainable Food Production” in the comments section.

For more information, contact Carolyn Glesne at 218.736.1514 or facf@minnesota.edu.

**MDA Offers Flood Aid Grants to Farmers in 15 Counties**

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is now accepting applications for state flood assistance from farmers severely impacted by record rainfall and flooding in June 2012. Grants are available to eligible farmers in Aitkin, Carlton, Cass, Cook, Crow Wing, Dakota, Goodhue, Itasca, Kandiyohi, Lake, Meeker, Pine, Rice, Sibley, and St. Louis Counties.

Gov. Mark Dayton and state legislators agreed to create the grant program as part of the package of disaster aid passed into law during the one-day special legislative session on August 24. The program goal is to provide assistance to farmers recovering from the impacts of the severe storms.

The application form can be found on the MDA website here. Applications must be postmarked by Oct. 24. The applications will be reviewed and audited by MDA staff, with funds expected to be delivered in January. For more information about the program, contact MDA's Minnesota Farmer Assistance Network at 1-877-898-6326.

**Hennepin County Seasonal High Tunnel Workshop Slated**

Seasonal high tunnel or hoop house fruit and vegetable production is a rapidly growing farming technique in Minnesota. Thanks in part to the Natural Resources Conservation Service’s Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), new seasonal high tunnels are being installed across the state and country. To give new growers a solid foundation on high tunnel production and to provide helpful information for current seasonal high tunnel growers, U of M Extension is partnering with USDA–NRCS in Hennepin County to offer a seasonal high tunnel workshop from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Oct. 4.

The workshop will be outdoors will be held rain or shine. Please dress according to the weather. The location is Knapton’s Raspberries, Pumpkins and Orchard 5775 Highway 55, Greenfield. The cost is $15 for the morning or afternoon session, and $20 to stay all day; lunch and farm tour are included. To register, call Nancy Meese at 612-596-2128 or email nameese@umn.edu.

**Design Center Seeks to Hire Garden Program Manager**
The Community Design Center of Minnesota seeks a full-time Garden Program Manager to lead our education and training programs in sustainable gardening, entrepreneurship and youth development. The position is part of a dynamic work environment in which a small staff collaborates to help St. Paul youth and families develop skills related to entrepreneurship, agriculture, community service, healthy eating and ecological stewardship through work projects that improve the community's health and environment.

The CDC is a 43-year-old non-profit organization with a mission to build vibrant, healthy communities through food, conservation and youth development. We operate food and ecology programs that place the tools of personal and community development in the hands of young people and families.

To apply, please send a cover letter with salary requirements, resume and contact information for three references by Oct. 5 to: Tamara Downs Schwei, Executive Director, Community Design Center, 731 E 7th St, St. Paul, MN 55106 or email to admin@comdesignctrmn.org. Email is preferred; please write Garden Program Manager in subject.

Cover Cropping in Urban Agriculture Discussion Set

Join a discussion regarding how Cover Cropping May Improve Soil Fertility In Urban Agriculture from 3-4:30 p.m. Oct. 23 at Peace Coffee, 3262 Minnehaha Ave, Minneapolis. The event is free; coffee and cookies will be provided.

In spring 2012, Stone’s Throw Urban Farm received a SARE Farmer-Rancher Grant to explore different ways in which cover-cropping could improve depleted, urban soils while also fitting into the management requirements of a small farm. The workshop will explain Stone’s Throw’s cover cropping goals, experimental design, and initial ruminations. Then, the farmers hope to enter into a broader discussion regarding soil fertility challenges and potential solutions for urban agriculture and small-scale vegetable production in general.

Nursery Seeks Grower to Supply Pumpkins, Christmas Trees

Squire House Gardens & Nursery, a small gift, home decor, and outdoor goods shop in Afton, Minn., is seeking a grower to furnish pumpkins and/or Christmas trees for our fall and holiday season. The nursery is seeking sustainably grown, preferably organic products. This is our first season carrying these items and are happy to negotiate a reasonable arrangement for both grower and buyer.

Please contact Libby Wyrum at 612.867.0854 or via email at libertywyrum@gmail.com.

NCR-SARE Announces Farmer Grant Call for Proposals

The 2013 North Central Region - Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (NCR-SARE) Farmer Rancher Grant Call for Proposals is now available.

Farmers and ranchers in the North Central Region are invited to submit grant proposals to explore sustainable agriculture solutions to problems on the farm or ranch. Proposals should show how farmers and ranchers plan to use their own innovative ideas to explore sustainable agriculture options and how they will share project results. Sustainable agriculture is good for the environment, profitable, and socially responsible.

Interested applicants can find the call for proposals online as well as useful information for completing a proposal here. You can find more information about sustainable agriculture at sare.org or take a free National Continuing Education Program online course about the basic concepts here.

Proposals are due on Thursday, November 29th at 4:30 p.m. at the NCR-SARE office in St. Paul, MN. Potential applicants with questions can contact Joan Benjamin, Associate Regional Coordinator and Farmer Rancher Grant Program Coordinator, at jbenjami@umn.edu or 573-681-5545 or 800-529-1342.
Farmers' Guide to Organic Contracts' Now Available

Farmers' Legal Action Group (FLAG) is pleased to announce the release of a comprehensive and much-anticipated publication, the Farmers' Guide to Organic Contracts, written to help farmers make informed decisions at every stage of the contract relationship (available for free download at [www.flaginc.org](http://www.flaginc.org)).

The organic sector uses written contracts at a much higher rate than the conventional agricultural sector. However, until now, organic farmers had little independent, reliable legal information available to them when presented with - or when proposing - a marketing contract for organic crops, dairy, livestock, or other organic farm products.

This new resource for the organic community can help organic farmers evaluate, negotiate, and manage contract agreements with buyers of organic farm products.

The Farmers' Guide to Organic Contracts is accessible on FLAG's website and can be downloaded free of charge. Hard copies can be ordered [here](http://www.flaginc.org).

Fiber Farm Tour to Celebrate Sustainable Fiber, Animals

Dedicated to the promotion of sustainable fiber, fiber animals, and fiber art and artists, a Sheep & Fiber Farm Tour event is set from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on both Oct. 6 and 7 in southeast Minnesota. The tour, which spans Winona, Fillmore and Olmsted counties, includes four farms that will have Heritage-breed wool sheep of Shetland, Gotland, Lincoln, Leister Longwools, Romney, Merino and CVM. Also on the tour are Angora rabbits, Alpacas, llamas, and Angora goats. Discussions will be held on raising Heritage breeds and other fiber animals. Other demonstrations include weaving, spinning, felting, carding and other fiber uses.

Admission is free. For information, visit [www.fiberfarmtour.com](http://www.fiberfarmtour.com), email muellers@acegroup.cc or call 507.896.2354.

Organic Certification Cost Share Accepting Applications

Minnesota organic farmers and processors can apply for a rebate of up to 75 percent of the cost of their organic certification as the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is accepting applications for the Minnesota Organic Cost Share Program through Oct. 31.

Funds for the cost share program come from a cooperative agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Operations that received certification (or had ongoing certification) between Oct. 1, 2011 and Sept. 30, 2012 are eligible for reimbursement of up to 75 percent of certification-related costs up to a maximum of $750 per category (crop, livestock, processing/handling, wild harvest). Last year, the MDA disbursed nearly $381,000 to 480 certified organic farmers and processors in the state.

More information: [www.mda.state.mn.us/organic](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/organic) or 651-201-6012.

AWA Calls for 2012-2013 Good Husbandry Grant Proposals

Animal Welfare Approved, the only certification program and food label for pasture-raised meat, dairy and eggs, is announcing a call for proposals for its 2012-2013 Good Husbandry Grants. Now in its fifth year, the Good Husbandry Grants program has funded over one hundred projects across the country to improve farm animal welfare. Certified farmers and those who have submitted an application for AWA certification may apply for up to $5,000 towards projects such as mobile housing, breeding stock, and on-farm processing equipment. Slaughter plants working with or seeking to work with AWA farmers are also eligible for funding.

The funding priorities for this year's cycle include improved genetics, increased outdoor access, welfare improvements in the slaughter process and non-lethal predator control. As pasture- and range-based management is a fundamental requirement of AWA certification, a primary goal of this grant program is to facilitate the growth and success of high-welfare, pasture-based systems.
Farmers and slaughter plants interested in applying should click here for Guidelines, FAQ and an application. Contact Grants Coordinator Emily Lancaster at Emily@AnimalWelfareApproved.org or (202) 618-4497 with any questions.

**MDA Has $1 Million in Funds for State’s Livestock Farmers**

Minnesota Agriculture Commissioner Dave Frederickson has announced that $1 million in grant funding is being made available to livestock producers in the state for on-farm improvements. The Livestock Investment Grant Program was first funded by the Minnesota legislature in 2008. Since then, 89 grant recipients have invested an estimated $31 million in improvements to their operations.

Qualifying producers would be reimbursed ten percent of the first $500,000 of investment, with a minimum investment of $4,000. Qualifying expenditures include the purchase, construction, or improvement of buildings or facilities for the production of livestock, and the purchase of fencing as well as feeding and waste management equipment. Producers who suffered a loss due to a natural disaster or unintended consequence may also apply. The grant will not pay for livestock or land purchases or for the cost of debt refinancing.

The deadline to apply for the grant program is January 14, 2013. More information on the Minnesota Livestock Investment Program can be found on the MDA website.

**Fall Harvest Event for Women in Sustainable Agriculture**

Come share ideas, conversation and laughter while enjoying the beauty and relaxation of the Root River and surrounding bluff country of the Cedar Valley Resort during the annual Fall Harvest Gathering for Women in Sustainable Agriculture Nov. 9-11 in Whalan.

The weekend will include a presentation and demonstration on proper chainsaw use and safety, virtual farm tours, engaging women farmer speakers, small and large group discussions, songs, and plenty of time to relax and unwind.

For more information, contact stacelyleighbrown@yahoo.com.

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**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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