22nd Annual Lake Superior SFA Harvest Festival Brings Back Energy Fair

By Clare Hintz • SFA Lake Superior Chapter Coordinator

According to a U.M.D. report, we could keep millions of dollars – and hundreds of jobs – circulating in our region if we ate and sold more local food. Plus, more localized food systems have greater potential to address issues of food justice and access. And just imagine if we also produced more of our own energy!

The Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association’s Harvest Festival is the premier venue for learning about and boosting sustainable agriculture and food systems. LSSFA is hosting the Festival for its 22nd year.

Harvest Fest will take place at Bayfront Festival Park from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sat., Sept. 12. Held rain or shine, it is a free, family-oriented event that brings thousands of producers and consumers together to celebrate healthy communities through sustainably produced delicious food. Parking and the festival are free.

Harvest Festival features local farmers, artisans, live music, active organizations and businesses devoted to sustainability, and demonstrations. This year, the festival has revived games, and displays dedicated to renewable energy, energy conservation, and climate change action. Festival-goers can compete in an energy obstacle course and win points for conserving energy.

This year also features a greater recognition of our shared Western Lake Superior foodshed and includes more farmers from the Chequamegon Bay area of Wisconsin.

For more information, go to sfa-mn.org/lake-superior.

Executive Director's Note
The September issue of Progressive Farmer magazine has a special feature on food security in light of climate change. It's a very interesting read all farmers should examine. We all know the political rhetoric around climate change is wide-ranging, and at times, can seem a little over the top. Regardless of your personal stance on the politics of climate change, where it's occurring, how it's occurring and if man is causing it or it's just a part of the long term weather cycle of the world, farmers all over the world are indicating the climate is changing.

We know this. While 2015 was an unimaginably favorable summer for much of Minnesota, the extreme weather patterns we've had over the past few years likely means we won't see another one like this for a while. California, on the other hand, remains locked in a long term drought, which continues to have long term implications on food security for the US and the world.

When we add to this the considerations of a growing global population, and a growing demand for food for that population, we have a cauldron of issues brewing in the face of American Agriculture. That's one of the reason's I recommend Progressive Farmer's special feature. Its food for thought, and it highlights actions we can take now that can mitigate the effects of climate change. The fact is, even if all the “experts” are wrong about climate change, taking action today by changing the way we produce food will do us no harm, and will likely improve water quality and food quality in the future. PF editor Gregg Hillyer put it very succinctly in his opening editorial, “Don't let the controversy surrounding climate change keep you from making adjustments. Climate Smart agriculture requires a nimble hand to counter today's climate challenges…”

Let's have SFA farmers lead the way on these adjustments! Now's the time for those of us who've been developing soil building, climate change mitigating, healthy food producing farming practices to come to the aid of American agriculture. How can you be involved? If you own land, require your tenant(s) to attend the Midwest Soil Health Summit. If you are a farmer, come to the Midwest Soil Health Summit. Join the SFA Farmer to Farmer Network, learn from other farmers, see practices like cover crops and livestock grazing in action and see the improvements made. You'll be glad you did.

Three New SFA Soil Health Events Added to Calendar

We have added three new events to our fall slate. The details are not yet complete; please keep an eye on SFA Connect and our events homepage to learn more.

Plus, you can always check our Events Calendar for the most up-to-date listings.

The dates to circle:

- Nov. 6 – Soil health webinar with Dr. Allen Williams.
- Nov. 12 – Integrating Cover Crops and Livestock Grazing into Cropping Systems, Redwood Falls
- Nov. 13 – Integrating Cover Crops and Livestock Grazing into Cropping Systems, Blue Earth

Deep Winter Class Still Open; Fall Farm Skills Sold Out
SFA's Deep Roots Farmer Development program is offering a short course, “Deep Winter Production of Greens and Livestock Fodder Utilizing Passive Solar Energy,” set for Nov. 7, 2015, at Paradox Farm north of Ashby, Minn. During the class, Paradox 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. Cost is $100. Farm Skills 101 graduates may register for $30. Click here to register for “Deep Winter Production.”

Also, Fall 2015 Farm Skills 101 registration is SOLD OUT. Watch SFA Connect and deeprootsfarmer.com for information on Spring 2016 class dates.

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 current leading vote-getters:

- Farm Power Primer: Machinery Options, Operation and Maintenance
- Growing Fruits Organically in a Northern Climate
- Beyond the Farmer’s Market: Marketing Alternatives for the Small and Mid-Sized Producer
- Know Before You Buy: What to Look/Out for When Considering a Property for a New Farm Project
- The Art of Stacking: Add Revenue Without More Acres
- Basics of Farm-Scale Permaculture
- Fruit Farming in Minnesota
- Maintaining a Forage Chain - Full Season
- Taxes on the Farm
- Bee Keeping Basics

SFA Field Day: Fencing Innovations for Soil Health

Fencing innovations have made the integration of livestock into cover cropping systems easier than ever, and SFA is hosting a free field day to show how these strategies can result in improved soil health and enhanced profitability.

Join Kent Solberg (right), SFA Livestock & Grazing Specialist, from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Sept. 18 as he installs a semi-permanent fence on the Allen Deutz farm, 2866 Co. Rd. 35, Marshall. Solberg, who has 20 years personal and professional fence design and installation experience, will also lead a discussion of the cover crops planted and how Deutz intends to use them to build soil health and improve his farm profitability. Lunch is included; leather gloves, work boots and safety glasses are highly recommended.

The event is free, but an RSVP is appreciated for planning purposes here. Information: kent@sfa-mn.org or 1.844.922.5573, Ext. 701.
SFA Field Day: Cover Crops & Livestock Integration

Join SFA as we tour four central Minnesota farms and a look at the results of a three-year Minnesota Department of Agriculture Sustainable Ag Demonstration Grant project on various applications of cover crops in livestock operations.

The event, set for 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Friday, Sept. 25, begins at the farm of Kent and Linda Solberg, 18618 County Rd. 23, Verndale. Watch for the SFA signs. The tour group will travel via a coach bus to the three other farms: Larry Heitkamp’s farm in Sebeka, Dan and Rosie Middendorf’s farm near Verndale, and Marcus Edin’s farm near Staples.

Cost is $10; lunch is provided. Click here to register. Information: kent@sfa-mn.org or 1.844.922.5573, Ext. 701.

Fosston Fiber Festival & SFA Sheep Networking Group

Celebrating the fiber heritage of northern Minnesota, the Fosston Fiber Festival will showcase local fiber producers and artists from Oct. 2-4 at Northern Woolen Mills, 803 11th St NW, Fosston. The Festival, which includes fiber workshops, shopping, crafts, Northern Woolen Mills tours and more, is free, family-friendly and open to the public.

Information: www.fosstonfiberfestival.com or 218.657.2502.

Also, SFA is forming a Sustainable Sheep Networking Group. Keep watching SFA Connect for more information as it is available.

Check This Out

Consumer Reports magazine ran a recent cover story by Andrea Rock, "Wanted: Safe Beef," that concluded that sustainably raised beef was healthier, safer and more humane than conventional beef.

Consumer Reports is a subscription-only publication, so this link to the whole article may not work for everyone. However, here’s a quote from the article that we especially appreciated:

“The most sustainable beef-production systems don’t rely on any daily drugs, don’t confine animals, and do allow them to eat a natural diet,” (Consumer Reports Center for Food Safety and Sustainability Director Urbashi) Rangan says. And what’s good for cows is good for people, too. “Our findings show that more sustainable can mean safer meat.” That’s why Consumer Reports recommends that you buy sustainably raised beef whenever possible. Sustainable methods run the gamut from the very basic ‘raised without antibiotics’ to the most sustainable, which is grass-fed organic.

“We suggest that you choose what’s labeled ‘grass-fed organic beef’ whenever you can,” Rangan says. Aside from the animal welfare and environmental benefits, grass-fed cattle also need fewer antibiotics or other drugs to treat disease, and organic standards and many verified grass-fed label programs prohibit antibiotics. Sustainably raised beef does cost more, but it’s the safest—and most humane—way for Americans to enjoy our beloved burgers …”

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

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