Cultivate your agricultural legacy with a farm transition

BY JAN JOANNIDES

The heartbeat of American agriculture is transforming: over 70 percent of farms will change ownership hands during the next twenty years. With the average age of the American farmer now in their late fifties, but with a growing crop of young people eager to commit to agriculture careers, today’s established and experienced farmers stand in a pivotal role to lead this next generation to be successful farmers.

Farm transitions are far from quick and easy; however, starting the process can be the first step toward establishing the agricultural legacy of both your family farm and helping ensure a healthy food supply for our nation.

Different than other professions, farming is not a typical ‘job’ that you can simply walk away from one day when you decide to retire. Our nation’s family farms include a rich history and commitment built over years and even generations. Farm transitions therefore can not and, frankly, should not take place quickly; rather, transitions must be a thoughtful process that engages everyone involved.

To help facilitate this process, Renewing the Countryside and the Sustainable Farming Association are hosting workshops to help farmers navigate the complex process of farm transitions.

The Minnesota Organic Conference on January 11 features a session on “Who’s Next? Farm Succession and Transfer.”

The Sustainable Farming Association’s Annual Conference on February 16 includes a session on “Who’s Next? Farm Succession and Transfer.”

The MOSES Conference on February 22, 2023, offers a session titled “Nurturing the Next Generation of Organic Livestock Farmers.”

Farm Transitions is a joint project of Renewing the Countryside and the Sustainable Farming Association.

Funding for Farm Transitions is provided by USDA. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.
TRANSITIONS from page 1

Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota are developing a cornucopia of helpful tools to assist you in navigating these complex issue. We’re starting a bi-monthly newsletter – and this is our first issue. We’re also creating a short, monthly radio program, and partnering with the University of Minnesota Extension, Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture and the Land Stewardship Project to create an online clearinghouse of information and resources on this topic.

An exciting part of this work is that we are able to bring farm transitions guru John Baker to Minnesota to conduct a multi-day workshop this March. John is a practicing attorney and has 30 years of experience in helping families plan for and execute farm transition and estate plans. He helped to form the Beginning Farmer Center at Iowa State and helped found the International Farm Transition Network.

This workshop is not for the mildly curious. It involves four days (in two segments) where John and his associates walk you through a process for making your transition and estate plan a reality. Registration is limited, so sign up soon to save your spot. More information is available in the box on Page 4 of this newsletter.

Contact us with questions at 612.910.7601 or info@rtcinfo.org.

BY GARY A. HACHFELD

Transitioning the farm business to the next generation or to another individual can be a daunting task. To add to the complexity of the process, it is essential to complete a personal estate plan in addition to a business transition plan. The question is where does one begin?

University of Minnesota Extension has made available a number of information sheets that can supply background information on developing and implementing both a business transition plan and an associated personal estate plan. The various information sheets outline processes and strategies that can help begin the process. The first series includes 11 sheets focused on business transition. Topics include establishing goals for the process, business entities that may enable the process, information on applicable tax issues, treatment of heirs if applicable, financial decisions, and developing a written transition plan outline. The second series focuses on personal estate planning and includes such items as planning principles, tax information, wills and trusts, power-of-attorney, health care directives, HIPAA designations, and long-term health care issues. The third series includes financial management sheets including information about a cash flow, balance sheet, income statement, statement of owner equity, and financial ratios. These sheets can help in determining the financial strength of the business being transferred.

The three-part series in available free of charge. Simply go to www.cffm.umn.edu. Once there go to the top right of the page placing the cursor over “publications” and then clicking “farm management”. On that page scroll down until Transferring the Farm Series, Estate Planning Series and Financial Management Series appear. They can be printed as separate documents or as a group.

Planning ahead is critical to preserving the farm business. No planning or poor planning can be catastrophic leading to unnecessary estate taxes or other issues upon the death of the owner. Planning can facilitate the transition of the business to a family member of unrelated person insuring the survival of the business and the desired retirement life of the exiting generation.

Gary A. Hachfeld is an extension educator at the University of Minnesota Extension. He can be reached at bachf002@umn.edu.
### Get to know us: The Farm Transitions team

Renewing the Countryside strengthens rural areas by championing rural communities, farmers, artists, entrepreneurs, educators, activists and other people who are renewing the countryside through sustainable and innovative initiatives, businesses, and projects. Learn more at www.renewingthecountryside.org.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jan Joannides</th>
<th>Brett Olson</th>
<th>Robyn Ingber</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jan Joannides</strong> is most at home in the countryside, and after many years of city life is happy to now call southeastern Minnesota home. She has spent the last couple of years learning about the complexities and challenges that farmers face as they consider their later years. Jan has a master’s degree in natural resources from the University of Minnesota. She helped co-found the Center for Integrated Natural Resources and Agricultural Management, directed the Community Assistantship Program in its early years, and served as an administrator at the University of Minnesota’s Children, Youth and Family Consortium. Jan has been the managing editor of eight books focusing on sustainable rural development, helped launch Green Routes, a sustainable travel initiative, and works to find innovative ways to build vibrant rural communities.</td>
<td><strong>Brett Olson</strong> grew up in small rural communities throughout the Midwest. Summers were often spent at the wheel of a windrower on neighbors’ farms. Brett works for Renewing the Countryside who’s mission is to find active strategies for building sustainable rural economies and enhancing the quality of place for the people who live in them. Brett has presented on sustainable tourism, family farms and local food both locally and nationally. He has worked directly with farmers in designing business strategies and discovering direct markets for their products. As one of the founders of Renewing the Countryside, Brett has been involved in much of the development, planning and organizing since it’s inception. Brett and his family recently moved on to a former dairy farm in Zumbro Falls, Minnesota.</td>
<td><strong>Robyn Ingber</strong> joined Renewing the Countryside as its Staff Attorney in July 2012. She grew up on the plains of Oklahoma, then later attended the University of Kansas, where she received a B.A. in Political Science. Robyn comes from a long line of Southern farmers, so she is thrilled to combine her passion for law and family tradition in the work she is doing with the Farm Transitions program. Robyn is a Certified Farm Succession Coordinator, which means she is trained in the particular issues that farm families face when doing estate planning and farm succession planning. Robyn graduated from William Mitchell College of Law in 2008 and spent the past three years practicing in an estate-planning firm in Minnetonka. She lives in Minneapolis with her husband, Marc; 19 mo. old daughter, Ella; and 75-pound lapdog, Otis. She is known among her colleagues and friends for making delectable pecan pies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **John Mesko** is the Executive Director of the Sustainable Farming Association, a Farmer-to-Farmer Network designed to enhance and promote sustainable agriculture. In this role, John develops local food networks, helps beginning farmers succeed, and expands the capacity of farmer networks. He and his family also own and operate Lighthouse Farm, producing grass-fed beef and pastured pork. | **Kent Solberg** and his wife, Linda, have a diversified pasture-based livestock farm near Verndale, MN. They raise dairy, pork, eggs and beef. Kent serves as Livestock and Grazing Specialist, and Dairy Initiatives Coordinator through the Sustainable Farming Association. He is also adjunct faculty at the community college in Fergus Falls as a livestock, forage and farm skills instructor. | **Jason Walker** is Communications Coordinator for the Sustainable Farming Association. After a decade in the newspaper business, Jason joined SFA in summer 2011 and handles social media, newsletters, website and member management for the organization. He works with the Farm Transitions project in several aspects of communications and outreach. Jason is also a staff writer for the Heavy Table and contributes to Growler magazine. He lives with his family in Minneapolis where he likes to can, build things in his shop and attempt to play and sing classic country songs. |

The Sustainable Farming Association supports the development and enhancement of sustainable farming systems through farmer-to-farmer networking, innovation, demonstration, and education. Learn more at www.sfa-mn.org.
Thinking about what will happen to your farm when you can no longer farm it is not something most people like to think about. Succession planning, estate planning, retirement planning – it sounds confusing, it IS confusing, and it is easy to put it on the back burner. But as uncomfortable as these topics are to address, they are crucial in ensuring that you are comfortable in your later years, that the assets you have worked so hard to build during your lifetime will be transferred according to your wishes, and that you will leave behind the legacy you want.

Renewing the Countryside and the Sustainable Farming Association have put together a team of specialists to help you navigate the complexities of the various plans you need to have in place as you age: estate planning, retirement planning; succession, transition planning – we’re here to help.

The process is simple. We can sit down with you and your family and work through an assessment that will map out the steps you need to take. We then will provide some “coaching” to help you move along with your plan and can help you access the additional expertise and resources you need. We’re able to offer this service for free through the fall of 2013, thanks to support from USDA’s Risk Management Agency.

If you would like assistance in planning your farm’s future and assuring that your hard-earned assets are protected, please contact the Farm Transition Team at 612.910.7601 or info@rtcinfo.org.

---

**FEELING OVERWHELMED?**

Attend this very special Farm Succession and Estate Planning workshop. We will have two attorneys on hand + our Transition Team to answer questions and assist you in getting a real start on a plan.

Attorney John Baker is a nationally known expert on farm succession planning. His 30 years of experience working with families on planning for the future has made him the “go-to” guy on this kind of law. Baker has conducted workshops in Iowa, Alaska, Nebraska and is now coming to Minnesota. Don’t miss this rare opportunity to get extensive assistance and hands-on help developing your plan.

The four-day workshop will assist farm families to plan for the eventual transition of their farm. The two-session workshops will be held on consecutive days to allow for plenty of conversation and time to develop written plans. The workshops are planned as a multi-generational event for current farm owners and for their heirs or non-family members to whom they hope to transfer the farm.

Where else are you going to get this level of expertise, advice and support for under $100? Attendance is limited and we anticipate registration to fill very quickly.

**When:** March 4-5 and March 25-26
**Time:** 9am-5 pm each day
**Where:** Villa Maria, Frontenac, MN
**Cost:** $95 ($160 for couples + $75 per additional person) All meals are included

If you need assistance with costs – please let us know. Farm Transitions is a joint project of Renewing the Countryside and the Sustainable Farming Association. Funding is provided by USDA. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Find more information at www.sfa-mn.org/farm-transitions/