Double Your Donation to SFA as You 'Give to the Max'

This is an exciting time for us at SFA, because we are starting to see both an increased interest in our programming as well as positive results from the education and farmer networking efforts we've undertaken in the past few years. Even large, entrenched corporations are starting to see the benefits of sustainable farming, proving that SFA outreach and education are helping lead farming in the Upper Midwest toward increased sustainability and success.

SFA is an inclusive organization open to all, and we believe that our brand of agriculture is the most positive way forward. That's why we are happy to announce that we are building a matching fund pool for the upcoming Give to the Max Day, the popular annual fundraiser promoted by GiveMN.org.

As of today, we have raised over $9,000 for a still-growing matching fund on Give to the Max Day. This means that every dollar you donate will be matched by the fund at least up to $9,000 – your $100 donation results in $200 to SFA.

Our goal is to raise $20,000 on Give to the Max Day, and we can't do it without your support.

This year's fundraising holiday is officially Nov. 12, but GiveMN has stretched the event – starting Nov. 1, any donation you make through SFA's page on GiveMN will qualify for the matching fund. That's right – for 12 full days you can DOUBLE your donation to SFA on our GiveMN homepage. Schedule your donation early and avoid the high-traffic GTM Day fray.

SFA is growing the next generation of farmers who are going to farm in ways that feed our communities good food while improving water and soil quality. We hope to hear from you this November.

We are still raising money for the matching fund as well. If you would like to contribute to this effort, please email john@sfa-mn.org.

WOC Talks to Tap Wisdom of SFA Community
Similar to the popular TED Talks, SFA has a new program that we call WOC Talks (Wisdom of the Community). The idea is that SFA members and supporters will submit talks on subjects relating to sustainable farming and food systems, and the organization will select some of them for presentation at the SFA Annual Conference on Feb. 13, 2016, in St. Joseph, Minn.

The selected WOC Talks will be filmed and then placed on SFA’s website and YouTube channel.

Your talks can be existing presentations adapted to the WOC Talk format, or you may create a new presentation. Please be aware that we cannot broadcast any material that you might include in your talk that has a third-party copyright unless you obtain written permission to use the material.

For more information and the complete rules, please visit our WOC Talks homepage.

Executive Director's Note

Editor's Note: This is a condensed version of an article by John with an accompanying Farm Solutions podcast. Both can be found in their entirety here.

A recent article in the Wall Street Journal detailed Monsanto’s plans to cut 2,600 jobs in response to a quarterly earnings loss of nearly $500 million. Monsanto CEO Hugh Grant cites the downturn in the commodity corn prices as the reason for the loss, “When you narrow the lens to the next 12 months, the industry continues to face a challenging macro environment and we’ve moderated our outlook.” That’s corporate-speak for, “Run for the hills! Corn prices are falling, its every person for themselves.”

What if we could invest mostly our time, our energy and our intellect into something, with a little money, and get a long-term return without the risk involved in the global financial market, or the commodity grain market? What if we could come together as farming practitioners, consumers, and educators, and work together to invest in a guaranteed return?

When we invest in building our soils through the natural systems built into our environment, we are growing wealth financially, environmentally and socially. Communities with healthy, productive soils are simply better off.
The third and final weekend of Farm Skills 101 was abundant with varied activities. At Seven Pines Farm in Verndale, Minn., we spent a significant amount of time handling dairy cattle. We learned how to put cattle in a head gate, assess health, administer medication and put in ear tags. We also practiced how to utilize the cattle's natural flight zones to direct their movements in a way that caused the least amount of stress to the animal.

Students were involved in the full-life spectrum: helping a newborn calf acclimate to its new pen and butchering a lamb. And, of course, more fencing, which by this weekend was much easier than in Week One. For many of us, we had our first experience on a tractor and learned to drive, both forward and backward. We also hitched up a manure spreader and learned how to safely hook up the PTO.

Back at Paradox Farm, we learned how to assess and grease wheel bearings on a farm trailer – we completely dismantled the hub, cleaned and lubricated the bearings, and re-assembled it (Holly Pearson shown in photo at right). While groups of two worked on bearings, the other students designed and built pens for the goats' winter housing using some of the carpentry skills learned in Week One. Additionally, we examined how trailers can be used as appropriate moveable housing for livestock.

During the three weekends, we were introduced to a wide variety of farm skills. What I learned built well upon my already established familiarity with fencing and butchering, and now I have a much greater degree of competence with the skills.
However, my skill set was most profoundly impacted by those skills that I was introduced to for the first time. Both my pride and my typical human desire to not be too much of an imposition would have prevented me from seeking out help or offering to help with tasks such as driving a tractor or working on machinery. Having these skills introduced in such a supportive and fun environment now allows me to pursue more opportunities for greater knowledge with confidence and excitement.

It is sad to be done with Farm Skills 101, but the very intentional energy put into establishing a community that goes beyond the end of the class session will benefit us all. With SFA I enter a community that serves as a support and pool of knowledge from which to draw as my farm grows and evolves.

### Deep Winter Greenhouse Course Added for Feb. 20

Our Nov. 7 Deep Roots short course, “Deep Winter Production of Greens and Livestock Fodder Utilizing Passive Solar Energy,” is sold out, but we just added a new Deep Winter short course for Feb. 20! If you were hoping to register and missed the November class, [click here to sign up for Feb. 20](#).

At our Deep Winter short course, Paradox Farm owners Sue Wika and Tom Prieve provide 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.

To learn more about this short course, [click here](#).

### Deep Winter Producers Group Meeting is Nov. 7

Are you interested in growing healthy, tasty produce in the depths of winter in Minnesota? Come to a gathering of the newly formed SFA Deep Winter Producers Networking Group and find out what's going on in our state, from winter greenhouse design to production and all points in between.

The meeting will be held at 5 p.m. Sat., Nov. 7, at St. Benedict's Monastery, 104 Chapel Lane, St. Joseph, Minn., in the Rosamond Building, Room A (just north of the College of St. Benedict Campus). All experience levels welcome, and no registration is required.

We'll hear about the latest research in these innovative winter greenhouses, as well as exciting opportunities this winter to find out even more! Come join in the discussion with growers ranging from experienced greenhouse producers to beginners still pondering how to make it happen on their own farms. Afterward, join us for dinner at the nearby Gorecki Dining Center on campus. Great food, all you can eat for $12.

Membership in this networking group is free. Information: Carol Ford at 320.226.9435 or [deepwinter@sfa-mn.org](mailto:deepwinter@sfa-mn.org).

### SFA Adds Sustainable Sheep Networking Group

**By Alethea Kenney • SFA Sustainable Sheep Founder**
Sheep have been an integral part of Minnesota's heritage and continue to be a growing part of diverse farms across Minnesota, and SFA's Sustainable Sheep networking group focuses on connecting sheep farmers, youth, fiber artists and consumers that want to promote, use and sell sustainably raised sheep, meat and fiber products locally.

This group also has a unique opportunity to promote sustainable ways to raise sheep and to educate the public in the importance of choosing local, sustainable fiber for their garments, projects and art.

Seeing northern Minnesota sheep producers moving toward grass-based sustainable sheep production and more sheep products available and being purchased locally is the ultimate goal of the SFA Sustainable Sheep networking group. Please join us in seeing these goals become reality.

For more information, visit our Sustainable Sheep homepage or email sustainablesheep@sfa-mn.org.

**Forage Council Hosting Fall Meeting**

The Crow Wing River Basin Forage Council, an SFA Networking Group, is hosting its fall meeting at 9 a.m. Oct. 29 at Bricks Cafe in Motley. The group will recap its summer "Land and Water Tour" and goals for future tours as well as its upcoming 2016 Winter Meeting.

This meeting is free and open to all. For more information about the Forage Council, visit its homepage.

**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. Here are the top vote-getters, as of Oct. 20:

- Growing Fruits Organically in a Northern Climate
- Beyond the Farmer's Market: Marketing Alternatives for the Small and Mid-Sized Producer
- The Art of Stacking: Add Revenue Without More Acres
- Farm Power Primer: Machinery Options, Operation and Maintenance
- Know Before You Buy: What to Look/Out for When Considering a Property for a New Farm Project
- Basics of Farm-Scale Permaculture
- From the ground up: How to make a Deep Winter Greenhouse a reality
- North Country Beekeeping - Hive types, surviving harsh winters, basics, etc.

**Check This Out**
Great quote from SFA member Joe Borgerding in this Minnesota Farm Guide report: “Butter will help kids eat their vegetables and butter is healthy for that.” Right on, Joe!

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