A note from Executive Director John Mesko

Greetings once again, everyone. As you rush into what is no doubt a very busy fall harvest season, here's a quick update on what's happening in Sustainable Ag in Minnesota.

This week, we welcome Jason Walker to SFA (see bio below). Jason will be with us temporarily for now, the result of a small grant from the Initiative Foundation, and will be helping distribute information about our Annual Conference. Thanks, Jason.

Over the years, several SFA members have encouraged us to have a voice in public policy. Recently, I attended an advocacy training session in Washington, D.C., courtesy of the Organic Farming Research Foundation. This group is focusing advocacy and information efforts around organics in the 2012 Farm Bill. Minnesota is a key player politically in Farm Bill discussions, with Rep. Tim Walz and Rep. Collin Peterson on the House Ag Committee and Sen. Amy Klobuchar on the Senate Ag Committee. In Washington, I spoke about genetically modified organisms and organic crop insurance at a USDA listening session, as well as with several key Capitol Hill staffers. I learned that the 2012 Farm Bill is likely going to be processed, discussed and decided upon faster than earlier farm bills, though the final votes may not occur any sooner.

As just one offering at the SFA Annual Conference (Feb 18, 2012), attendees will have a chance to learn more public policy advocacy and how to be involved.

Meet Jason Walker, our new consultant

A Minneapolis-based food writer, Jason is a father of two whose goal is to stock his pantry with affordable, healthy and delicious food from sources like his garden, the farmers market, the food co-op and the discount store. Our fast-food society often takes eating for granted, and Jason believes taking simple steps to creating a sustainable kitchen can enrich the mind, body and pocketbook.

A 2001 journalism graduate of the University of Kansas, Jason has worked at several newspapers, including the Kansas City Star and the Lawrence Journal-World. Also a staff writer at The Heavy Table, Jason is thrilled to work for the SFA.
Call for MISA Board Members – Minnesota is rich with dedicated sustainable agriculture resources, and one of the best that SFA relies on is the Minnesota Institute of Sustainable Agriculture (MISA). Housed and staffed by the University of Minnesota, MISA is in a league of its own compared to similar efforts in other states. If you want to be involved in what is happening broadly in sustainable ag and join a great group of past and current key players, there’s never been a better time. MISA is seeking to fill some soon-to-be-vacant board slots. This program is a supportive partner with SFA. Please consider giving input into the development of this board.

The purpose of MISA is to unite the diverse interests of the agricultural community with interests from across the university community to develop and promote sustainable agriculture in Minnesota and beyond. A term on the MISA Board is three years, and you may nominate yourself or someone else. If you are interested, or know someone who is, please contact Helene Murray, MISA Executive Director, at 612.625.0220.

Also, don’t forget to check out the Event Calendar on our Website for more Sustainable Ag Events.

Mark Your Calendars!

SFA Annual Conference - February 18, 2012
College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph, MN