Once every 5 years, the farm bill comes up for revision and renewal. Most sustainable farmers would probably agree that traditionally, rewriting the farm bill is a process that has not been particularly friendly, or fruitful. Largely, the farm bill serves interests other than sustainable farming, and some would argue that’s just fine. Sustainable farmers are the original “go your own way” people, abhorring the thought of dictates for farming decisions, with few relishing the idea of developing a dependence on government programs. Having done without, we can do without… part of sustainability, right?

It could work that way on a level playing field, but according to an increasing number of stakeholders, inequity in farm bill legislation is becoming more and more pronounced.

The awareness that a relatively small number of powerful lobbying interests are writing farm policy that affects us all, has stimulated a countervailing movement, bringing more voices into the debate than ever before. You may have sensed that something very different is in the air around the 2007 farm policy re-write…OK, so it smells mostly like ethanol, but if you keep sniffing, you will detect the unmistakable aroma of FOOD.

Michael Pollan, well-known author of several food system essays and books, including Omnivore’s Dilemma, is one of many vocal leaders for farm bill reform. In late March, he moderated “Food Fight: A Teach-in On the 2007 Farm Bill”, an event at UC-Berkeley with over 700 people in attendance. The overriding message was “get off the farm bill sidelines and into the fray”. Pollan stated, “Every five years or so, the President signs an obscure piece of legislation that determines what happens on a couple of hundred million acres of private land in America, what sort of food Americans eat (and how much it costs) and, directly as a result, the health of our population. The American food system is a game played according to a precise set of rules that are written by Congress, typically with virtually no input from anyone beyond a handful of farm-state legislators. Nothing could do
Artisan Cheesemaking News

Many Enjoy a Look into Artisan Cheesemaking

More than 60 people attended the first SFA Artisan Cheesemaking Workshop in St. Peter, February 17th. Attendees enjoyed a guided cheese tasting of a wide range of American artisan cheeses, led by cheese experts Joshua Dix and Patrick Moore. Four farmstead cheesemakers – Pam Benike, Joy Hedquist, Jodi Ohlsen Read, and Brand Donnay – shared stories of their cheesemaking lives and details about their farms and cheeses. Laurie Greenberg, Wisconsin artisan food producer advisor, University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems research affiliate, and consultant with the Wisconsin Dairy Business Innovation Center, presented an overview of artisan cheesemaking in Wisconsin along with a look at a variety of Wisconsin artisan cheesemakers and their businesses.

Many attendees expressed interest in future hands-on workshops and farmstead cheesemaking tours. The first SFA tour of a farmstead cheesemaking operation is tentatively scheduled for Friday, June 22nd at Shepherd’s Way Farms in Nerstrand, Minnesota. Attendance will be limited – registration details will follow in an upcoming CornerPost and on www.sfa-mn.org.

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The CornerPost newsletter is published quarterly. For editorial submissions or advertisements, contact Anne Borgendale, Communications Consultant, at the address below.

Articles, ideas, and information published in the CornerPost do not indicate a consensus among the members of the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota. For editorial submissions, questions, and comments, please contact: Anne Borgendale, Communications Consultant, Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota, 1045 23rd Ave SE Apt 2, Minneapolis, MN 55414, phone: 320-226-6318; email: communications@sfa-mn.org; www.sfa-mn.org.

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Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota Chapters .... there’s one near you!

Chapters are active in many interesting events year round. Call the chapter contact for more information, or visit our website at www.sfa-mn.org.

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Southeast Chapter

By Edgar Hansgen

Greetings from beautiful southeast Minnesota! It seems that I have gone from Mrs. Santa’s cookie tester to Mrs. Bunny’s Candy Taster in a few short weeks. We have had a busy 2007 so far with our meetings and other efforts. We are definitely ready for spring and all its activities, I think!

The turnout at our meetings exceeded our expectations and this gives us enthusiasm for planning our chapter activities for the rest of the year and early 2008. We have also been able to sign up new members whom we greatly appreciate along with our existing members.

We want to take this opportunity to introduce our new members to our “Complaint Department.” They are Lonnie Dietz, Arlene Nelson, Vic Ormsby, Eric Klein, Roy Michaelis, Ray Mark, and Ray Nelson. Please call them with any of your complaints. Seriously, they comprise an excellent Board of Directors. The board meets on the second Monday of each month at Gobbler’s Roost in Altura, MN at noon. Please call me at (507) 932-4219 if you wish to attend or to have an item added to our agenda.

The only summer activity scheduled is a “DIG.” The DIG amounts to digging in the soil to see the effect of soil health on root growth and plant health related to fertility. These DIGS are very informative and interesting. More on this later, as it will be late July or August before this takes place. We are open for suggestions, as this is your organization.

We are still hoping to have a meeting on “healthful

Southeast continued on page 4
Southeast continued from page 3

eating” sometime this year and a meeting on using herbs and spices, however, we have had scheduling problems. I hope that you all have a really good spring and summer. I’m sure that all the green houses are really cooking, and the tractor drivers have gone through spring training.

Crow River Chapters

By Greg Reynolds

Welcome to spring. The ice went out on the Crow River March 20th. The snow is off most of the fields and things are starting to dry out a little. Judging by the way the water has disappeared in the low spots, the frost is coming out of the ground too. We are being overrun with box elder bugs too. Onions, eggplant, and the first lettuce are up in the greenhouse.

We had our Spring Social at Three Crows in Delano, MN on Friday, March 23rd. It was a local wine and cheese tasting. As it turned out, it was a lot of fun, but if you ever need to know how not to do a wine and cheese tasting, just ask.

Usually we get about 20 people at our spring or fall socials. Over 50 people showed up for this event, most of whom I had never seen before. Obviously, Jerry Ford has figured out how to write a press release and get local papers to run it. The presenter, Mike Dickerman, is opening a winery on County Road 30, just west of Delano (i.e. really local) next year. The local paper ran a front-page story on Mike and the wine tasting. Mike told me that the Star Tribune called and wants to do a story on him too.

Jean Peterson volunteered Al to help out at the wine tasting. Al cut up cheese from Green Pastures Dairy, Carlton, MN and Donnay Dairy, Kimball, MN, greeted people at the door, collected the money, introduced Mike, plugged the cafe, local music, and gave a brief talk on sustainable farming and local food. Thanks Jean. Other people who deserve a big thank you too – Mary R. helped out with cutting bread, running to get the change that I forgot, pouring wine, cleaning up. Cathy and Don were late and tried to sneak in the backdoor, but it was the kitchen, so they got put to work opening bottles, pouring wine, serving bread and cheese. Gina and Brad own the place, but pitched in just like they were members too. Mary S., Pat, and Joey supplied wine glasses.

While Mike launched into his presentation on vineyards, making wine, and tasting wine we were all in the back trying to figure out how to serve wine and cheese to a packed house. As Brad noted, there was no way we were going to get all those people through a receiving line. And since I had counted on 30, tops (50% more than usual), we were faced with making three bottles of wine serve 50+ people. As it turns out, an ounce of wine looks like a reasonable amount to taste. I picked up a couple of high priced Minnesota wines and Mike brought five varieties of his wine. Judging by the volume of the conversation and the laughter, there was plenty of wine to go around.

All Mike’s wines were very good (his red won third place at the State Fair), but the Rhubarb and Apple wines were great. Lots of fruit flavor and not very sweet. The nameless other Minnesota wines tasted flat and flavorless by comparison. Bob Belvick, Mike’s neighbor, brought a couple bottles of Port wine that he is making and provided a nice finish to a great event. Whew.

Let the rain kiss you.
Let the rain beat upon your head
with silver liquid drops.
Let the rain sing you a lullaby.
The rain makes still pools on the sidewalk.
The rain makes running pools in the gutter.
The rain plays a little self-p-song
on our roof at night--
And I love the rain.

- Langston Hughes, April Rain Song
Cannon River/Hiawatha Chapter

By Mary Ellen Frame

The annual meeting of the Cannon River/Hiawatha Chapter of the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota was held on Saturday, February 3rd at the United Church of Christ Church in Northfield, MN, a very cold day; many members were unable to attend due to weather-related problems.

Our featured speakers were Michael Nash and Solveig Hanson of Sunflower Fields Farm, near Postville, IA. Nash and Hanson farm 215 acres of pasture, vegetables, hay, woodland, small grains and flowers. They are also part of GROWN Locally, a 15-member producers co-operative located in a predominantly rural area in the Northeast corner of Iowa. They told the story of the formation of the co-op, and explained in detail how it works in serving institutions as well as families. The co-op has also built a licensed kitchen to process foods, excluding meats, so that it has greater diversity in its offerings, and can capture the added value of baking, jamming, cutting, etc. It uses one web site for the producers, through which the co-op coordinator determines what to order, and from whom. Another web site is for customer orders, and it all comes together through the co-op coordinator.

In our chapter, there are a number of members who market a variety of products directly to consumers, and also to Just Food Co-op in Northfield, MN and one of the local colleges. The GROWN Locally model of co-operative marketing, with some changes, might work very well for us. We decided that it merits further discussion. We met again on Saturday, March 3rd to consider whether we’ll pursue the idea of such a marketing co-op. We realize that it will take a lot of meeting time to put such an undertaking together. Our next meeting on this topic will be November 10 or 11, details to be announced.

Our officers are: Rae Rusnak, President; Erin Johnson, Vice President; Sheri Breen, Treasurer; and Katie Wall, Secretary. There was a meeting of the Board of Directors on Sunday, March 25th, at Sheri Breen’s house in Northfield. An upcoming event this summer will be a gathering at Mary Ellen Frame’s farm on Sunday, July 8th; details to be announced.

Central Chapter

By Sue Peterson

The Sustainable Farming Association of Central Minnesota (SFACM) has launched a new program called the 100 Orchards Project. Its goal is to plant and sustainably maintain 100 orchards in the central Minnesota. It will offer opportunities for mentoring, community building, especially if an orchard can be in a public place, and long-term cooperation between orchard owners and caretakers. It will also produce healthy local food for rural communities. The plan is to develop a catalog whereby landowners can choose the appropriate orchard for their individual needs, soil type, etc.

As part of this program, the SFACM is hosting a Grafting Workshop on Monday, April 9th starting at 10:00 a.m. at Greg Nolan’s sawmill near Browerville, MN. There will be classroom instruction in the morning followed by a potluck lunch, and hands-on tree grafting in the afternoon. There will be approximately 145 roots available for apples, pears, and stone fruit. There is a fee for the workshop, but participants will also take home 5-10 grafted trees. Please contact me at (320) 355-2980 or azariahsue@yahoo.com for more information and directions.
Manure Management Plans for Fun and Enjoyment

By Jeremy Lanctot

If your farm has a livestock feedlot, you need to complete a Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) approved manure management plan (MMP) by 2010 according to the new 7020 rules. I recently received more training on completing these plans for dairy farms. Also, I have access to grant money that could help you get your plan done for very little money. Plus, I’m not a regulatory person, so I don’t ‘bite’, nor will I tell someone who does ‘bite’ if you have a manure management problem. The grant program I work with doesn’t require disclosure and this has been tested in at least one case already. We can quietly work on solving your problems by completing a MMP, which will put you, not the MPCA, in the driver seat. The MPCA MMP is a subset of the federal NRCS nutrient management plan (NMP), which is a subset of the comprehensive nutrient management plan (CNMP). If you want a higher Conservation Security Program (CSP) score and want to develop an NMP or CNMP, I can also help. Basically, you just have to contact me. Between the state grants and NRCS EQIP cost-sharing, you should be able to get one of these plans accomplished with only a small outlay of money for soil and manure tests, etc.

I can also help dairy farms improve their conservation scores for CSP. I can assess what practices you are doing and need to do on your farm and then provide some painless ways to add a few more practices, for example, native pollinators and birdhouses. If anyone needs birdhouses for their farm, my children are building some bluebird and bat houses this spring and could build a few for you as well.
South Central Chapter

By Jim Tjepkema

The board of the South Central Chapter presented a program on farm policy at our annual meeting held on Saturday, March 10th. We were very fortunate to have former U.S. Congressman Tim Penny as one of our speakers. Dave Frederickson, past president of National Farmer’s Union and Sen. Amy Klobuchar’s agriculture advisor, was scheduled to attend, but had to cancel. Fortunately, we were able to get Pastor Barbra Finley-Shea from Our Savior’s Lutheran Church in Lyle, MN to fill in. We asked our speakers to talk about the effect of the rising price of corn on farm policy pertaining to sustainable agriculture.

Barbara Finley-Shea spoke about four state bills covering funding for research on organic farming, outreach work on sustainable livestock production, the state sustainable agriculture grant program, and the state organic cost share program. Barbara told us that the Land Stewardship Project (LSP) would like us to call our legislative leaders asking them to support this funding. Additional information on calling to support this legislation is available by clicking at the take action area of www.landstewardshipproject.org.

Tim Penny approached the topic by presenting a history of farm policy, including some legislation that he helped shape when he served on the agricultural committee while in Washington D.C. Since the beginning of our government, and even in England during colonial times, government has been involved in policy and laws that impact agriculture.

He feels that we are now burdened with a policy that provides excessive payments to large farms even when they are doing well and don’t need the extra government subsidies that they are getting. He believes that these excessive payments to large farmers would be better spent on research and development that would have an impact on sustainable farming.

A question and answer period followed the presentations. Tim answered many questions from his perspective as a former policy maker. He sees the need for change in agriculture and sees hope in smaller operations that are more specialized, similar to those advocated by people in the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota. Tim believes that a good approach to changing policy would be to reduce excessive payments to large farmers and use this money for sustainable agriculture development. He said that an increase in the budget for agriculture is not likely to occur and it shouldn’t be increased because our country has other needs that should be supported and are short on funds. From his experience, none of the various agricultural interest groups will easily give up any of their funding, but the high payments to large farms could be reduced if there is enough pressure put on this area of funding.

Tim’s advice to people concerned about farm policy is to take action by confronting legislators at public meetings; writing letters to legislators, and writing letters to papers, which name legislators and ask them to support changes in legislation. He said that every one in Washington D.C. has a clipping service and will know when their names are mentioned in newspapers. He also said we need to show courtesy when addressing legislators so that they will listen, but we also need to be forceful. To get legislators to attend our meetings we should join with other organizations to sponsor large meetings.

There was lots of good interaction between Tim and the fairly large audience. Tim told us that one his boyhood neighbors was in the audience, an early adaptor of conservation farming, who had received an award for conservation. Tim’s boyhood neighbor told us that he is pleased that a South Central Chapter member, Archie Kluender, is now running his land and farming it organically.

Do you need to renew?

Membership in the SFA of MN entitles you to receive the CornerPost Newsletter and discounts on SFA of MN Events. Use the form on page 17 or go to www.sfa-mn.org and join or renew your membership today!
The State of Sustainable Dairy in 2007

By Jeremy Lanctot

There has been a lot of activity the past few months in dairy related events in Minnesota. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has assembled a new Dairy Advisory Committee to help decide and steer the direction of the Minnesota Dairy Initiative and other dairy programs statewide. I personally know several of the people appointed to that body and I have high hopes that this group of fifteen, or so, people will be able to provide a clear vision for future expenditures and programs to help the dairy industry in Minnesota. The persons I know are not just interested in more milk production. They have a good concept of what it means to be a dairy farmer and what makes dairy farms successful.

Recently a need has arisen to highlight successful dairy farms along with how they maintain their sustainability and sanity. Many dairy farms that meet these criteria get overlooked because they’re not big or their numbers don’t show up in the upper percentages of DHIA testing. Two measures that I often see in sustainable farms are the number of excellent heifers and yearling sold and the number of new dairy farms incubated from the ‘mother’ farm. These are the farms that we should be making known to our legislators as models of the future dairy industry independent of their size and milk production numbers. If we can’t multiply our livestock and help others get started in dairy, we’re sunk no matter what our DHIA numbers reveal.

If you are a dairy farm that has been successful at selling excess (not cull) heifers and/or if you have been able to help startup another dairy through a son, daughter, herdsperson or friends, please contact me at mdi@sfa-mn.org or (320) 980-2333. I’d like to add you to a list of dairy farms that should be case-studied to educate others on what can and should be done in Minnesota.

Kristen Kubisiak wrote an article for the March 24, 2007 issue of the Dairy Star reviewing a speech given by Harlan Anderson of Cokato, MN at Ridgewater College in Willmar, MN. Harlan declares that the state of Minnesota no longer cares about its dairy industry. Minnesota supports the ethanol industry with 35 times more subsidies than it gives to dairy. I attribute this to a lack of vision of our dairy leaders. The successful farmers aren’t speaking out enough about what works.

Personally, I believe government subsidies squelch creativity when they’re not phased out. It’s fine to grant some money for something new to get it going. This initial support should be cut back over time to help force self-sufficiency. Let’s use the lack of ‘support’ from our state as a stepping stone to prove we have ingenuity and tenacity. Remember New Zealand!

One segment of the dairy industry that is growing is organic and grass-fed milk. Southwestern Minnesota has just added some new certified organic dairy farms within the last six months with more transitioning this year. Northwestern Minnesota is seeing the same response. Several new farms near Fosston, MN are scheduled to be shipping organic milk in May with more farms coming online later this year. I don’t have the exact numbers tallied as of this writing, but Minnesota should finish 2007 with approximately 150 certified organic dairy farms on our roster. This is a tremendous gain!
Right after Thanksgiving 2006, I assembled my advisory committee for SFA’s work with the Minnesota Dairy Initiative to receive input on how SFA should be concentrating its efforts towards dairy in 2007. By the end of the meeting many hours later, we had assembled a rough outline of a system which could help herdspeople transition from dairy farm employees into dairy farmers with their own herds and farms. Since this initial planning, we have added education professionals from the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system to this group and solicited their input on what can be done to help herdspeople get the training they need to further their skills in dairy management. In essence, we will surround the interested herdspeople with the necessary resources to advance their capabilities and possibilities in order to encourage them to stay in the dairy trade while they work.

Another goal of this project is to create a pool of skilled workers who can perform fill-in work for existing dairy producers when the farmers vacation or are sick. Also, similarly to how CSA farms employ part-time intern workers, young people could try out herd management on ‘incubator’ dairy farms to see if it is something they have a long-term interest in doing. One could take a break from college for a few months and help a farmer milk and manage a herd. At a more advanced stage in herdsperson training, sharemilking could be included in the plan to help the individual build his or her own herd in anticipation of spinning off to his or her own farm. Livestock is the primary economic engine of dairy farms. Helping herdspeople build this portion of their investment is a powerful wealth generator. Having them learn a broad range of skill-sets while doing this a great way of ensuring lasting success. They would be encouraged and helped to take advantage of the training available through the present college system via workshops and short courses. Land Stewardship Project’s Farm Beginnings™ would be an excellent training opportunity for those who are getting prepared to embark into their own dairy farm enterprise.

These plans are still in its design stage and we’re working on the formation of a pilot project. I would love to hear from dairy producers who employ herdspersons or know someone who could benefit from such a project. Of course, whatever ‘it’ is has yet to be solidified.
When Cheesemaking Goes Bad

By Jeremy Lanctot

Now that we’ve completed the initial cheesemaking training for over sixty of you who came to Artisan Cheesemaking Workshop for Beginners at the SFA of MN annual conference, we’re going to see a proliferation of cheese-like substances foisted on us unsuspecting Minnesotans. I remember the faces of the attending legislators who dared sample some of the sharper varieties of ‘cheese’ thrust under their noses. I wish I had my camera in tow. <grin>

My family came home with a booty of great cheese perfections from Green Pastures Dairy, Shepard’s Way and Prairie Hollow. Oh yes, Donnay’s goat chevre is definitely a hit at home! There were other varieties for the wayward taste buds as well. I steered clear of those. But, there’s nothing like a Minnesota apple sliced thinly with a thin slice of Minnesota gouda or white cheddar. Mmmm. Now, I’m anticipating a rash of news flashes appearing in local papers about what happens when cheesemaking has gone bad.

I’m sure our excellent cheesemaking experts made the process look so simple and straightforward. Workshop attendees were thinking, ‘I CAN do this!’ BEWARE of these overly confident craftsmen! Recently, a machine shed near Paynesville simply exploded wiping out an entire farm. Fortunately, the family escaped with their lives. Is there some connection? The timing is certainly suspicious. The HazMat authorities are still trying to decipher what substance caused that accident.

In ‘Dead Men Don’t Wear Plaid’, an early Steve Martin movie, Steve plays a private eye who uncovers a plot by an evil Nazi-like megalomaniac played by Carl Reiner who is going to destroy the United States with an unhealthy dose of really ‘bad’ cheese. Given the results of some people’s early cheesemaking attempts, MPCA may be issuing “attempted cheesemaking management plans” in lieu of MMPs. Some sure smells like it! What will the neighbors think? I can foresee the court battles now. “Limburger to Land in Township, Local Residents Enraged”, the headline will read. Where’s local zoning when you need it. Act now!

How can you tell when your cheese has gone ‘bad’? You’ll notice the shady varieties that slowly make their way to the back of your refrigerator. Their shifty character and anti-social make-up causes them to retreat to the dark recesses behind better behaved fare. These are probably good candidates for cheese gone ‘bad’. They start hanging out with the moldy jars of half-eaten artifacts from an era long gone. The back alleyways of many people’s refrigerators are surely a dangerous place to venture. Here’s a test. If you give your animals a ‘cheese’ sample in their feed dish and the sample is sorted over the outside edge of the dish, then THAT is bad cheese. If your cat buries it…it’s REALLY BAD cheese.

After you’ve tried a few batches of your ‘cheese,’ test it out on your animals first. I realize the PETA folks will probably be contacting me via their lawyers for making this recommendation. How would it look if you put “No Animal Testing” on the labels of your product? I think people would be better off with a little testing first, don’t you think?

Just don’t test it on me! Best of luck in your cheesemaking endeavors.
Yokiel honored posthumously with Sustainable Farmer Emeritus Award

By Anne Borgendale

“Work hard. Do it right the first time so you don’t have to do it over again. Do what’s best for you, don’t worry about what others say.”

George Yokiel’s family can remember him saying these things and living by the values these words profess to: a strong work ethic, quality work, thinking for yourself, doing what you think and know is right, determination, confidence in your abilities and knowledge, and helping others.

These were the qualities that made George Yokiel the independent, pioneering organic farmer who was admired by many. These were also reasons why he was chosen posthumously for the Sustainable Farmer Emeritus Award by the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota (SFA of MN) award committee for this honor, which recognizes someone “… that has dedicated many years of their life to the advancement of sustainable farming in Minnesota.”

In 1991, George Yokiel’s 320-acre farm near Wells, MN was certified as organic. George’s brother, Ray, who also farms, converted his farm to organic in 1984. George decided to also convert to organic to help his dairy herd, as the cows were having health problems. After the conversion, herd health rebounded and George did not look back.

Even though the neighbors talked a lot about the farm and thought it was strange, going organic wasn’t that big of a change for George since he never used that many chemicals to begin with. Growing up on a farm in south central Minnesota, George’s dad never used that many chemicals either. For George, going organic just seemed like the right thing to do.

George started farming on his own in 1963 after marrying Leona. She grew up on a farm only a few miles away and they had always gone to church together. They had a dairy herd, pigs, chickens, and row crops. George and Leona had five children: Gary, Anita, Sandy, Mark and Cathy.

In 1998, after years of dairying, they sold the dairy herd and switched to raising beef cattle and replacement heifers.

In the early 1990s the South Central Chapter of the SFA of MN was just starting to form and George attended some of their meetings. He eventually became a chapter board member. However, his biggest influences on the group were the insights and opinions that he brought with him. George wasn’t trying to change agriculture as a whole; he just wanted to share what he had learned on his farm while trying to make it more sustainable. Many people would call to ask him questions or come up to his place and talk because he was a mentor to many farmers. They leaned on him for information, with some people calling from as far away as Pennsylvania. He was also one of the first people in Minnesota to try flame cultivating and was always willing to share what he had learned about it and what worked for him.

George also sought out support. Often he would sit down with his brothers Ray and Don -- also organic farmers -- and hash things out. They would sometimes talk for hours out in the machine shed about different techniques, methods and breeds. They felt fortunate to be able to express their opinions without fear of being

Yokiel continued on page 12
Yokiel continued from page 11

judged. George was always willing to listen and try new things on his farm.

Besides farming George was also passionate about working on tractors. He did all of his own repairs and also liked to restore old tractors. His most prized tractor was a Minneapolis Moline military tractor, which is believed to be the only one around. He transformed the dilapidated tractor and made it run again.

When George passed away in 2003, his oldest son Gary took over the farm. Gary had been farming part-time prior to his father’s death. He continues to farm organically, and like his dad he is always learning and experimenting. The farm continues to have beef cattle, corn, beans, alfalfa, oats and small grains. While the farm continues to evolve, Gary is still carrying out his father’s vision.

Leona and Gary accepted the award on George’s behalf at the SFA of MN’s 16th Annual Conference at Gustavus Adolphus on Saturday, February 16th. They felt that George was very deserving of this honor. Leona explained, “We don’t realize what people really thought about what (George) was doing. It is nice to know that his name is still brought up today in this organization (SFA of MN) … he’s not forgotten. It’s too bad that he wasn’t here to accept it, but it is quite an honor to our family to know he received this.” According to his brother Ray, “I think George would truly enjoy this.”
Reynolds recognized for his service to Sustainable Agriculture

By Anne Borgendale

When you ask Greg Reynolds, he says that he’s not doing anything particularly special to help sustainable agriculture; he just farms his land and tries to grow the market for his vegetables. However, when you ask the people that know him, they tell you that in the process of “not doing anything special,” he’s improved soil quality, raised consumer awareness about locally produced foods, mentored young farmers, and initiated the Minnesota Garlic Festival.

So, whether he believes it or not, Greg has been of tremendous service to the sustainable agriculture community over the past 16 years. To honor his accomplishments, Greg was presented with the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota’s (SFA of MN) Distinguished Service Award at the SFA of MN’s 16th Annual Conference on Saturday, February 17, 2007.

On his farm and in his day-to-day life, Greg explains that he follows a set of simple guiding values stating, “It is important to leave things in better shape than we found them. It should be possible for our grandkids to farm here. As a society we have to make some hard choices about how we live.” For example, a choice he recently made was to put a new hot water heating system in his greenhouse. He chose the hot water heat over forced air because it uses half the energy.

Greg also utilizes cover crops such as soybeans, rye, and vetch for green manure to help return nutrients to the soil that growing vegetables take out. He uses composted manure too, as he does not have enough land on his farm to have the appropriate field rotation of 7-8 years in order to be free of most outside inputs.

His farm is an 80-acre plot right on the Crow River near Delano, MN, aptly named “Riverbend Farm.” Riverbend has been organically certified since 1994 and grows mostly vegetables for direct wholesale to co-ops and restaurants such as Lucia’s, Restaurant Alma, The Birchwood Café, Moose and Sadie’s, Broders Pasta Bar, Mississippi Market, Seward Co-op, The Wedge, Linden Hills Co-op and Lakewinds Co-op.

Jokingly, Greg blames his second career on his dad, commenting, “If I grew up on a farm I would have known better.” Also, when he was growing up in Anoka, MN, his dad always had a big garden in which Greg had a plot. Greg credits his interest in sustainable agriculture and energy issues on being a product of the

Reynolds continued on page 14
Reynolds continued from page 13 1970’s and the back-to-the-land movement popular at that time. In high school he was interested in farming, but knew that as a kid right out of school he could never afford land or equipment. Thus, he took the “practical” route and pursued other interests.

In the early 1970s, Greg earned a degree in physics from the University of Minnesota and got a job with TSI, a high-tech company based in Minnesota. This eventually took him to Connecticut for 10 years, but in 1991, Greg returned to Minnesota to farm. Out east is also where Greg met and married his wife Mary who accompanied him back to Minnesota. She is employed in Buffalo, MN as a psychotherapist and helps out on the farm in different capacities when needed.

Overall, Greg says he’s happy to be farming, “I get to work outside and I get to do what I like.” In the past 16 year’s learned some things too, stating, “The best lesson that I’ve learned is to go on vacation when the weather is nice. There is always more work that needs to be done. Getting away around the first week of July is perfect. Everything is planted; tomatoes aren’t ready to harvest. The weather is warm; the days are long. Weeds are a little tricky, but there are always plenty of them. It also helps my crew pull together and learn how to get things done when I’m not here telling them what to do.”

Greg has been involved with the SFA of MN for many years and is currently the Crow River Chapter Coordinator. He is also an integral part of the Minnesota Garlic Festival. Jerry Ford, the Crow River Chapter President, says that Greg planted the seeds for the Garlic Festival. However, Greg says that the Garlic Festival is Jerry’s baby. No matter what is ever decided about who started what, Greg is in charge of food for the Garlic Festival. It was a natural step for him because of his connection with chefs and restaurants.

In the end, Greg feels honored to be given the Distinguished Service Award, even if doesn’t think he deserves it. He explains, “I want to make a positive difference in the little part of the world that I have contact with.” Greg has had and continues to have a notable influence on sustainable agriculture, but you’ll have to convince him of this.

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Bilek Elected OCIA President

DeEtta Bilek was elected 2007 President by the Board of Directors of the Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA), a USDA accredited certification agency, at OCIA’s Annual Membership Meeting in Lincoln, Nebraska in March. She was first elected to the Board in 2006 as Treasurer and Finance Committee Chair. DeEtta and her husband Tom have a certified organic farm in central Minnesota near Aldrich. DeEtta is also the Chair of the Certification Review and Crop Improvement-Education Committee of the OCIA Minnesota Chapter. She served as SFA’s program manager from 1995-2003. Congratulations DeEtta!
This is an email that Marvin & Laura Bihl of Homeplace Organic Beef received from one of their customers who is living in Germany for a short time. The customer expresses her ability to continue to obtain locally grown and organically grown food during their stay in Germany and the German interest in good, locally grown food.

Dear Laura and Marvin,

I haven’t had much time to write a lot to anyone, but I have been thinking of you folks of late. We live in Sillenbuch, a small town/city that belongs to the greater Stuttgart area. A part of Sillenbuch is called Riedenberg, and the two must have grown together some years ago, although a strip of farm, field and woodlands mostly separates them. In Riedenberg is a Demeter association farm. Demeter is a certification association, which is organic, with an emphasis on good treatment of the animals. The farm sells raw milk out of an automat dispenser adjacent to the barn. We pay our coins into a flowerpot on the window ledge, and put our brown milk bottles on the shelf below the dispenser, push a button and the pump fills the bottle. I was certainly concerned at first, about health issues like tuberculosis, but the more I read about it, the more determined I became to drink fresh, raw milk whenever possible.

The farm also sells vegetables and fruits, cheese, bread, joghurt and eggs produced by other farms, so when I can get there in the early evenings (when the stand is open) I do my best to buy there. At the very least, I hope that drinking the raw milk will help us keep ahead of the local germs, which really knocked us down the first few months.

As far as food goes, we really are lucky, because there is an organic shop just two streets away, and four other groceries within walking distance, and every Friday is a “Wochenmarkt” - pretty much a farmers’ market. Every store has at least some organic produce, even the least fancy ones. I haven’t driven a car since I left Minnesota (I’m studying for the test), and buy almost all our food locally, bringing it home in a bicycle trailer that has a push-handle on the back. This means I get out and walk a good couple of miles to the shops and farm at least three times each week.

Chris’ boss and wife are also members of Slow Food, and we plan to attend slow food activities here - they are very tied into healthy foods and healthy growing methods.

Kathryn Linafelter Johnson

The “Students on Sustainability” breakout session at SFA of MN’s Annual Conference. Gustavus students from Left to Right: Liam Glover (Freshman), Kevin Borgendale (Senior), Kristin Wheeler (Senior), and Ingrid Vick (Senior).
Let Them Eat Grass at Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo (FNCE)...and more!

By Mary Jo Forbord

One of the many reasons for Health Environment and Nutrition (HEN) members to attend American Dieticians Association’s Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo in Philadelphia September 29 - October 3, 2007 is to participate in HEN’s Priority Education Session, Let Them Eat Grass: Pasture-Raised Meats for Health and Flavor. Pasture-raised meats are in the news, and are increasing in demand among consumers. Nutrition and health benefits, environmental benefits, an economic boost for family farms…is it all too good to be true? Explore the science behind the claims and find out what is causing consumers to seek out grass-based foods, while discovering the emerging world of grass-based cuisine. Session presenters are Mary Jo Forbord and Shannon Hayes.

Mary Jo Forbord, R.D., is the Executive Director of the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota. A fifth generation farmer, Mary Jo and her family operate Prairie Horizons Farm, grow certified organic pasture-fed beef, and sell directly to customers. Mary Jo is the chair-elect of the Hunger and Environmental Nutrition Dietetic Practice Group.

Shannon Hayes holds a Ph.D. degree in Sustainable Agriculture and Community Development from Cornell University. Her research areas include agricultural transitions in New York State, grass-roots sustainable agriculture development initiatives, sustainable cuisine, and community welfare. Shannon is a partner on Sap Bush Hollow Farm, a diversified grass-based livestock operation, specializing in meat science, product development and marketing. Shannon is a writer, cooking teacher and author of The Grassfed Gourmet (2004), and The Farmer and the Grill (2007). She will be signing her books following the HEN priority session on Sunday, September 30th.

On Sunday evening, September 30th, you are invited to our annual HEN Member Reception at the Reading Terminal Market, featuring locally grown foods in season. The HEN Awards are always a highlight of this event. Our members do amazing work, and this is our chance to recognize the most outstanding contributions.

Immediately following the reception, HEN invites you sit back, relax, and get comfortable for our inaugural Let Them Eat Grass continued on page 21
Food continued from page 16
Sustainable Food Systems for Food and Nutrition Professionals.”
the lines’ of advocating for nutrition programs, is speaking out on the connection of food, agriculture and health. As a membership organization comprised of 65,000 food and nutrition professionals, Increasingly, the new voices joining the farm bill debate are taking ownership. They understand that the farm bill has widespread, profound and long-term effects. They are determined to be part of a revived democratic process to craft farm policy that links to a diverse domestic food supply, health, social justice, natural resource conservation, and rural economic development. Positive change is looking more possible, much is at stake, and the voices of sustainable farmers are essential to the debate.

The Minnesota congressional delegation will play a key role in drafting the 2007 farm bill. Collin Peterson is the chairman of the House Agriculture Committee (assistant Wally Sparby 218-253-4356), and Tim Walz is a House Ag Committee member (assistant Matthew Wohlman 507-993-1284). Both Minnesota Senators Norm Coleman (202-224-5641) and Amy Klobuchar (202-224-3244) are Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee members. Give your senators and representative a call. Help them understand that sustainable agricultural systems are essential to solving many of the most pressing social, environmental and economic problems we face… problems that we would rather not pass on to our next generation.

Sustainable Farming Association
Membership & Sustaining Contributions

Become a member ... or renew your membership! Your sustaining contribution will accelerate our progress toward a more sustainable food and farming system. When you become a member, you will receive the CornerPost quarterly newsletter to “keep you posted” about events and happenings in sustainable agriculture.

Name

Farm/Business/Organization Name

Address

City/State/Zip Code

Phone

Email Address

I would like to receive SFA’s Bi-Monthly Events Email

Annual Membership $30*

Sustaining Contribution $ ________

Contributions are tax deductible

Total SFA Support: $ ________________

*I designate that my membership fees go to the ________ chapter.

Please send a check payable to: SFA of MN, 29731 302nd St, Starbuck, MN 56381
You can also become a member and/or give a sustaining contribution online at the SFA of MN web site: www.sfa-mn.org.

Thank you for your support!
Jamming Jumbucks

By Audrey Arner

It was the night before the Sustainable Farming Association’s third annual meeting, I believe, in 1995. I think we were in a hotel room in Mankato. The room was packed with musical instruments, singers and an enthusiasm level that flowed out into the hall, along with the strains of songs by Neil Young, Woody Guthrie, and Greg Brown. Glen Borgerding, as usual, had issued a call to tote along instruments, so we were a group of farmers replete with guitars, mandolins and harmonicas. We sang the “Iowa Waltz” for Dwight Ault. Then Ralph Lentz suggested “Waltzing Mathilda”. We heartily took up the chorus and then fell flat. Who knew the words? Ah, the plight of so many late night songfests: a great song, splendid harmonies present, no song sheet. Then Ralph let it be known that, indeed, he did know ALL THE WORDS and proceeded to sit in a not-so-quiet corner and dutifully write them down. Even though we still weren’t sure what it meant to put one’s jolly jumbuck in one’s tuckerbag, by the next year we were circulating song sheets in our esteemed chairperson’s handwriting so that everyone could chime in. Ever since, around campfires, at retreats and annual meetings, when the time is right, we waltz with Mathilda.

As a little research reveals, in the outback of 1894 Australian sheepshearers were fighting graziers for better wages and conditions, and the song expressed sympathy for the plight of the working class in the face of the powerful land owners. Today the words are heartily sung by members of a mostly urban Australian society who like to think of themselves as rugged, independent country folk, standing up against authority.

SFA members are among the genuine country folk of Minnesota. We realize that our independence is held up by interdependence, from learning from and supporting one another, helping to cultivate a new generation of stewardship farmers, and participating fully in a food system that connects us to our urban co-producers. Music has frequently reinforced those connections.

We musicians of the SFA gave an impromptu and informal award preceding the 16th annual meeting. Joel Roisen (Lake Superior Chapter) was presented with a (recycled) souvenir towel imprinted with the hallmark lyrics of Waltzing Mathilda in acknowledgement of his devotion to keeping folk music as an important thread of SFA gatherings all these years. Thanks, Joel, for always bringing your guitar and for your harmonic fervor.

(From Left to Right) Ralph Lentz, Cannon River Hiawatha Chapter; Joel Rosen, Lake Superior Chapter; and Audrey Arner, Western Chapter.
GET INVOLVED!

Here’s a few ways that . . .

• You
• Your Farm
• Your Business
• Your Organization

. . . can be a part of the premiere festival for family farms, vital rural communities and a healthy environment:

Volunteer!
Opportunities abound to help out with everything from ticket taker to stagehand, games to food service.

Be a Vendor!
Minnesota farms and businesses are welcome to sell your products, and you’ll find booth fees surprisingly low.

Be an Exhibitor!
We’re expanding the festival grounds this year so that your organization can, if you wish, go way beyond having a booth. You can present an entire themed area, with demonstrations, entertainment - whatever you wish*. And we’ll make it work for you financially.

Festival date: Saturday, August 18, 2007
Location: Wright County Fairgrounds, Howard Lake, MN
Contact: Jerry Ford at (320) 543-3394 or jerry@marienne.com

*Exhibitors and Vendors must submit an application and be in alignment with the mission of the festival and Sustainable Farming Association.
Festival Mission Statement: “Minnesota Garlic Festival promotes state-wide garlic production and sustainable agricultural practices, enhancing consumer awareness and the vitality of rural communities through education and the arts in an entertaining and festive atmosphere.”
SFA’S Spring Events Calendar

For more details on sustainable farming and living events visit: www.sfa-mn.org/calendar

If you would like to add an event to the SFA of MN Events Calendar contact Anne at communications@sfa-mn.org.

April 9  Grafting Workshop – Greg Nolan’s sawmill near Browerville, MN. This workshop is being hosted by the Central Chapter of the SFA of MN. There will be classroom instruction in the morning followed by a potluck lunch, and hands-on tree grafting in the afternoon. Please contact Sue Peterson at (320) 355-2980 or azariahsue@yahoo.com for more information and directions.

April 9  What’s for Dinner? The Ethics and Aesthetics of Eating - Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, Chaska, MN. To register for the event call: 952-443-1422. Additional information is also available at www.arboretum.umn.edu.

April 19-20  Green Conference 2007 – Centennial Student Union - Minnesota State University – Mankato. For details contact Mark at students4sustainability@yahoo.com

April 21  Introduction to Permaculture Class - Northfield, MN. Pre-registration is required. For more information, contact: The Center for Sustainable Living to download a registration form - www.centerforsustainableliving.org, or call Scott Schumacher, 612-756-2671.

April 21  Spring into Farming – Gale Woods Farm, Minnetrista, MN. $5 per person. For more information contact Rebecca 763-694-2007. rconser@three riversparkdistrict.org.

April 21  How to Make Biodiesel – Gale Woods Farm, Minneapolis, MN. Learn the basics of biodiesel production on a home- or farm-scale. Highlights include test batches and calibration, small-scale reactor construction, and 40-gallon water heater batches. Cost: $100. Details atwww.sundaysenergy.com.


May 5-6  Living Green Expo – State Fair Grounds, St. Paul, MN. The Living Green Expo is a free, annual event that provides information and products to help Minnesotans improve the environmental and social impacts of their day-to-day living. For more info visit: http://www.livinggreenexpo.org.

May 5-6  Land Stewardship Project Community Food and Farm Festival – Minnesota State Fair Grounds’ Education Building – St. Paul, MN. For more information, call LaVonne Murphy in the Land Stewardship Project’s Twin Cities office at 651-653-0618, ext. 200, or log onto www.landstewardshipproject.org/cff/cff.html. This is being held in conjunction with the Living Green Expo.

May 5-8  All Things Organic Conference & Trade Show – Chicago, IL. For more info www.organicexpo.com

May 20  Vinekeepers Field Day – Ron and Karin Koenen, Clara City, MN. For more info contact Audrey Arner at (320) 269-8971 or moonstone@mvtwireless.com


June 2-3  All Goat Expo – Wright County Fairgrounds - Howard Lake, MN. Contact the Minnesota Meat Goat Producers committee at: mmgp@mmgonline.com

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:: Pin the Tale on the Farmer ::

a name matching game

At the Locavore Celebration the night before the 2007 SFA of MN Annual Meeting at Gustavus Adolphus College, SFA farmers and Gustavus students were cooking together and getting to know each other. One of the ways this was accomplished was by playing "Pin the Tale on the Farmer" written by Crow River Chapter President Jerry Ford.

The Instructions: Match the SFA farmer to their description and when you get them all, yell "Bingo!" real loud. Answers are below.

| A) Katy Wortel     | 1) Berry Farmer from Western MN |
| B) Jerry Ford     | 2) Executive Director of SFA  |
| C) Mariénne Kreitlow | 3) Raises Fjord Draft Horses near Brooten, MN |
| D) Jeremy Lanctot | 4) Organics Consultant and Bass Player |
| E) Jim Tjepkema   | 5) Songwriter of Top 10 songs about garlic |
| F) Glen Borgerding| 6) A Director of Bayfront Harvest Festival, Duluth |
| G) Mary Schmidt   | 7) Herbalist & Greenhouse Grower from Winstead |
| H) Joel Rosen     | 8) Grows organic veggies for gourmet restaurants |
| I) Greg Reynolds  | 9) Environmentalist and Blue Earth Co. Commissioner |
| J) Mary Jo Forbord| 10) Director, Minnesota Garlic Festival |
| K) John Sluss     | 11) Once worked for Rodale Institute |

Let Them Eat Grass continued from page 16

HEN Film Feastival. We are particularly excited about showing a carefully selected few of the most thought-provoking food system short films, while munching on locally grown popcorn, soft pretzels and enjoying local libations. Barb Hartman and Melinda Hemmelgarn are heading up HEN’s Film Feastival plans for your viewing pleasure.

To connect early with HEN members at FNCE, meet us on Saturday at noon for lunch at the Reading Terminal Market. HEN’s Executive Committee Meeting and Member Business Meeting will follow lunch.

We know HEN members won’t want to miss harvest season in the beautiful Pennsylvania countryside, so we have prepared a fabulous, day-long Organic Farm Tour on Wednesday, October 3rd (post-FNCE), generously sponsored by Organic Valley Family of Farms Cooperative. Join HEN members and friends for this autumn get-away to Amish Country. We are working to finalize plans for lunch on the farm, prepared by a noted European-trained chef, teacher and author. Coach transportation is provided, but space is limited, so please register early by contacting Mary Jo Forbord at sustainablefarming@heinet.net or 320-760-8732. Of course, we all know the number one reason to attend FNCE… the great and numerous opportunities to network with fellow HENS. See you in Philly!
Sunny continued from page 23

heritage tom turkey for my ladies. A mink beheaded my tom. I do have a classy joint here, so I need to buy another. I am looking to raise some dairy heifers. One thing about new beginnings is that it really keeps a person humble. I have my hands full, I don’t know enough, and I could really use a partner.

My farm is half way between Walnut Grove and Tracy. It’s not large; I have 80 acres all together, but my nephew rents 67 acres for his ventures. I am working the rest. This year I will be extending the shelterbelt a few hundred feet, and will plant five acres in high-diversity prairie, where I will graze my birds and maybe some dairy heifers, and sequester all the carbon I can for the good of the planet. If all goes as well as I hope, my whole acreage will be similarly planted in a few years. Maybe I will be able to sell one harvest for cellulosic biomass. We’ll see. Maybe I’ll just graze it.

I do have family, three sons, but they are all grown and living in Washington. When the oceans get too high, I figure they’ll be more interested in what I am doing here.

I first became acquainted with the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota about five years ago I think when I visited the Land Stewardship Project office in Montevideo, MN. I needed contacts, I needed affiliations and I needed people to talk to. They recommended that I look up the Coteau Ridge SFA guys, and I did. I love those guys. They are brilliant and funny, a little crazy and they know so much of the stuff I am hungry to learn – my kind of friends.

I consider myself, and all others in sustainable farming ventures, to be leading the Good Food Revolution. The study of nutrition and natural/herbal medicine is a big part of my life, and learning more about soil health and nutrient-dense food are top priority for me. I am thoroughly convinced that the best cure for disease is prevention, that food is the best medicine (along with laughter, of course), and the place to begin is with the soil. So here I am, living my dream, and doing my best to walk my talk.

For more about my farm visit the web site at www.merryweathergardens.com.
Meet Sunny Ruthchild

I was raised on a general farm here in the Walnut Grove, MN area, one of seven kids, and spent my youth dividing time and loyalty between the farm and school. Digging in the dirt, pulling weeds, and caring for any animals that got sick or orphaned were the focus of my summers, and studying and music and the arts were the focus of my school year. When I think about it, I’ve traveled around the world a bit and lived here and there, but here I am, back in Minnesota less than a mile from where I was as a child, and I am digging in the dirt, pulling weeds, caring for animals, and studying. Good to know some things don’t change too much.

Before I came back to Minnesota, I was in Washington state for thirty years, where I spent my time running my art gallery, building art gardens, forming up community events and art, climbing mountains and hiking and all those things that one does there. But when my father passed, I moved back here into an abandoned farmstead that the family owned, and began my new life as a novice herb and garlic farmer. I study soil and plant nutrition and ecology and naturopathy. I am very near a doctorate in Naturopathy, but feel like a real newbie when it comes to soil and plants and ecology. But that’s good, right?

First, I was here only for the summer, but this last year I moved in full-time. So now I also have vegetables, free-range heritage turkeys, and colorful chickens that rule the place. I also need a grown

Sunny continued on page 22
mission: we support the development and enhancement of sustainable farming systems through innovation, demonstration, education and farmer-to-farmer networking.