Calling All Budding Farmers to SFA Annual Conference

Art and science projects, cooking lessons and more – the Budding Farmers program is coming to the 2015 SFA Annual Conference, set for Feb. 14 at the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph, Minn.

SFA member Monica Irwin of Northfield launched Budding Farmers in 2013 after years of experience working within the local food system as a farmer, farmer’s market manager, community educator, and good food activist. The goal of the program is that all kids should know where their food comes from and why they should be eating healthy food.

At the SFA Annual Conference, registered children will complete art, science and cooking projects, and move around playing imaginative games. Also, each child will go home with plenty of fun activity pages and materials, including a seed-sprouting kit, so they can be a Budding Farmer at home.

“We’ll be doing hands-on agriculture-themed activities that focus on the Budding Farmers motto: ‘Learn, Cook, Grow – I’m a Budding Farmer!’” said Irwin (right).

Registration for children’s programming is just $10 – Budding Farmers students will return to their parents for lunch, and parents may want to pack snacks and drinks for their students to have during class time. Children attending must be between 3 and 12 years old and potty trained; kids under 3 are welcome to attend the conference but are the responsibility of their parents.

Click here to register.

To read more about Monica and Budding Farmers, visit her homepage or read this 2013 article from the Northfield News.

Volunteer Registration Now Open and Other Annual Conference News

- Volunteer registration is now open – all 2015 volunteers receive a newly designed SFA t-
• Register through Dec. 30 at the Early Bird rate of $45/members and $55/nonmembers. SFA members will receive a separate email with discount registration instructions. Only SFA members will receive this separate email.

• Vendor/Exhibitor Registration is open as well. Visit our Annual Conference homepage to download the proper form.

• Scholarships to attend the SFA Annual Conference are available for current students and require a volunteer commitment; for more information, email Jerry Ford at jerry@sfa-mn.org.

Oct. 31 Deadline Approaching: Send Us Your Memories to Celebrate 25 Years of SFA Farmer Networking

By Jason Walker • SFA Communications & Membership Coordinator

Next year is a big one for SFA – 2015 marks 25 years since our formation – and we need your help.

As SFA begins a yearlong series of special events and publications revolving around our Silver Anniversary, we are seeking submissions for a special edition of the yearly CornerPost magazine – SFA-related memories, stories, photos, videos, documents. This can be anything you have to share that can help tell SFA's story, whether it happened 25 years or 25 days ago.

A selection of these historical nuggets will be published in the upcoming CornerPost edition as well as archived on our homepage.

The deadline for these submissions is Oct. 31 to make the CornerPost magazine. After that you are encouraged to still send submissions for the website, but they won't make the printed, full-color CornerPost magazine!

Even if you want to just send two sentences about what SFA means to you, that would be terrific. No submission is too large or too small, as we are hoping to collect as diverse a range of information as possible.

Additionally, we're having a video contest: Make a short video (no longer than two minutes) about SFA, sustainability and what it means to you. The videos will be posted on our website, and the best video (as chosen by a panel of distinguished SFA staff) will receive a semi-fabulous prize package of SFA swag as well as free admission to the SFA Annual Conference. Then, at the conference, we'll play the winning video during the opening plenary session.

Email your materials to history@sfa-mn.org, and we'll start compiling. Or, mail to SFA, Box 192, Princeton, MN 55371. Submissions can not be returned without prior consent.

Executive Director's Note

SFA has played a major role in the advancement of sustainable agriculture over the last 25 years. Founded in 1990, SFAs Farmer to Farmer Network has helped to develop and promote foundational practices in agriculture; some of which have become mainstream.

For example, in 1990, reduced tillage and no till agriculture was somewhat obscure for most farmers. Today, zero tillage, particularly in soybean production has become the standard. Today, farmers are smarter about chemical applications, there are more farmers markets, more farmers selling direct to consumers and more beginning farmers than ever.

These advances would not have succeeded without the network of SFA farmers, who over the years have shared their insights and learnings with neighbors and friends through SFA chapters and involvement in SFA events. If you've been around SFA for any length of time, you've had a hand in this as well. Send us your memories, your thoughts, examples of the things you've
learned. Its time to celebrate the accomplishments of all of sustainable agriculture!

**Upcoming Webinar: Building Farm to Institution Markets**

A free webinar and survey to help Minnesota food producers grow, “Building Farm to Institution Markets,” is set for 3-4 p.m. Thurs., Nov. 6.

This webinar is for farmers, ranchers and producers currently selling to, or interested in selling to, schools, child care centers, hospitals or other institutions. It will provide an introduction to farm to institution practices and benefits. It will focus on how the needs of the producer can be matched with the needs of the buyer, accessing the potential of this rapidly expanding market channel. This webinar pairs with a new survey that invites producers to share their input on farm to institution opportunities, barriers and resource needs.

Presenters scheduled to appear include:

- SFA member producer Greg Reynolds, who will discuss his experience with farm to institution sales
- Andrea Northup from Minneapolis Public Schools, who will talk about the institution's perspective
- Ryan Pesch from University of Minnesota Extension, who will talk about the market potential of institutional sales

This is a project of: Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Renewing the Countryside, and Sustainable Farming Association.

[Click here to register.](#)

**SFA KCIM Cover Crop Field Day is Nov. 1 near Sebeka**

The Sustainable Farming Association is hosting a Cover Crop Field Day as part of its Keep Cattle in Minnesota project from 1 to 4:30 p.m. Nov. 1, 2014, in the Sebeka/Verndale area. The event is free and open to the public, and no RSVP is required.

During the Field Day, attendees will review two fields planted to complex cover-crop mixes; one is planted to a cool-season mix and the other to a warm-season mix. These mixes were designed to stimulate soil microbes, build soil organic matter and provide livestock forage. Cattle will likely be utilizing at least one of these fields the day of the tour. There will be a soil pit in the second field to view cover crop root action and growth.

The tour begins at Larry Heitkamp's Yellow Rose Organic Farm on County Road 12 seven miles east of U.S. 71 in Sebeka, or three miles east of the Co. Rd. 12 and Co. Rd. 23 intersection. Watch for SFA signs.

After the program at the Heitkamp farm, the group will caravan to the second stop, Kent and Linda Solberg's farm, at 18618 Co. Rd. 23, Verndale.

The Keep Cattle in Minnesota project is funded in part by MDA Sustainable Ag and Energy Grant and NRCS. For more information about SFA or Keep Cattle in Minnesota, contact Wayne Monsen at [wmonsen@gmail.com](mailto:wmonsen@gmail.com) or visit our [KCIM homepage](http://kcim.org).
After Last Year's Sellout, Midwest Soil Health Summit Returns With Gabe Brown; Registration Now Open

Registration is now open for SFA's second annual Midwest Soil Health Summit, featuring Gabe Brown, set for Feb. 18-19, 2015, at Arrowwood Resort in Alexandria, Minn.

The MSHS, newly expanded for 2015, also will feature Dr. Allen Williams, a champion of the grass-fed beef industry.

Brown, the keynote speaker, owns Brown's Ranch in Burleigh County, N.D., and is a pioneer in diverse cover cropping who has used no-till techniques for two decades. At the 2015 MSHS, Gabe will discuss soil health programming for beginners as well as lead a separate program for advanced farmers – if you attended the previous MSHS, rest assured this year’s version will include plenty of fresh information from Gabe.

Last year's MSHS was a sellout; register now to guarantee your spot. Walk-up registration will be dependent on pre-registration numbers, and SFA members receive a $50 registration discount. [Click here to register.]

Also scheduled to appear:

- **Jerry Doan**, farmer from Black Leg Ranch in Burleigh County, N.D., a multi-generational family farm that emphasizes soil health.
- **Dr. Michael Lehman**, a research microbiologist whose studies include evaluating soil microbiological responses to agricultural management practices.
- **Dr. Wendy Taheri**, a research microbiologist who specializes in the study of arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF).
- **Kent Solberg**, SFA Livestock & Grazing Specialist, will discuss Designing Complex Cover Crop Blends
- **John Mesko**, SFA Executive Director, will lead a program on Soil Science Basics
- **Ian Cunningham**, a cow-calf producer and veteran cover cropper from Pipestone County, Minn.

Also returning this year is our exclusive "Gab With Gabe" networking session from 4 to 6 p.m. Feb. 18, 2015, with Gabe Brown. ONLY 10 TICKETS will be sold at $50 each for this chance to network one-on-one with a soil health pioneer. You must register for the MSHS separately – this ticket will ONLY get you into “Gab With Gabe.” [Click here to register for “Gab With Gabe.”]

Need a room? Arrowwood Resort is a family friendly location with ice fishing, cross country ski trails, snowmobiling, ice skating, broomball, and more. For more information or to reserve a room at the special MSHS rate of $99, call the resort at 320.762.1124.

Deep Winter Greenhouse Workshop Registration Now Open

A 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. 31, 2015, in Ashby, Minn.

This newly listed class is distinct from the sold-out Feb. 13 Deep Winter class that is offered in combination with the SFA Annual Conference.

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.

This particular Deep Winter class is more in-depth and will provide opportunity for students to "get their hands dirty" in the greenhouse by planting and harvesting greens. It will also cover
greenhouse construction in a more detailed manner.

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). Storm date is Feb. 7, 2015.

Space is limited. Click here to register.

Lake Agassiz 'Good Food, Good Farms' Event is Nov. 5

SFA Lake Agassiz Chapter is sponsoring a local-food event, “Good Food from Good Farms,” from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Wed., Nov. 5 at the Heritage Community Center in Thief River Falls, bringing sustainable farmers and consumers together for education and networking opportunities. If you are passionate and committed to growing and/or eating good food, you will not want to miss this exciting event. Light refreshments will be served and admission is free.

Local celebrity chef Sue Doeden will demonstrate cooking with local food and provide samples to taste. Along with the demonstration will be four “lightning workshops” to visit, including:

- Lake Agassiz Chapter SFA information table offering Free Membership until April 2015 and highlighting the 2015 Lake Agassiz Chapter SFA Chicken Festival
- Homemade Cheese Press for your kitchen
- Thief River Falls Growing Forward food network
- High Tunnels

Come share ideas, learn new skills, find new markets, and meet others who think and live sustainably. For more information, email Marie Petry at grass@wtc-mail.net.

Check This Out

“Check This Out” is a section of links to articles and videos chosen by SFA staff that you might enjoy. Consider:

- Farmers interested in planting cover crops to improve soil health now have an updated and expanded resource in the second edition of the Midwest Cover Crops Field Guide. The pocket guide, released Sept. 22,is produced by Purdue University and the Midwest Cover Crops Council and is available at Purdue Extension’s The Education Store. Search by the name of the publication or product code ID-433.
- From the Washington Post: "Advocates of labeling for genetically modified foods are getting some heavyweight support from Consumer Reports, the nonprofit known for its comprehensive product reviews. On Tuesday, the group and its policy arm Consumers Union began touting a pair of studies on consumer behavior and product claims, the latest in a string of efforts supporting genetically modified food labeling requirements on the ballot in Oregon and Colorado." Read the entire article here.

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.
Food Licensing Questions Answered at Videoconference

What kind of a license do you need if you sell eggs, chickens and pork at a farmers’ market? Or if you sell jams and jellies? Or fruits and vegetables? Baked goods? Coffee?

Get your food licensing questions answered directly from Health and Agriculture staff from 12:30 to 4 p.m. Thurs., Nov. 6, during a videoconference hosted at eight sites around the state. The Minnesota Farmers’ Market Association is teaming up with the Minnesota Dept. of Health and the Minnesota Dept. of Agriculture to host this afternoon learning session using MDH’s & MDA’s statewide videoconference system.

In addition to learning about the various food licenses that are needed, participants will enjoy a fun hands-on safe food sampling lesson, presented by U. of M. Extension.

The eight videoconferencing locations are: Bemidji, Duluth, Fergus Falls, Mankato, Marshall, Rochester, St. Cloud, and St. Paul.

More details are coming soon! For more information, contact MFMA at info@mfma.org or 320.250.5087.
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