You are cordially invited to attend:

SFA of MN’s 19th Annual Conference

**Sustainable Farming 2020:**
*What does it look like? How do we get there?*

Saturday, February 20, 2010
St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN

By Anne Borgendale

At the close of the first decade in the 21st century many people are looking back at the decade that was, however, the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota (SFA) is looking forward to living, working, learning, building, eating and farming in the decade to come and beyond. There are many challenges that sustainable farming will face; however, there are many opportunities as well. No one can predict the future, but you can farm and live with an eye towards sustainability and work towards more resilient farming systems.

At SFA’s 19th Annual Conference on Saturday, February 20 at St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN, the day will revolve around: “**Sustainable Farming 2020: What does it look like? How do we get there?**” The conference will also feature a variety of breakout sessions, speakers and exhibits on the future of sustainable farming in the face of climate change and rising input costs, practical skills sessions, sessions on local foods and youth, and the debut of the sustainable farming movie, “Farm Forward.”

**“Farming 2020: A Sustainable Vision”**

Minnesota Secretary of State Mark Ritchie will be the keynote speaker at our 2010 conference. In the 1980s, Ritchie worked for Governor Rudy Perpich in the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, addressing the economic crisis threatening family farmers and rural communities. From 1988 to 2006, he served as president of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. Ritchie will speak on the subject of “Farming 2020: A Sustainable Vision.”

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More mileage per CP

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Do you need to renew?

Membership in the SFA of MN entitles you to receive the CornerPost newsletter and discounts on SFA Events. Use the form on page 28 or go to www.sfa-mn.org and join or renew your membership today!

CornerPost Ad Policy:

The CornerPost is the official membership publication of the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota.

It is mailed to members and friends of SFA, and relevant agency personnel, through the postal mail. The CornerPost is published four times per year, with advertising deadlines of March 15, June 15, September 15, and December 15. The CornerPost runs between 24 and 40 pages per issue. CornerPost circulation is approximately 1200.

Here is our fee schedule for CornerPost ads for the 2009-10 fiscal year:

- $500 full page
- $130 quarter page
- $260 half page
- $ 75 eighth page

We also are offering a classified ad section. Current SFA members will be invited to submit classifieds free of charge.

Ads ready for print may be emailed to Anne Borgendale, CornerPost Editor, at communications@sfa-mn.org. If you need assistance in composing an ad, please call Anne at 320-226-6318.

Our policy on advertising:

- SFA will not devote more than 25% of the total print space to paid advertisements.
- Advertisements must represent products and services that are consistent with SFA’s mission.
- SFA reserves the right to accept or deny any advertisement, and retains all editorial control over content.

Thank you for your support of sustainable farming in Minnesota!
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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Lake Superior Chapter

By Nicole Wilde

The Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association (LS-SFA) co-sponsored the first regional Superior Grown Food Summit organized by representatives of farming, food, and gardening organizations in the Lake Superior bioregion on Saturday, November 14. Well over 200 community members attended the Summit which included morning panels that presented an overview of our local foods movement, the capacity of our region to produce more food, the role of family farms in a regional economy, and examples of how regions are rebuilding distribution and processing centers for locally produced food. Afternoon discussion solicited public input in breakout sessions on community food needs and priorities. A ‘Vision Document for Regional Foods’ is currently being created using this input, and the document will be used to help further educate policymakers and the public. Other sponsors of the Summit included the Whole Foods Coop, UMD Offices of Sustainability and Civic Engagement, and University of Minnesota’s Northeast Minnesota Regional Sustainable Development Partnership. Visit http://foodsummit.ning.com/ to learn more.

LS-SFA held another successful Farmers Take the Stove annual fundraiser Tuesday, November 17 in Duluth at the Peace Church. The event has earned a reputation as a great place to get a remarkably delicious, diverse, and nutritious meal of local foods prepared by area farmers and their families. Additional funds were raised with a silent auction, and live music.

Lake Superior Chapter continued on page 4
Lake Superior Chapter continued from page 3 by the Carmody’s Irish Setters added to the festive atmosphere, demonstrating once again that good food and good times are not hard to find despite the onset of winter. The 8th Annual Farmers Take the Stage, our other annual fundraiser featuring homegrown talent, is slated for Friday, March 26 with the location to be determined.

The LS-SFA annual meeting has typically featured education workshops, a local foods dinner, and the annual business meeting open to all members of the Chapter. This year LS-SFA will be changing the format in order to provide members with greater opportunity to network and increase their farm knowledge. The annual business meeting will be held on January 26, with the main order of business being to present and approve the 2010 LS-SFA budget and conduct the election of board officers. The educational component usually affiliated with the meeting will be held later in the winter. LS-SFA and Chequamegon Organic Research, Education and Training (CORET) will co-coordinate and host the Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Conference. The event will be held Friday and Saturday, March 5-6 at Barkers Island Inn in Superior, WI. This exciting conference will feature a half-day ‘organic university-style’ intensive training and a full-day program with presentations and workshops covering season extension, healthy soils, partnership-based business structures, organic pesticides, grass-finished beef, crop rotation with pigs, organic pest control in lambs, grower-hospital cooperation and more. Regional and statewide farmers and specialists from Minnesota and Wisconsin will present. Members are encouraged to attend both the January and March events and will receive more information about the annual business meeting and conference in early 2010.

LS-SFA is sponsoring a second Lake Superior Farm Beginnings (LSFB) program. Classes began in November and will run through October 2010. There are 14 farm units registered this season with 26 total participants. Enterprise interests include maple syrup, vegetables, high tunnel raspberries and a large and diverse interest in livestock, specifically in grass-fed and/or pastured poultry, beef and dairy cattle, hog and sheep operations. Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College is graciously hosting LSFB again, and we continue to utilize innovative and experienced regional farmers as presenters and educators for the program.

Crow River Chapter

By Grey Reynolds

Around here October was cold and wet. November was warm and dry. December is cold. It has been a tough harvest season. The wet weather in October kept everyone out of the field. November was spent trying to get crops out of the field or trying to get garlic planted. Ugh. Hopefully everyone got their corn and beans out and didn’t have to spend a fortune on drying them.

Friday, October 16 we had our fall social at Deer Lake Orchard. Twenty-some people showed up and had a good time gabbing and listening to Tim Reese’s band. We all had a chance to go on a hayride, to hear a little about growing apples, and eat some great apple brats and desserts.

Our big upcoming event is our chapter winter conference. The topic will be “Sustainable Agriculture - what does it really take?” This is going to be a big picture look at what agriculture is going to look like when we have to consider all the changes in the economy, the weather, and our communities.

The U.S. economy continues to be in the tank. Real unemployment is running at 18%. Consumers have tapped all the equity in their houses. Manufacturing jobs are still moving offshore. And no one has a good idea on how to turn this economy around. A consumer or service-based economy is not sustainable.

World crude oil production peaked in 2008. Mexico is poised to stop exporting oil in the next few years. Saudi Arabia production has been flat for the past few years and is not predicted to ever increase. They are #2 and #3 U.S. oil suppliers. Energy prices are going to go up.

The climate is changing. You may have noticed that the weather has been a little erratic this year.

All of these factors add up to big changes for agriculture. We are going to try to have a look at what’s coming and what we have to do to deal with these changes at our winter conference on Saturday, January 2 at Gale Woods Farm in Minnetrista, MN. This should be an interesting and fun meeting. Visit the SFA website for more details–see you there!
**Cannon River/Hiawatha Chapter**

By Mary Ellen Frame

In October we were invited to tour John Ostgarden and Lowell Gordon’s Clinton Falls Farm. They have a vegetable CSA with 126 members. The local members in the Owatonna area pick up their shares at the farm, but John and Lowell also deliver shares to Mankato and the Twin Cities. Much of the tour focused on their new greenhouse, which they call “The Hub.” It’s used for processing vegetables, share pick-up and as a hoop house. In it they have a flexible shelving system, which they find adaptable to many uses at different seasons. Besides supplying their members, they also sell a little at the Owatonna Farmers’ Market and to the chef at the Gainey Conference Center in Owatonna. This is John and Lowell’s third year of the CSA, and so far they’ve been doing all the work by hand on their five acres. However, with the quantity of vegetables they need to produce, they’re looking into getting a tractor for next year. Again this year, the statewide SFA Annual Conference will be here in Northfield at St. Olaf College. We’re looking forward to welcoming you all here.

It seems like the seasons got all mixed up this year. It rained most of October so that it was impossible for row crops to be harvested, and everybody was bogged down in the mud. Then November was like a dream of Indian summer, extending the vegetable season and giving everybody a chance to catch up with the harvest. I picked spinach and other greens at the very end of November—amazing! But at the beginning of December, it was all over; the cold moved in quite suddenly. Now we’ve just had our first blizzard; it looks and feels like a normal winter, here to stay. I hope you’re keeping warm and cozy.

**SFA State Board Update**

By Chris Kudrna

Greetings from your state board! It’s been an exciting quarter since the last CornerPost and I know I speak for the entire board when I say we are thrilled to have John Mesko join SFA as our new Executive Director. John has hit the ground running and we are all excited about what 2010 will bring. For this column I want to focus on one topic that is particularly important to me: Your membership information and how we manage it.

I have heard from many of you that membership management is a particular frustration. We have had some trouble adding members on a timely basis and getting address changes correctly made as two examples. Poor membership records frustrate your leaders at both the local and the state level too since we definitely want timely and accurate records. These problems are ultimately caused by having duplicate membership rosters throughout the state. Our chapter structure is obviously a key strength, but historically this has meant we haven’t done as good a job coordinating our membership roster as you deserve.

In starting to address this problem, the state membership roster has recently been moved entirely online to a database service called The Databank. This means that as we move into 2010 we have an opportunity for chapters with internet access to maintain and store their chapter records in a common, shared location. Two chapters have already volunteered to make this change and share their results with the other chapters. Once we have all our records stored in one common location, most of our membership management problems will be resolved.

Getting our records online and in one place also means that we will be able to do so much more with our member-to-member interactions. For example, if you are interested in Fjord horses or Community Supported Agriculture having one, central electronic database means we will be able to create ‘affinity groups’ around topics like this. You can connect and communicate more easily with SFA members that share your interests.

If you want to get involved in helping us with this change, please contact your local chapter leadership, John Mesko or myself and volunteer to help as we get ready for Databank in 2010.

Finally, as I am sure you have noticed elsewhere in this publication our state conference is coming in February to the same great location we had last year—Saint Olaf in Northfield. I hope to see many of you there as it promises to be both productive and interesting!
South Central Chapter

By Jim Tjepkema

Some of our members, who raise corn and soybeans, have had a difficult harvest season. Corn harvest was very late and some corn is still in the field as I am writing this in the first week of December. Soybean harvest was also late due to wet weather in October. We did have unusually warm and dry weather in November, which allowed farmers to complete the soybean harvest and allowed for an extended harvest of fall vegetable crops from my garden.

I was not able to attend the last state SFA board meeting and I appreciate Dean Goette’s willingness to fill in for me at that meeting as our chapter representative. At the state board meeting Kelly Firkins, who is a member of our chapter, was selected to be the at-large representative for youth on the state board. Kelly has recently started marketing vegetables and fruit that she grows on the farm where she lives near Delavan, MN. We offer our congratulations to Kelly on her selection to the state board.

We have not had any activities in recent months because many of our members have been very busy doing their harvesting. By the time you get this issue of the CornerPost we will have held a board meeting where we will do some planning for winter and spring activities. If plans go as usual, we will probably have a meeting in January where members will be invited to a round table discussion on a selected topic related to sustainable agriculture. We will also start making plans at our December board meeting for our annual meeting. The board is always interested in hearing about ideas for activities from our members. Please contact me or another board member if you have any suggestions for activities or any comments or ideas of any kind related to the work of SFA both at the chapter level and the state level.

Central Chapter

By Sue Peterson

The Sustainable Farming Association of Central Minnesota (SFACM) held an apple harvest and preservation workshop in Pine River on Saturday, October 24 as part of a 100 Orchards Project Workshop. Attendees learned how to store apples, dry apples, make apple cider, cook applesauce two different ways, and can “Apple Pie in a Jar.” The event was fun and delicious for all. Several SFACM members participated in the SFA booth at the Acres Conference held in early December.

In upcoming events, the SFACM annual meeting will be held on Saturday, January 9, 2010 at Camphill Village in Sauk Centre. The keynote speaker will be John Mesko (new SFA Executive Director) and several breakout sessions will begin after the annual meeting and lunch. The menu includes: Swedish meatballs, pulled pork, squash, and applesauce. The cost is $8 for adults. Please contact Sue Peterson (320-355-2980 or azariahsue@yahoo.com) for further information.

Western Chapter

The Western Chapter of SFA will have their chapter annual meeting on Saturday, January 23. The theme of the meeting will be “Bringing Terra Madre home … what it means for us returning to prairieland…” The meeting will be held at Earthrise Farm (www.earthrisefarmfoundation.org) -- 2580 250th St., Madison, MN. The noon meal will be a potluck, please bring a dish to share. For questions contact the VanDerPols at 320-847-3432 or grassroots@pasturesaplenty.com or Earthrise Farm (Kay & Annette Fernholz) at 320-752-4700.
Southeast Chapter

By Lonny Dietz

Happy Holidays to all of our members in the Southeastern Minnesota and the rest of the state. We did not have as many field days this year although we are exited to be hosting a youth sustainability confab on Saturday, March 27, 2010 at Winona State University (WSU). WSU has a year long program focusing on sustainable food and some of the events have been a talk by Michael Pollen, a farmers’ market on-campus this past October, and a local foods meal was served on the WSU parents weekend. WSU will also be expanding on this topic at the Frozen River Film Festival in January.

We are planning our chapter annual meeting for Saturday, February 13 and will send out a letter announcing the place and times. This will be a good chance for our members to meet the new John Mesko, SFA’s new Executive Director. You’ll be able to give him input on the direction you like to see the state board take and ideas on ways that they can help with chapter activities. We will also be electing our chapter board and would like members to consider a position on the board. For more information or to talk about our chapter contact Lonny Dietz at (507) 932-5225 or londietz@aol.com.

We had over 60 attendants that came to a greenhouse field day at Whitewater Gardens Farm on Monday, December 7. This was in a series that the Land Stewardship Project put together on the topic of “Ten things to think about before you build a hoop house.” There is a lot of interest in this area and I just saw an e-mail that hoop houses will be eligible for EQUIP cost share money next year. The greenhouse is not even up yet although it is coming next week and we can’t wait to start construction with this great weather. It should have been put up in warmer weather but this will make for good story telling.

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We are products of our decisions and not our circumstances

A letter to the editor
By Carmen Fernholz

Since my pen is warm and my thoughts itching to get out of my head and onto the paper, let me respond to Jim VanDerPol’s Real Change Is Possible. (Fall 2009 CornerPost)

Bryan Walsh gets it. (TIME Magazine, Aug. 31, 2009; The Real Cost of Cheap Food) Whether that (real change) happens will ultimately come down to all of us, since we have the chance to choose better food three times a day.

And yes, this is refreshing, considering the venue Walsh uses to express his sensitivity to the issues. More importantly, however, in my opinion, is not that he never offered any workable ideas for how we are to get there from here; that is not necessarily his responsibility. Instead, he has opened the door for leadership among us as food producers, processors, handlers, distributors, retailers and most of all as consumers, to step through, define the issues and begin to make it happen.

Making it happen begins with all of us accepting that we are the initial cause of the food production environment that Walsh decries. Therefore, we must be the masterminds of the ways and means to fix it.

Let’s begin by stopping pointing the finger of blame at agricultural economist or Washington politicians. Politicians and economists are easy to blame, but we can only blame ourselves for electing them and then following their advice or their mind sets. Politicians are reactors, and economists are theorists. Besides, why do we even reference them in our conversations given the way we eternally denigrate them. As Fedele Bauccio, Bon Appetit’s co-founder says in the same article: Ultimately it’s going to be consumer demand that will cause change, not Washington.

Secondly, let’s review, examine and then really try to understand why the 200 and 300 layer chicken flocks left the farm; why the 20 and 30 cow dairies continue to fade away; why the 40 and 50 sow swine enterprises continue to disappear. I think we will find that it was not nor is it because of the economists or politicians. If we think so, that very thought or mind set may be the problem.

Isn’t it instead because we allow it to happen? We allow ourselves to be the victims of our decisions, both we who produce the raw materials food and all of us who buy the food.

All of us must begin to make big U turns every time we head out of our small rural communities, or down our farm driveways to a big box store. We may rationalize and justify these buying habit actions because of the perceived savings in dollars. Rationalize instead about who we are about to deny a place in a needs to be rebuilt food system infrastructure that Bryan Walsh acknowledges may just be the answer to our economic albatross.

Finally, as raw materials producers, why is it that we continue to operate as individual market-makers in our free enterprise economy? We continue to allow ourselves as individual producers to create price competition among ourselves instead of among the retailers of our goods and services. We too often forget that pricing the fruits of our labors is a decision with significant impacts and consequences, either negative or positive, on our food production system. Our marketing decisions ultimately determine the survivability of not only ourselves, but everyone else in the communities in which we function.

So if rural communities and food systems infrastructures are failing, we have only ourselves to blame because we have not valued these institutions adequately as reflected in our marketing decisions. It has very little or nothing to do with politicians or economists. It has everything to do with the everyday decisions that we are still able to make.
Minnesota Dairy Initiative Update: On-Farm Processing Education in Your Backyard

By Jeremy Lanctot

Years back, I wrote about a website that I found helpful for those who were interested in small-scale dairy processing. The website www.smalldairy.com has increased its offerings and is a great resource for those researching farmstead dairy enterprises.

If you haven’t been there recently and have an interest in farmstead dairying, this site is worth the visit and could save you many hours of fruitless searching for the resources you need to get going.

If you’re looking into any sort of on-farm processing, SFA has contacts with many existing farmers who have many years of experience in the production, marketing and distribution of their farmstead dairy products. In fact, Minnesota has some very good farmstead, artisan dairies. You may not need to travel the world over to get the help you need to explore a new idea.

Another resource in Minnesota to help with the development of dairy products is our very own University of Minnesota Joseph J. Warthesen Food Processing Center, or also known as the Dairy Pilot Plant, located on the St. Paul Campus near the State Fairgrounds. Ray Miller is the coordinator of this pilot plant and has helped many successful farmstead dairies get a foothold in this growing industry.

Ray is a second-generation cheesemaker who followed his father’s footsteps. Ray’s father had 40 years in cheesemaking and now Ray has 26 years as coordinator of the pilot plant at the University of Minnesota.

“I studied under Dr. Morris, a world-renown researcher of cheese and dairy fermentations,” Ray states.

During his tenure with the University, Ray has worked primarily with small farmstead operations. “I generally work with 1 to 2 clients per year,” he notes. Plus, Ray will do on-farm consultations for those needing some help refining their processes. Ray continues, “I generally do not do the recommending of equipment or building issues, but will focus more on the actual product development, and production issues.”

Over the years, Ray has seen an increase in the number of people interested in developing farmstead dairy products. “It can be more costly and involved than most of them realize,” he adds. “I think there is definitely a place in the markets for specialty products especially if you have unique products that differentiate you from the products that are mass produced.”

If you have a dairy product idea and a need to test it out in a certified facility, check out the University’s Pilot Plant. Definitely review their website (http://fscn.cfans.umn.edu/researchandservices/pilotplant/index.htm) for more detailed information on what they can offer and the associated costs. Equipment is rented by the day and

University of Minnesota Pilot Plant. (Photo from: http://fscn.cfans.umn.edu/researchandservices/pilotplant/index.htm)
If your chapter is considering an event in 2010 that may include any sort of topics that could benefit any type of dairy, please check with Jeremy Lanctot (320-980-2333, mdi@sfa-mn.org) about funding help. SFA gets an annual allotment of grant funding to help with education for dairy farmers. If you have a farm tour or seminar that covers topics, such as, grazing, health, organics, feed, etc… that could be of use to dairies of any type, SFA can help with costs incurred.

Historically, we have helped cover stipends for speakers, publications expenses, transportation expenses and other costs associated with events.

Many times, chapters don’t have the resources to fund a complete event and raising the price of the event for the attendee may make it prohibitive for many families to attend, especially in this economy. The only strings attached are the requirement that the topics need to have a significant applicability to dairy operations. If you have a farm tour of a CSA, this would not normally be a qualified event, but if you are marketing this CSA tour as a good diversification opportunity for dairy farms to add to their existing enterprise, then the event could be eligible. If you’re not sure, let’s talk it over. Happy event planning in 2010!
As Secretary of State, Ritchie partners with township, city, and county officials to organize elections on behalf of Minnesota’s nearly four million eligible voters. Ritchie also oversees a wide range of services provided by the Office of Secretary of State including business filings, the archiving of official documents, administering the appointments process for state-level commissions, and operating Minnesota’s address confidentiality program. As an elected Constitutional Officer he sits on the state Executive Council, the State Board of Investment, and on the board of the Minnesota Historical Society.

In 2008 Secretary Ritchie was named the Most Valuable State Official in the United States by The Nation magazine and Politician of the Year by Politics in Minnesota, the state’s leading non-partisan public affairs news

Service. In 2009, he received the Election Verification Network’s national recognition award for his non-partisan leadership throughout the 2008 US Senate race recount.

**Breakout Sessions**

The breakout sessions address a variety of issues related to “Sustainable Farming 2020: What does it look like? How do we get there?” These sessions include the topics of climate change, peak oil and rising input costs, sustainable energy systems, farm to school, local food systems, direct marketing, grazing systems, sustainable careers in food systems, stories from beginning farmers, and new business models to invest in sustainability. These sessions will feature a variety of expert speakers from farmers and students to researchers and community organizers. See further descriptions of these sessions and a conference schedule on page 13.

**“Farm Forward” a new Documentary Film on Sustainable Farming in Minnesota**

The film “Farm Forward” is produced by Martin Lang and Ethan Marxhausen, Gustavus Adolphus College. This dynamic new film features your neighbors, including sustainable farmers Mary Jo and Luverne Forbord, Laura Frerichs, and Willard Kreitlow; as well as Jerry Ford of SFA, Glen Hill of the Minnesota Food Association, Margo O’Brien and Erik Larson of the St. Peter Food Co-op, urban farmer Susane Moua, and the.

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SFA’s Annual Conference continued from page 11
student farmers at Gustavus’ Big Hill Farm. “Farm
Forward” will be played during every breakout session
block at the conference, and a different panel of the films’
stars will accompany each showing.

Conference Location
St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN will play host to
SFA’s 2010 annual conference. St. Olaf is a liberal arts
college in the Cannon River valley, about 35-miles south
of the Twin Cities. St. Olaf may be best known for its
world-renowned music programs and Norwegian roots,
but it has also built a reputation for its dedication to
sustainability. A few examples of what’s happening on
campus: there’s an organic student-run farm, 100 percent
of food waste is composted, and a wind turbine provides
up to one-third of the campus’ electricity needs.

The entire conference will take place in the spacious
student center, Buntrock Commons, which also houses
the bookstore, a coffee shop, a host of meeting rooms,
and St. Olaf’s exceptional dining service, managed by
Bon Appétit. Every meal here features organic and locally
produced foods such as Thousand Hills Cattle Co. beef,
Valley View Farms milk and a cornucopia of vegetables
from Cannon River/Hiawatha Chapter farmer members
– and we’ll be able to taste it all. This year we actually
scheduled the conference lunch in the cafeteria – it’s that
good!

Friday Night Fun
Join the SFA and St. Olaf students on the evening of
Friday, February 19. This will be an informal gathering
that will include farmer, student and citizen interactions,
multigenerational discussion and music. All are invited to
attend. Visit SFA’s website www.sfa-mn.org for updates
on this event!

Sustainable Farming Association Awards
SFA will present its annual Sustainable Farmer
Emeritus and Distinguished Service Awards at the
conference. Have you nominated your favorite farmer
or person dedicated to the advancement of sustainable
farming? You still can by visiting www.sfa-mn.org/
discussion, look for the “SFA Awards” category. You
can also email your nomination to Mary Hanks (Mary.
Hanks@state.mn.us) or mail in your nomination form
from page 19  by Friday, January 29, 2010.

Exhibits
The array of exhibits and a winter farmers’ market are
likely to catch your attention between thought-provoking
sessions and delicious food. Are you a farmer or
organization that would like to exhibit? Contact Anne at
communications@sfa-mn.org or (320) 226-6318 for more
information.

Sponsorship Opportunities
Do you like what SFA is doing? Would you like to
be a catalyst for our work? Become a sponsor – please
use the sponsorship form on page 17 or contact John
Mesko at (763) 389-2316 or john@sfa-mn.org for more
information!

Join SFA for our biggest and best conference yet at St.
Olaf College on Saturday, February 20!
SFA of MN’s 19th Annual Conference

Sustainable Farming 2020:
What does it look like? How do we get there?

Saturday, February 20, 2010
St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN
8:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Schedule: (subject to change)

8:00 am  Registration
Featuring breakfast pastries and coffee from Minnesota Farmers Union

9:00 am  Opening Plenary Session
Welcome and Introductions followed by SFA Awards

9:45 am  Break for Exhibits and Farmers’ Market

10:00 am  Morning Sessions

Ten Years On: Climate Change, Peak Oil and the Sustainable Farm
Join us for a moderated panel discussion on how sustainable farming will cope with a more volatile and changing climate along with a rise in input costs.  Moderated by Joe Gransee-Bowman

Local Foods in the City and Country
Join Megan O’Hara from Homegrown Minneapolis and Dorothy Rosemeier, director of the University of Minnesota West Central Partnership, representing Buy Fresh Buy Local of the Upper Minnesota River, for a session on how both urban and rural areas of Minnesota are encouraging the production and consumption of locally produced foods.  Moderated by John Mesko, Executive Director of SFA

A New Business Model for Sustainability
Promoting and developing local community-based energy is uniquely suited for the sustainable farming community.  The principles of local, environmentally sustainable, secure and profitable apply to both local energy and sustainable ag.  Duane Ninneman from CURE (Clean Up our River Environment) will discuss momentum behind local energy and talk about new ideas for cooperative ownership and investment.

“Farm Forward” a new Documentary Film on Sustainable Farming in Minnesota
“FARM FORWARD” Produced by Martin Lang and Ethan Marxhausen, Gustavus Adolphus College. This dynamic new film features your neighbors, including sustainable farmers Mary Jo and Luverne Forbord, Laura Frerichs, and Willard Kreitlow; as well as Jerry Ford of SFA, Glen Hill of MN Food Association, Margo O’Brien and Erik Larson of the St. Peter Food Co-op, urban farmer Susane Moua, and the student farmers at Gustavus’ Big Hill Farm. A different panel of the films’ stars will accompany each showing.

11:15 am  Break for Exhibits and Farmers’ Market

11:30 am  Keynote Address
“Farming 2020: A Sustainable Vision” – presented by Minnesota Secretary of State Mark Ritchie

1:00 pm  Lunch – a delicious locally grown & seasonal meal through the St. Olaf food service

Visit the Exhibits and Farmers’ Market too!
2:30 pm **Midday Sessions**

**Ten Years On: Energy Systems**
Join us for a session on sustainable energy systems, on-farm renewable technologies: wind, solar, biomass, and harvestable building materials: agroforestry, lambs wool for building insulation. *Moderated by Joe Gransee-Bowman*

**Careers in a Sustainable Food System**
Join St. Olaf College students and others for a moderated discussion about careers in sustainable food systems. They will talk about different careers within the sustainable ag world and the various routes students and post grads can take to get there. They will also address the need we have for more farmers and others to support a sustainable food system. And, find out what resources are available to begin your career journey.

**Direct Marketing and Your Farm**
Some of the best small, direct-market farm operations never really get off the ground and become profitable. Sometimes this is due to difficulties in marketing the product. Let’s face it: If you can’t sell it, and more importantly if you can’t make money on it, you won’t be producing it for long. John Mesko, Executive Director of SFA of MN will lead a session on direct marketing for farmers. As the owners and operators of Lighthouse Farm, John and his family direct market grass-fed, organic beef and lamb as well as pastured pork, chicken, and turkey. This session will cover evaluating enterprises, finding and keeping clients, branding, marketing messages, assessing profitability and more. You’ll have a chance to peek behind the numbers, look at real-life examples, successes and failures, using actual sales data from Lighthouse Farm.

**“Farm Forward” a new Documentary Film on Sustainable Farming in Minnesota** (see previous description)

3:45 pm **Break for Exhibits and Farmers’ Market**

4:00 pm **Afternoon Sessions**

**Beginnings, Middles and Ends: Real Stories from the Field**
The Farm Beginning® program has been training new farmers for several years in the upper Midwest. In this candid group session, we’ll hear unedited stories of success and “redirection,” challenges and surprises; in hopes that we can all learn from these experiences, and ultimately present a more realistic and comprehensive picture to aspiring farmers. *Moderated by Nick Olson of the Land Stewardship Project’s Farm Beginnings program.*

**Grazing: MIRG or Mob?**
Join NRCS (Natural Resources and Conservation Service) grazing specialist John Zinn for a discussion of Management Intensive Rotational Grazing (MIRG) vs. high density grazing (Mob). This discussion will also feature several graziers from Minnesota and Wisconsin who use these different management practices. Learn the differences between these grazing systems and which one may be better suited for your farming operation.

**Farm to School: Healthy Farms & Healthy Kids**
Join us for a look at Farm to School in Minnesota. What’s been happening around the state? What works and what doesn’t? Hear about farmers’ experiences when selling to schools and more. You’ll also learn more about the farm to school toolkit available to help nutrition educators and farms at www.mn-farmtoschool.umn.edu/.

**“Farm Forward” a new Documentary Film on Sustainable Farming in Minnesota** (see previous description)

5:15 pm **The End!**

See you on Saturday, February 19, 2011 for SFA of MN’s 20th Annual Conference!
Visit www.sfa-mn.org throughout the year to find out about more SFA of MN Events.
Registration Form

for the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota’s 19th Annual Conference

Sustainable Farming 2020:
What does it look like? How do we get there?

With Keynote Speaker:
Mark Ritchie
Minnesota Secretary of State

February 20, 2010
St. Olaf College
Northfield, MN

You can also register online at www.sfa-mn.org until Wednesday, February 17, 2010.
For more information visit www.sfa-mn.org or contact Anne at communications@sfa-mn.org or (320) 226-6318.

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<th>Per Person</th>
<th>Number Attending</th>
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<td>(Includes all conference participants age 22 years and younger, except those participating in children’s programming.)</td>
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<td>6  • Children’s Programming</td>
<td>(For kids 3-12 years old (and potty trained). Your children will join you for the noon meal with the large group; this is included in the registration fee. Please list your children and ages on the back of this page. Family maximum of $32.)</td>
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<td>7  • SFA Membership Fees and Sustaining Contribution Gifts*</td>
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Total Fees Enclosed (Sum of rows 1-7)

Registration Form continued on back of page →
**Contact Information**

Name(s) of conference attendees  ________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

Address ___________________________  City __________________________  State _____  Zip _________

Phone _____________________________  Email _________________________________

Please send a check payable to SFA of MN, 7356 Cable Rd., Little Falls, MN  56345-5433

**Children’s Programming** *(list all children who will be participating)*

Name _____________________________  Age ____  Name _____________________________  Age ____

Name _____________________________  Age ____  Name _____________________________  Age ____

**Membership and Sustaining Contribution Form**

Become a member...or renew your membership! If you join or renew now, your membership will be current until 2011! Your Sustaining Contribution will accelerate our progress toward a more sustainable food and farming system. To “keep you posted” of interesting events and happenings in sustainable agriculture, you will receive a year’s subscription to the CornerPost, SFA’s quarterly newsletter. SFA of MN membership must be current to register for SFA of MN’s 19th Annual Conference at the reduced rate. You can also become a sustaining member & contribute online at the SFA of MN web site: www.sfa-mn.org.

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<td>Annual SFA membership or renewal</td>
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<td>Annual Student SFA membership</td>
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**I designate that my membership goes to:**

- [ ] Cannon River / Hiawatha Chapter
- [ ] Central Chapter
- [ ] Coteau Ridge Chapter
- [ ] Crow River Chapter
- [ ] Lake Agassiz Chapter
- [ ] Lake Superior Chapter
- [ ] South Central Chapter
- [ ] Southeast Chapter
- [ ] Western Chapter

Please send a check payable to SFA of MN, 7356 Cable Rd., Little Falls, MN  56345-5433

**Thank you for your support!**
Please consider participating as a:

**SFA Conference Sponsor**

Assist SFA in a most significant way by selecting the Gold, Silver or Bronze sponsorship level on the accompanying registration form. Sponsors will be featured in publicity and promotional materials, and in the SFA conference program, distributed to all conference attendees. All sponsor levels include an exhibit space, publicity and complimentary conference registrations.

**SFA Conference Exhibitor/Farmers’ Market**

Display and promote your mission, message, products and information, and interact with the most innovative farmers and sustainable agriculture ‘movers and shakers’ in Minnesota. The exhibit set up time runs 7:00 a.m. - 8:00 a.m. on the day of the conference; exhibits can be taken down after 5:00 p.m. Exhibit spaces will be assigned. The exhibit space is a 6-ft table without a table cloth or skirting. One chair will be provided per exhibit.

**About the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota:**

We are a statewide non-profit educational organization of farmers and others committed to the ecologically sound and profitable production of a diverse array of healthy foods, renewable energy and natural fiber. Wisdom, experience and values guide us toward farming methods that support local and regional food systems, diversified and decentralized production, community health and prosperity, and a high quality of life for generations to come.

**Our Mission:** The Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota supports the development and enhancement of sustainable farming systems through innovation, demonstration, education, and farmer-to-farmer networking.
**Sponsor & Exhibitor Form** - SFA’s 19th Annual Conference

Save time and postage by completing this form online and transferring funds electronically through SFA’s website at [www.sfa-mn.org](http://www.sfa-mn.org).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Sponsor and/or Exhibitor Level</th>
<th>Contribution (please indicate amount)</th>
<th>Complimentary Registrations Included:</th>
<th>Number of people attending</th>
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<td>Farmers’ Market**</td>
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**Total Enclosed:**

**The farmers’ market is for current Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota farmer members**

Name(s) of attendees:

1) ____________________________________________ 2) ____________________________________________

3) ____________________________________________ 4) ____________________________________________

For **Gold, Silver and Bronze** Sponsors, will you have an exhibit? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does your exhibit require electricity? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you a farmer? ☐ Yes ☐ No

The information below will be used to contact you about conference details and will be printed in the conference program as organizational contact information.

Organization or Business Name ____________________________________________

Contact Person ____________________________________________

Address ____________________________________________ City ________________________________ Zip ________________________________

Phone ________________________________ Email ____________________________________________

Website ____________________________________________

Short description of organization, business or farm: ____________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

For more info about Sponsor and Exhibitor opportunities contact Anne with SFA at (320) 226-6318 or communications@sfa-mn.org. Please either complete this form and submit payment online or mail this form and payment by **Friday, January 29, 2010** to: SFA of MN (c/o Chris Barnier, SFA Treasurer), 7356 Cable Road, Little Falls, MN 56345-5433

**Thank you for your support of sustainable agriculture in Minnesota!**
2010 Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota Awards Nomination Form

Based on qualifications of a high level of dedication, commitment, service, perseverance, achievement, and contributions to the advancement of Sustainable Farming in Minnesota, I nominate the following person(s) for the:

(choose one):

___ Sustainable Farmer Emeritus Award (farmer or retired farmer only)
___ SFA Distinguished Service Award (may be a non-farmer)

To be announced at the 2010 SFA Annual Conference on Saturday, February 20, 2010 at St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN.

Name: ___________________________________________________________________________________

Address: _________________________________________________________________________________

Phone: ___________________________ Email:_____________________________________________________

Please write a brief rationale of why your nominee(s) deserves the Farmer Emeritus Award or the Distinguished Service Award:

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Your signature: _________________________________________________________________

Mail your nomination form by **Friday, January 29, 2010** to: SFA of MN, c/o Mary Hanks, 10500 295th St W, Northfield, MN 55057 or submit your form electronically to: Mary.Hanks@state.mn.us or post your nomination on the SFA of MN web site discussion board: www.sfa-mn.org/discussion.

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**Become a CornerPost Sponsor!**

Are you interested in strengthening the development of sustainable agriculture in Minnesota? Supporting the SFA’s quarterly newsletter is a way for you, your business or organization to become active in the cause. We will acknowledge your sponsorship in CornerPost by providing description and contact information unless you prefer that your sponsorship remain anonymous - we will honor your wishes. Please call Anne Borgendale at (320) 226-6318 to discuss your sponsorship opportunities.
Lodging:

AmericInn Motel & Suites
1320 Bollenbacher Drive
Northfield, MN 55057
(507) 645-7761
www.americinn.com

SFA has rooms on hold at the AmericInn Motel & Suites of Northfield for Friday, February 19, 2010. These rooms will be held until Friday, February 5, 2010. To reserve a room ask for one of the “Sustainable Farming – St. Olaf” rooms.

Archer House Historic Inn
212 Division St.
Northfield, MN 55057
(507) 645-5661
800-247-2235
www.archerhouse.com

Archibald Inn Bed & Breakfast
107 First Street
Dundas, MN 55019
(507) 664-9481
www.archibaldinn.com

Country Inn
300 Hwy 3 S.
Northfield, MN 55057
(507) 645-2286
800-456-4000
www.countryinns.com

The Magic Door Bed & Breakfast
818 Division Street S.
(507) 664-9096
www.magicdoorbb.com

Super 8 Motel
1420 Riverview Drive
Northfield, MN 55057
(507) 663-0371
www.super8.com

Directions:

St. Olaf College
Buntrock Commons
1520 St. Olaf Avenue
Northfield, MN
www.stolaf.edu

From I-35 (from the north or south)

* Take I-35 to Hwy. 19 East (Exit 69, Northfield exit)
* Travel east on Hwy. 19 for approximately 6 miles into the Northfield city limits
* The main entrance to the college will be on your left.
Enter the campus here.

From US-52 (from the north or south)

* Take US-52 to Hwy. 19 (in Cannon Falls)
* Travel west on Hwy. 19 into Northfield, which will include several stop signs and turns.
* Continue west on Hwy. 19 until you reach the western edge of Northfield
* The main entrance to the college will be on your right.
Enter the campus here.

Once on campus follow the directional signs to Buntrock Commons (building 3 on the map on page 20). A more detailed map of campus is available at www.stolaf.edu/visiting/maps/screen2d.html.

Parking
No parking permit will be required for the day.
The most centrally located parking lot is north of (adjacent to) Buntrock Commons.
Overflow parking will be available in the parking lot by the Skoglund Athletic Center.
St. Olaf College Campus Map

Map courtesy of www.stolaf.edu/visiting/maps/

Buntrock Commons = 3
Be a “Local Vocal” and become an important part of the growing local food movement

There is no doubt that right here in the Upper Minnesota River Valley some of the best food in the nation is being produced. From Dry Weather Creek’s on farm milled corn meal and flour to Pastures A Plenty’s legendary smoked bacon, you would be hard pressed to find finer. The Twin Cities finest restaurants have known for years about the bounty of our incredible farms and the nutritional and culinary advantage afforded when serving these products. But here in Western Minnesota we are often hard pressed to be able to find these healthy and fresh foods and it is being produced right in our own back yard.

This is why U of M West Central Partnership and its Pride of the Prairie partners have initiated the Buy Fresh Buy Local Campaign to spotlight the delicious fruits and vegetables, meats, dairy and bakery items from our region and to open the vital discussion about the economic benefits of creating a strong community-based food system.

They are known as “Vocal Locals” and we want you to become one!

The Upper Minnesota River Valley Buy Fresh Buy Local (BFBL) Chapter is building collaborations all the way up and down the food chain from farmers to processors, restaurants, food co-ops and other locally owned food stores and supportive organizations. And this food chain also includes YOU. The individual is a critically important part of the local foods equation because without you there would be no demand from the grocer, the restaurant or from the sustainable farmer.

The cost of being a “Vocal Local” is minimal but the advantages are huge as you help build and show the way to a sustainable and healthy food future for our community. You can become a “Vocal Local” partner of the Uppers Minnesota River Valley Buy Fresh Buy Local Chapter by going to the Pride of the Prairie web site, www.prideoftheprairie.org/freshlocal and clicking on How do I become a Partner.

As a “Vocal Local” Partner, you will receive a Buy Fresh Buy Local Partner decal and be listed as a member on the website and in the 2011 local foods guide publication. For more information, you can also contact Anne Borgendale at communications@sfa-mn.org or (320) 226-6318, a “Local Vocal” Partner of the Buy Fresh Buy Local Upper Minnesota River Valley Chapter.

The BFBL campaign represents:

• A BRAND that identifies the Upper Minnesota River Valley region and its abundant supply of local, sustainable, healthy foods.

• A CAMPAIGN that helps people understand food systems and to make ethical and sustainable choices.

• A CHAPTER with partners representing the various sectors of a local food system, working together to promote healthful, sustainable and ethical food choices.
By John Mesko

A Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota (SFA) members. As the new Executive Director of SFA, I’d like to let you know some about myself just as I’ve started to get to know more about many of you.

Born and raised in Minnesota, I attended Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana; obtaining a Bachelor of Science Degree in Agronomy and a Master of Science Degree in Farm Business Management.

After my wife Lisa and I married, my career took me to Michigan, Northern Indiana, and eventually Indianapolis, IN, where I was the Technical Information Manager for Mycogen Seeds, the seeds division of Dow Agrosciences, a subsidiary of Dow Chemical. In this role, I took a peak “behind the curtain” so to speak of the global agriculture industry, and wasn’t encouraged by what I saw.

It became apparent that I was playing an important role in the global dominance of food, food supply and food production of a huge, multi-national corporation. I saw that my work was ultimately resulting in the reduction of profit to the farmer, a reduction of food choice to the consumer and an overall downgrading of the environment. Ultimately, some of the future biotechnology plans in place at the time scared me out of my socks. I really could no longer give the most productive years of my life to an organization with such a cavalier attitude toward human life, food and the environment.

As a father of a future generation and caretaker of the soil, I couldn’t live with that. So, I took a position with Purdue as a County Extension Director and Solid Waste Management District Director in East Central Indiana. In this role, I worked with emerging organic and sustainable farm operations. Primarily, I was focused on expanding the markets for goods from these farms, and worked to educate producers and consumers about the choices both can make in the areas of community supported agriculture, direct marketing, farmers markets, food cooperatives, and farm-to-institution arrangements.

I always felt my own credibility was on the line in these types of programs. I had seen many examples of “expert arrogance,” (the not-so-subtle tendency for those who talk about farming to speak as though they actually farm), and often wondered if the farmers in the audience were skeptical. We wanted to do it – farm for ourselves. We had been raising a small market garden and some livestock, and felt ready to do more. I wanted to be able to say to people when they asked a question, “Why, yes, as a matter of fact, I do employ this in my own farm business.”

In 2005, when the opportunity came to purchase the farm I grew up on, return to Minnesota and begin farming on our own, we took it; and Lighthouse Farm (www.lighthousefarm.com) was born. We moved to an abandoned building site on the farm and basically started from scratch. There are some very old buildings, but they’re not much. We had to dig in water and septic pipe as well as electric lines. The former fences used years ago for grazing beef and dairy herds had literally

John Mesko continued on page 24
John Mesko continued from page 23 disintegrated and the hog fencing had been taken up years earlier. So, fencing of all kinds, sheep, hog, and cattle were project priorities in the beginning.

We started our e-newsletter, Sowing and Reaping, even before we moved, and it has become the primary source of obtaining new customers. Our first direct-marketed product was lamb in the fall of 2006, beef and pork followed shortly after. Now, we market 100% grass-fed, organic beef and lamb, as well as pastured pork and poultry, and eggs. Currently, our ground beef is featured at The Local, an Irish Pub in Downtown Minneapolis on Nicollet Mall. Lisa has developed the Authentic Agriculture series of educational DVDs, which we have marketed to dozens of beginning farmers and homesteaders. This has also led to a consulting business supporting new farmers and rural residents.

While developing a successful farm operation has been personally rewarding, the desire to help agriculture in general to become more sustainable and profitable has been with me since my epiphany at Dow Chemical. Additionally, we need a community of informed, active sustainable farmers as the movement grows. This is what interested me so much about our organization.

The Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota (SFA) has a long name, but each word is key in my view.

**Sustainable.** There are all kinds of definitions out there as to what “sustainable” means. In our name it means farming and caring for the land in ways that will make that land and lifestyle available to the next generation. It needs to mean more than just keeping your head above water, it needs to mean that farms that meet the needs of people, food, and the land are thriving, enjoyable places to live and work. SFA is focused on addressing the issues surrounding sustaining our resources and farming models.

**Farming.** As an organization, SFA is about farms, farmers, and farming. That’s very important. It doesn’t limit our membership, rather, it focuses our membership on the real important end of the food production cycle: the beginning.

**Association.** We are a community. Farmer-to-Farmer. Farmer-to-Consumer. Citizen-to-Citizen. One of our greatest strengths lies in the foundational structure of our local chapters. LOCAL chapters, addressing local needs, sustaining local resources. To the extent that these efforts can be coordinated, strengthened and delivered, we will be successful.

**Minnesota.** One of the great agriculture states in the country, our resources, our farms, our people, are worth preserving, maintaining and growing!

I’m very pleased to be a part of such an organization. Thank you for the opportunity. I’ve enjoyed meeting many of you since beginning as Executive Director. I’d love to meet more of you. Please feel free to contact me at any time by phone (763) 389-0554 or email, john@sfa-mn.org. I’m looking forward to meeting more of you at this year’s annual conference on February 20, 2010.

Permanence continued from page 25 find them to be happier, especially with their meat products. No one who likes to eat a pork chop likes to think while eating about how the animal has suffered in a confined environment in order to make that chop available.

If our farms feature permanent pastures and hayfields as part of the rotation, as well as orchards and grape arbors, wood lots and meadows and sloughs teeming with wild things, would we be more content to spend time on them, rather than seeking our lives elsewhere? And how could a farm develop in this direction without the continuing daily presence and work of the farm family? What impact would this kind of farming have on climate change, and conversely, would this kind of farm cope better with unpredictable and changing weather?

Our current agricultural rationales are dying and doing a certain amount of thrashing about in the process. It seems evident that a movement toward the perennial goes some way to helping ease some of the trouble we have made for ourselves this past half century or so. To do so, we will need to focus upon permanence as a goal. Human beings, who have no claim on the permanent, are at their best when they strive for it anyway.
Conversations with the Land: *Permanence*

By Jim VanDerPol

*This article originally appeared in Farming.*

Mainstream American agricultural thought is confused and staggering in circles. The several Michael Pollan broadsides, the documentary movie Food Inc, preceded by Eric Schlosser’s Fast Food Nation are perhaps the occasion for the confusion but hardly the cause. These statements of discontent with food production in the United States, all from the eating side of the question, have produced a spate of farmer and farm country rebuttals on the editorial pages of the agriculture press, some of which were pretty well subsidized by the Hudson Institute and large corporate beneficiaries of the current circumstance in farming.

It is likely that the real cause of dismay is the realization creeping in that we have arrived at the end of something, and that massive changes are at hand. After several generations of giving the customers what we thought they should want rather than bothering to ask what they did want, we have become unused to operating by some pretty basic business principles. We have been mistaken in other ways. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that though the recent run up in fuel prices may have been a bubble manufactured for the good of Goldman Sachs by Goldman Sachs, fuel is indeed going to be an increasing problem, that we cannot use forever out of a pile without causing that pile to shrink. And as the polar ice caps melt, it is hard to escape the uneasy feeling that our current weird weather, whatever that happens to be, is not just “the weather” but represents a major shift in climate that we will have to learn to live with, if we can.

We yearn for permanence, even though we know it to be beyond our capabilities. It has been my pleasure recently to visit several vineyards in Ontario and Germany and I was struck by the clear signs of an ongoing human presence in those places. Vineyards seem to be not very much like Midwestern farms even though they are a land based enterprise as is farming. I saw narrow gauge railroads, for getting the grapes in at harvest, I suppose, as well as transporting tourists. There were built up and graveled roadways and footpaths which rather followed the lay of the land and the plantings of grapes as well as the demands of the work. The buildings themselves seemed to be of good construction, not very new for the most part, but still good and straight and well placed.

Grapes are a perennial. Our crops here in the Midwest are annuals. How much of the difference between farms and vineyards can be accounted for by this fact? Certainly the planting of a perennial stand of anything requires of us a different thought pattern. Considerations will have to be made about living with these plants in this area ten and twenty or thirty years from now. Our farming here, by contrast, looks more and more like an overpriced industrial park on the edge of town. Good big farmhouses have been allowed to deteriorate, and then replaced with double wides. Big prairie hip roof barns molder back into the soil until the farmer gets enough gumption to push them into a pile for burning to clear the way for another grain bin or steel machine shed. Cheaply built bunkhouses are making a comeback to house dozens of young men far away from home and willing to work cheap on our huge dairy “farms” and hog establishments. Crops (there are two, corn and beans) are always annual, and are planted on as large a field as possible underlaid with miles and mile of plastic tile to dry the soil early enough for the tractors to move across many acres. Township mile roads are beginning to get in the way. Nobody is ever at home on these places, living is done at the lake, at the job in town or the café, and especially on the seat of the pickup truck.

If agriculture becomes more perennial in the coming decades, what might be the impact? Certainly farms based more squarely on perennial plants are going to have an easier time with high priced fuels, simply because they will not use tractors as much. We are going to have to feed our livestock differently, because some of our feeds will be different. Hogs and poultry are going to have to be more dispersed, because we will not be able to lean so easily on cheap corn to feed them and they will have to be raised in conjunction with the grazing species to take advantage of some of the synergy available in diversity. If we do this, and if we try to take some control of our markets through retaining ownership of the products all the way to the customer’s hands, we will

Permanence continued on page 24
Dear SFA Members and Supporters,

2009 has been a good year, in many ways, for SFA. We have accomplished much good work toward our stated goals; and every day we see more and more people becoming aware of the impact our nation’s farming practices have on the health of our economy, our environment and our people.

Also in 2009, we bid farewell to Mary Jo Forbord who was an excellent Executive Director. Under Mary Jo’s leadership our organization grew in strength and profile. Fortunately, SFA succeeded in hiring a new Executive Director, John Mesko, who has picked up the reins and is keeping our feet moving.

During 2009 we completed our second fundraising drive, and were able to raise more than $10,000 in donations. With John Mesko taking the lead, we have started another drive and have already raised $3963, including $3293 through the GiveMN.org program. We have also begun receiving donations in response to a recently mailed fundraising letter. We appreciate the generosity of the donors, listed on page 27, who have given us a good start toward our goal of raising $20,000 by July 1, 2010.

The public is becoming more aware of the need for a more sustainable approach to agriculture including the need for better farming practices and for more production of high quality locally produced food. We are in a good position to respond to this increased awareness, but we will need more support to advance our work. You can find considerable information about our programs in this newsletter. The funding from charitable foundations for sustainable farming is decreasing under current economic conditions, which means we will need more help from individuals like you.

During this holiday season we hope you will consider sending us a tax-deductible gift to support our programs. If you are a member, and are planning on renewing your membership soon, you may consider an extra gift in addition to you $30 annual membership fee. Donations in excess of the annual fee are also tax-deductible. Use the Sustaining Contributions card on page 27 to mail in with your donations or you can donate at our web site, www.sfa-mn.org.

Sincerely,

Dennis Ingle, Jim Tjepkema, Joe Gransee-Bowman, and Kelly Firkins
The SFA of MN Fundraising Committee
The Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota thanks these contributors:

Anonymous
Anonymous
Stephen Adams, Barnum
L.M. Arntsen, Grand Marais
James Banks, Maple, WI
Shayna Berkowitz, Minneapolis
Joan Bibelhausen
Teresa Birky, Detroit Lakes
Jayson Bixler, Duluth
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Jennifer Stenersen, Duluth
Jim Tjepkema, Clarks Grove
James Vnuk, Cloquet
Terry Waggoner, Bagley
Kevin Walsh, Duluth
Sue Wika, Ashby
Nicole Wilde, Duluth
Dale Woodbeck, Deephave
Whole Foods Community Co-op

Support SFA with a Sustaining Contribution

☐ $50   ☐ $100   ☐ $250   ☐ $500   ☐ $1000   ☐ Other: __________

Name: ___________________________________________ Business/Org/Farm: _____________________________
Address & City: __________________________________________ State: ________ Zip: _____________
Phone: ______________________________ Email: ______________________________________________________

Please make checks payable to: SFA of MN. Mail the form and check to:  SFA of MN, 7356 Cable Rd, Little Falls, MN 56345-5433
You can also contribute online at www.sfa-mn.org. Just click on the piggy bank.

Thank You!
**Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota**

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**Membership Form**

![Image of a membership form](image_url)

**Date:**  

**SFA Annual Membership (for a family)**  

- $30  

*(Not Tax Deductible)*  

**SFA Annual Youth/Student Membership (for one student)**  

- $10  

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**Name 1:**  

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**Name 2:**  

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**Farm/Business/Organization:**  

**Address:**  

**Address Line 2:**  

**City:**  

**State:**  

**Zip:**  

**Country:**  

**Home Phone:**  

**Work Phone:**  

**Mobile Phone:**  

**Email:**  

**Website:**  

**Chapter:**  

- Central  
- Cannon River/Hiawatha Valley  
- Crow River/Lake Agassiz  
- Lake Superior  
- Lake Agassiz  
- South Central  
- South Dakota  
- Southeast  
- Western  
- Unspecified  

**Member Interests (Optional):**  

- Chef/Cooking  
- Consumer  
- Crafts  
- Distribution  
- Education  
- Energy Production  
- Entrepreneur  
- Environment  
- Events  
- Exhibitor  
- Farmer  
- Food Production  
- Garlic Festival  
- Grazefest  
- Health  
- Marketing  
- Other  
- Policy  
- Processing  
- Sponsor  
- Youth  

---

**Please make your check payable to:** SFA of MN. **Mail form & check to:**  

**SFA of MN, 7356 Cable Rd, Little Falls, MN  56345-5433**  

Thank you!
Help SFA reach our fundraising goal!

The Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota’s fundraising goal for fiscal year 2009/2010 is $20,000. Each cow below represents $1000. We’ve already raised almost $4000. With your help we can make our goal.  

Thanks!
Thanks for your generosity on “Give to the Max” Day!

Many thanks to all who contributed to SFA of MN on Tuesday, November 17, 2009 through the GiveMN.org “Give to the Max” day! Our organization raised over $3000 in one day. It was a great kickoff to our 2010 Fundraising Drive!

One way we use contributions we receive is to partially fund the SFA Annual Conference. From the 2009 Annual Conference, we received a comment that sums SFA up very well:

“Very informative & practical…So many opportunities, so little time.”

SFA is informative; and we take great pride in being practical. All of our programs, not just the Annual Conference, are great opportunities for education, networking and increasing knowledge and awareness. SFA brings the innovation, demonstration, education, and farmer-to-farmer networking to the sustainable agriculture community.

How can you help? Watch for more fundraising information coming soon. If you haven’t already, contribute at: www.sfa-mn.org, click on the “piggy bank.”

Also, you can help by letting your friends and others who are interested in sustainability know about our fundraising campaign. Contributing to SFA is a great way to promote your values!

- John Mesko, SFA of MN Executive Director

Let’s Keep Antibiotics Working!

It may startle you to hear this, but nearly 70% of U.S. antibiotics are being used on animals raised on industrial farms. Sadly, they are being used on animals that are not even sick. The primary reasons behind this overuse of antibiotics are to offset crowding and poor sanitation and growth promotion. As a result of this practice, scientists have seen deadly strains of drug-resistant bacteria spreading to humans.

It is alarming to know that consumers are exposed to resistant bacteria through the handling and consumption of contaminated meat, through produce that has been exposed to resistant bacteria in soil and water, or through direct contact with the bacteria in the environment.

By curtailing the use of unnecessary antibiotics, we will encourage producers to raise animals in better living conditions that are less conducive to disease. By educating Minnesotans about the threat of resistant antibiotics, we will support those farmers and ranchers that raise healthy animals without the nontherapeutic use of antibiotics.

While it is crucial that we protect our family and friends from the threat of antibiotic resistant bacteria, we must also protect animals that will suffer when antibiotics administered by veterinarians fail to work.

Currently, there is work being done in Minnesota to educate the public about the growing crisis of antibiotic-resistant diseases due to the unnecessary uses of these drugs in the feed and water of livestock and poultry that are not sick. Let’s all help educate others about this practice, so we can end it.

Please contact Donald McFarland at (612) 424-3028 or Donald@mcfarlandandco.com to find out how just a few minutes of your time can help educate Minnesotans about this harmful practice.
Unearthing the dark side of earthworms

Asian “jumping” worms are new gardening threat

By June Kallestad
Natural Resources Research Institute at the University of Minnesota Duluth

Most people don’t know that there are no native earthworms in the Great Lakes region—none, zero, zip. All earthworms you know and love came over with the Europeans some 200-plus years ago. And while everything you’ve heard about them being good in the garden—they aerate the soil, make organic material, increase nutrient turnover—that’s all true. But if you take that same earthworm and put it in a hardwood forest that has evolved for 10,000 years with no earthworms then it literally changes the ground rules—pun intended—of that ecosystem which developed under earthworm-free conditions.

Research scientist Cindy Hale recently published Earthworms of the Great Lakes (Kollath+Stensaas Publishing, Duluth) to document the impact of non-native earthworms. She began The Great Lakes Worm Watch program (greatlakeswormwatch.org) to spread the word about the problems caused by earthworms and to engage citizens in documenting earthworm species across the region.

JK: Explain how earthworms are bad for forests while good for gardens?

CH: When earthworms invade these previously earthworm-free forests, they mix the thick layer of spongy, slowly decomposing matter we call duff, into the soil, which changes the structure, the chemistry, and the biology—the living organisms in the soil—literally eating the rooting zone out from under the forest understory plants.

JK: You were on the front page of the Wall Street Journal in 2003 and this story has been told many times since, most recently in the March Scientific American. What’s new in this research area?

CH: There’s a suite of Asian earthworms in the genus Amynthas that are a new emerging threat. You’ll hear them called Jumping Worms, or Alabama Jumpers. They’re called that because they have very muscular and hyper-active behavior, very un-worm-like behavior. These guys flip and jump. They’ve been invading throughout the east coast and are slowing working their way west. In gardens they’ve invaded it’s been devastating, to the point of a “nothing grows here” syndrome.

JK: Have you seen these worm devastations?

CH: There’s a guy in Pennsylvania who has 30,000

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Earthworms continued from page 32
hosta varieties and this Asian earthworm came in with mulch he imported and it destroyed half of his nursery. In Minnesota, we’ve seen them at a few places in the Twin Cities and a handful of places in Wisconsin. They’re not well established in the western Great Lakes region yet but they’re poised to be coming and we’re greatly concerned about them. They have the potential for even more of a heavy impact on our native forests, but also having very negative consequences to ecosystems where you traditionally think of earthworms being good in, like gardens and landscapes.

JK: earthworms are legless. How do they get around and “invade” an area?

CH: The European earthworms—nightcrawlers, and the like—are largely spread by people dumping unused fishing bait, gardening, and earth moving projects, like road construction. The Asian earthworms are spread much more by compost and leaf mulch, especially through larger community or commercial operations. So if you’re a landscaper and you’re ordering a truckload of compost or mulch from anywhere east of here, you may well be getting these Asian earthworms, unbeknownst to yourself. However, in bagged compost and mulch there won’t be live earthworms or viable egg cocoons.

JK: I have a friend who composes and swears by the earthworms she put in it. She says they’re needed to break down the waste to make it into compost.

CH: There are two ways to compost: vermicomposting (with earthworms) and regular heat-generating composting. I’m an organic farmer so I compost in big black barrels in my back yard. But if you go out on the Internet and order what you think are Red Wigglers—which are also European but generally are fine here because they don’t survive Minnesota winters well—you may be getting these or any number of species. There are very few sources that we looked at that are pure *Eisenia fetida* (red wigglers or manure earthworms). Most people think they know what they have, but they don’t, or they have a mixture of different species.

LN: Where are we most vulnerable when it comes to these Asian earthworms establishing themselves locally?

CH: We’d first see them around municipal gardens and municipal compost sites because mulch is being brought from far away places and they are fairly uncontrolled. On one level, the community garden and compost sites make a lot of sense. On another level they’re really dangerous, because they bring lots of problems, not just earthworms but Creeping Charlie, weed seeds, buckthorn and garlic mustard. We’re bringing all that to one site, mixing them up and sending them back out. It’s a recipe for disaster—a perfect mechanism for distributing invasive species unintentionally.

For more info visit www.greatlakeswormwatch.org.

SAFE COMPOSTING:

*Remember: All earthworms are exotic, so it’s technically illegal to knowingly introduce them to an outdoor compost pile.*

Outdoor Composts: A traditional backyard “hot” pile (or compost barrel) needs to be turned and watered regularly to activate the natural fungi and bacteria to heat the pile over 110 degrees. This kills any earthworms or earthworm egg cocoons.

Vermicomposting: Container composting with earthworms is popular with apartment and condo dwellers who don’t have backyard space.

FREEZE the vermicompost before it is introduced to an outdoor environment to kill the earthworms and their egg cocoons. In cold northern states, garages or other unheated buildings are good places to put your compost in the winter. If you live in a snowy region, don’t put the compost outside or the snow cover will insulate the compost and it may not completely freeze.
Youth Sustainability Writing Competition

“New Voices for Sustainable Farming, Local Foods, a Healthy Environment, and Vital Rural Communities”

Judging, Presentation, and Awards

Each category will be judged by a professional author or writing teacher. Finalists in each category will be given the opportunity to read or perform their piece at the Youth Sustainability Confabulation on Saturday, April 10, 2010. Finalists will be reimbursed for their mileage to the Confab at $0.55 per mile. Winners in each category will receive an honorarium of $50 in addition to the mileage reimbursement, and a plaque. Obviously, we are encouraging finalists to attend the Confab, but if you cannot, your piece will likely be read, and you will still be eligible to win. The winners’ works will be published in SFA of MN’s quarterly newsletter, “The CornerPost”, on the SFA website or in other SFA publications.

Youth Sustainability Writing Competition Awards Ceremony and Readings will be held at the Youth Sustainability Confab, Gustavus Adolphus College, Saturday, April 10, 2010. This information & entry form are also available at:

WWW.SFA-MN.ORG

High School and College Age Divisions with categories in:

Poetry
Poems will be 40 lines or less and may be in any style or form. Themes should include rural life, nature, the environment, farming or local foods.

Journalism
Entries should portray a real life, eyewitness account or personally researched story about Minnesota sustainable farming.

Limerick
Consisting of five lines, “aabba” rhyme scheme, with a syllable structure of 9, 9, 6, 6, 9. It should be witty or humorous, and based on the same themes as the Poetry Category.

Haiku
In the English free form style of 17 or fewer syllables; three lines in short/long/short, focusing on images from nature, farming or local foods.

Essay/Creative non-fiction
300 - 500 words answering the question, “What is your vision for the future of rural Minnesota?”. Themes can include farming, locally produced foods, the environment, vital rural communities and the beauty of Minnesota’s countryside.

Flash fiction/Short story
A short story of 100 - 500 words in which the setting, main characters, theme or plot concerns rural MN and/or farming.

Dramatic Monologue or Duet
A self-contained dramatic speech given by a single character, or a conversation between two characters, in 500 words or less. Themes are the same as Flash Fiction and Essay.
Purpose:
This competition is being sponsored by the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota. Our intention is to encourage young people to think about sustainable farming and its implications in Minnesota: Where does your food come from? How does sustainable farming benefit the environment? Is there value in having beautiful countryside in our state? Are small farms and rural life important elements in our culture?

Rules:
1) Writers must be within one of the age divisions: 14-18 (high school) or 19-25 (college). However, if you are younger than 19 and are a full-time college student, you should enter in the college division. You do not have to be an enrolled student as long as you are in one of the age divisions.
2) Writers must be Minnesota residents, or students from elsewhere attending a MN college or high school.
3) You may enter as many categories as you like, but only one entry per category.
4) Entries must be received by the Youth Outreach Coordinator no later than Friday, March 12, 2010.
5) Formats: Entries may be printed - with each piece on a separate page - or entries may be sent electronically, in Microsoft Word or as a PDF document, either mailed on a disk or emailed to the Youth Outreach Coordinator. Each piece should be a separate document.
6) It is the intent of this competition that all work submitted will be original by the author. Other material used by the author must be properly credited.
7) The copyright of each piece remains with the author. Authors will grant SFA of MN the right to publish or broadcast the material for two years from April 2010.
8) All entries must be in English or have an accurate translation provided by the author.

Workshops:
A companion workshop is available at no cost to schools and other organizations, directed by author/playwright/songwriter/poet Marienne Kreitlow. This workshop will focus on the categories of Flash Fiction, Poetry and Dramatic Monologue. Participants will finish the workshop with pieces begun or ready to enter the competition. Call (320) 543-3394 or email marienne@marienne.com for more information. Sponsored by Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota.

There is no entry fee for this competition

Please send your entries to:
Jerry Ford, Events & Youth Outreach Coordinator
Sustainable Farming Association of MN
7616 25th Street SW, Howard Lake, MN 55439
or email to: jerry@marienne.com

www.sfa-mn.org
MDI continued from page 9
Ray Miller can help you figure out what is needed and what the total bill will be for your product development. He can be contacted at (612) 624-7776 or emailed at rmiller@umn.edu. Minnesota isn’t the only midwestern state to have training and development facilities for dairy products. In fact, we’re quite blessed in this state to have so many so close. For those in the western half of the state, maybe the South Dakota State University – Brookings pilot plant is a bit closer. Check them out at http://dairysci.sdstate.edu/departmentinfo/facilities/dairyplantandsalesbar/dairyplant.htm or phone them at (605) 688-5420 or (605) 688-4116.

Maybe Wisconsin is closer to you. Try the University of Wisconsin – River Falls cheesemaking short courses. They can be found on the web at http://www.uwrf.edu/afs-all/institutes/foodscience or phone them at (715) 425-3704.

In summary, if you’re into dairy and have an interest in turning some of your raw product into a marketable commodity, check out the resources available right here in the Midwest. Our local schools can help you with the science. Our local farmers can help you with the ideas and the art.

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New Voices in Sustainability

Youth Sustainability 2010 Confabulation

Gustavus Adolphus College  
St. Peter, MN

Saturday, April 10, 2010 
Free and open to College & High School Age

Featuring: World Cafe, Talk to the Elders, and the Youth Writing Competition Finals
Winter Events Calendar

For more details visit: www.sfa-mn.org/calendar.
If you would like to add an event to the SFA Events Calendar contact Anne at communications@sfa-mn.org or (320) 226-6318.


Jan 4  Wisconsin Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Conference – Chula Vista Resort, Wisconsin Dells, WI. For more information www.waga.org; 920-478-3853.

Jan 5  Vineyard Establishment Tour – Pemberton, MN. Part of the 2009 3rd Crop Walk & Talks. For more information or directions contact the Rural Advantage office at (507) 238-5449.

Jan 7-9  Food Forest Design and Urban Regeneration – University of Minnesota, St. Paul Campus. For more details or to register, visit www.pricoldclimate.org/event/homescale_food_forests_and_urban_strategies_2_workshops or contact Evelyn Hadden comcoord@pricoldclimate.org with any questions.

Jan 8 – Feb 19  Online Beginning Farmer Course. Learn more at www.nybeginningfarmers.org/courses/.

Jan 8-9  Practical Farmers of Iowa 2010 Annual Conference & Jubilee – Marshalltown Community College. For more information visit http://www.practicalfarmers.org/events/annual-conference.html.

Jan 9  SFA of Central Minnesota Annual Meeting – Camphill Village, Sauk Centre, MN. The keynote speaker will be John Mesko, Executive Director of SFA of MN. For more info email Sue Peterson at azariahsue@yahoo.com.

Jan 9-10  Planning your Whole Farm: Land, Lifestyle, Money and Living Things - School Sisters of Notre Dame, Good Counsel, Mankato, MN. For more information contact Amy Bacigalupo with the Land Stewardship Project at 320-269-2105 to register or by email at amyb@landstewardshipproject.org.


Jan 15-16  Minnesota Organic Conference and Trade Show – St. Cloud, MN. For more information visit: www.mda.state.mn.us/food/organic or call 651-201-6012.

Jan 15-17 Wisconsin School For Beginning Market Growers – Madison, MN. For more information contact John Hendrickson at the Center for Integrated Ag. Systems, 608-265-3704 or jhendric@wisc.edu.

Jan 16  10th Annual Great River vineyard “Grape Growing 101: Learn to Grow Grapes” Seminar - Villa Marina Retreat Center, Frontenac, MN. For more information call (877) 345-3531 or visit www.greatrivervineyard.com

Jan 19-20 Year Round Grazing Systems – Business Management Seminar – Central Lakes College, Staples, MN. For more info call Barb Cline, Customized Training at 218-894-5120 or email bcline@clcmn.edu. With optional hands-on course work January 21 -- $50 per farm unit.


Jan 21  Attacking Poverty through Green Jobs (podcast) - Brainerd Area Environmental Learning Network (BAELN) - MN Pollution Control Agency in Baxter, MN. For more info on BAELN, please contact Stephen Mikkelson at (218) 316-3887, or toll free at 1-800-657-3864.
Jan 21-22  The annual Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference and Trade Show – St. Cloud Civic Center. For more info visit http://mfvga.org or call (763) 434-0400.


Jan 23  Western Chapter of SFA Annual Meeting “Bringing Terra Madre home … what it means for us returning to prairieland…” – Earthrise Farm, Madison, MN. For more info contact VanDerPols at 320-847-3432 or grassroots@pasturesaplenty.com or Earthrise (Kay & Annette Fernholz) at 320-752-4700.

Jan 23  Cannon River/Hiawatha Chapter of SFA Annual Meeting – Just Food Co-op, Northfield, MN. David & Laurie Hougén-Eitzman will present on their trip to China to work with Chinese farmers. Potluck with meeting to follow. For more information contact CR/H Chapter Coordinator Kathy Zeman kzeman@kmwb.net at (507) 664-9446.

Jan 23  Land Stewardship Project’s Farm Beginnings Tune-Up Workshop – Minneapolis, MN. Time Management. For more info contact Parker Forsell at LSP 507-523-3366 or parker@landstewardshipproject.org.

Jan 28-29  WFAN Annual Conference – King’s Pointe Resort, Storm Lake, IA. For more information visit www.wfan.org.

Jan 30  Back to Basics - Pine River, MN. For more info email Sue Peterson at azariahsue@yahoo.com.

Feb 5-7  The Midwest School for Beginning Apple Growers – University of Wisconsin, Madison. For more information, contact John Hendrickson at (608) 265-3704 or jhendric@wisc.edu, or visit the CIAS web site: www.cias.wisc.edu.

Feb 8  Third Crop Producer Meetings – Biomass Establishment, Knights of Columbus Hall, Fairmont, MN. For more information contact Jill Sackett – Extension Educator, Conservation Agronomist at the Rural Advantage office at (507) 238-5449 or visit their website at www.ruraladvantage.org for more information.

Feb 9-10  Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society Winter Conference – Watertown Event Center Watertown, SD. For more info www.npsas.org; 701-883-4304

Feb 11-13  6th Annual Cold Climate Grape & Wine Conference – Sheraton Bloomington Hotel, Bloomington, MN. For more information and to register visit www.mngrapes.org or contact Nicole Walsh, Conference Coordinator, with questions at nicole.walsh@mngrapes.org.

Feb 13  Southeast Chapter of SFA’s Annual Meeting. For more information or to talk about our chapter call or e-mail Lonny Dietz at 507-932-5225 or londietz@aol.com

Feb 15-16  Home Grown Economy 2010 – Southwest Minnesota State University, Marshall, MN. For more info http://collin.peterson.house.gov or contact Toni Merdan at 218-847-5056; Toni.Merdan@mail.house.gov.

Feb 16  Home Grown Economy 2010 – Equipping You to Build Community Based Food. For more info visit http://collinpeterson.house.gov. Interactive video sessions will be held at the following campuses: University of Minnesota, Crookston, University of Minnesota, Morris, Bemidji State University, and Minnesota State Community and Technical College in Fergus Falls.

Feb 18  The Impacts of a green Workforce on the Economy - Brainerd Area Environmental Learning Network (BAELN) - MN Pollution Control Agency in Baxter, MN. For general information on BAELN, please contact Stephen Mikkelsen at (218) 316-3887, or toll free at 1-800-657-3864.

Feb 18-20  18th Annual Wisconsin Grazing Conference: Pastures, People, Planet, Profits – Wisconsin Rapids, WI. For more information contact Heather Flashinski at 715-289-4896 or grassheather@hotmail.com.


Feb 20  Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota’s 19th Annual Conference “Sustainable Farming 2020: What does it look like? How do we get there?” – St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN. For more info visit www.sfa-mn.org or contact Anne with SFA at (320) 226-6318 or communications@sfa-mn.org.
Feb 22  **Third Crop Producer Meetings – Third Crops: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner, Knights of Columbus Hall, Fairmont, MN.** For more information contact Jill Sackett – Extension Educator, Conservation Agronomist at the Rural Advantage office at (507) 238-5449 or visit their website at www.ruraladvantage.org for more information.

Feb 25  **State of Organic Seed Symposium – La Crosse, WI.** Learn more at [http://www.seedalliance.org/Advocacy](http://www.seedalliance.org/Advocacy) or email matthew@seedalliance.org.

Feb 25-27  **21st Annual Organic Farming Conference & Organic University – La Crosse, WI.** For more info [www.mosesorganic.org/conference](http://www.mosesorganic.org/conference); 715-778-5775.

Mar 5-6  **Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Conference – Barkers Island Inn, Superior, WI.** For more information visit [www.lakesuperiorfarming.org](http://www.lakesuperiorfarming.org).

Mar 6-10  **Wisconsin Dairy Sheep School - Spooner Agricultural Research Station.** For more info contact Claire Mikolayunas, DBIC Dairy Sheep Specialist, at 608-332-2889 or clairemikolay@gmail.com or visit [http://www.dbicusa.org/sheeps_milk.php](http://www.dbicusa.org/sheeps_milk.php).

Mar 8  **Third Crop Producer Meetings – Biomass Harvesting and Processing, Knights of Columbus Hall, Fairmont, MN.** For more information contact Jill Sackett – Extension Educator, Conservation Agronomist at the Rural Advantage office at (507) 238-5449 or visit their website at www.ruraladvantage.org for more information.

Mar 13  **Beekeeping in Northern Climes Short Course – University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN.** For more info [www.extension.umn.edu/Honeybees/components/publiccourses.htm](http://www.extension.umn.edu/Honeybees/components/publiccourses.htm); 612-624-4798.

Mar 14-16  **2010 National Farmers Union Convention – Ramkota Hotel and Conference Center, Rapid City, SD.** For more information visit: [http://nfu.org/about/convention](http://nfu.org/about/convention).

Mar 19-28  **Teaching Permaculture Creatively" Course – Audubon Nature Center, Sandstone, MN.** For more information visit [http://www.pricoldclimate.org/](http://www.pricoldclimate.org/).

Mar 18  **Land Stewardship Project’s Farm Beginnings Tune-Up Workshop – Record Keeping; St. Cloud, MN.** For more info contact Nick Olson at LSP 320-269-2105 or nicko@landstewardshipproject.org.

Mar 22  **Third Crop Producer Meetings – Improving Soil Health, Knights of Columbus Hall, Fairmont, MN.** For more information contact Jill Sackett – Extension Educator, Conservation Agronomist at the Rural Advantage office at (507) 238-5449 or visit their website at www.ruraladvantage.org for more information.

Mar 25  **Deconstruction + Reuse = Green Opportunities - Brainerd Area Environmental Learning Network (BAELN) - MN Pollution Control Agency in Baxter, MN.** For general info on BAELN, please contact Stephen Mikkelson at (218) 316-3887.

Mar 27  **Youth Sustainability Confabulation – Winona State University, Winona, MN.** For more information visit [www.sfa-mn.org](http://www.sfa-mn.org).

Apr 10  **Youth Sustainability Confabulation – Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, MN.** For more information visit [www.sfa-mn.org](http://www.sfa-mn.org).

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WEED CONTROL: A SERIOUS ISSUE

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Jim & Tevie Tillman 912-764-4347 or 843-345-6776
I stumbled upon the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota (SFA) on the web while researching sustainable farming in early 2006. As I was just getting started with planning my farm business, I attended the 2007 SFA Annual Conference, and really appreciated the workshops that I attended, as well as connecting with other farmers. I officially became a member of SFA in March 2008, via the website. I eventually attended the Cannon River/Hiawatha chapter’s annual meeting in January 2009, where I was asked to represent the chapter as a delegate to the SFA board. I am now honored to serve as Vice Chair of the state board, along side many talented and dedicated leaders.

While I grew up in the city of Mankato, I had relatives and friends who were farmers. From an early age, I dreamed of one day being a farmer, and spent my summer vacations staying with and helping out on their farms, including my uncle’s horse farm, a friend’s dairy farm, and another friend’s sheep farm. We also had a large garden growing up, and I especially enjoyed growing, caring for, and harvesting vegetables and flowers.

I am currently a full-time Farmer at Clinton Falls Farm, LLC—a 28-acre farm in Clinton Falls Township, two miles north of Owatonna. My farm family includes my partner Lowell Gordon, and our two beagles, Jasper and Lily, and we are supported by both of our extended families, as well as close friends and dedicated members within the surrounding community.

We primarily grow vegetables and cut flowers direct marketed through our Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, the Owatonna Farmers’ Market, and wholesale to local chefs and area businesses. Prior to farming, I spent 18 years in the Twin Cities employed with a Fortune 500 Financial Services Firm in several different management positions.

I am very proud and excited to be a part of SFA at a time when our local, state, national, and global communities are struggling to find new and more sustainable solutions for healthy food, a healthy environment, and vibrant and healthy communities. SFA supporters, and those of us active in our organization are critical participants in solving one the most serious challenges the human race has ever faced. The choices and decisions made today on individual farms, in local communities, and across our great state will directly impact the future of agriculture, and the health of our planet, as a whole.
mission: we support the development and enhancement of sustainable farming systems through innovation, demonstration, education and farmer-to-farmer networking.