MARCH 5, 2020 | OLIVER KELLEY FARM, ELK RIVER

Midwest Soil Health Summit

‘Farm as Reflection of Farmer’

THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS:
2020 SFA Midwest Soil Health Summit

SCHEDULE

8 a.m. – REGISTRATION OPENS
8:30 a.m. – PLENARY SESSION
Thom Petersen (left), Commissioner, Minnesota Dept. of Agriculture
Troy Daniell (right), Minnesota NRCS State Conservationist
Aidan Read, “Soil Health Case Studies”


10-10:30 a.m. – BREAK/EXHIBITORS
Mentor tables with Minnesota Soil Health Coalition Farmers (for more, see page 4)

10:30 a.m.-Noon – MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS: CHOOSE A TRACK BELOW

AGRONOMIC TRACK
Farmer Panel, “Moving Forward With Soil Regeneration: Experiences & Challenges”
• Ben Dwire, Dwire Farm, Arco
• Jon Stevens, Maple Grove Farms, Rush City
• Mikayla Tabert, Tabert Farms, Red Lake Falls
Moderator: Kristin Brennan, NRCS Assistant State Soil Scientist, St. Paul

SILVOPASTURE TRACK
“Overview of Silvopasture Principles” – Diomy Zamora, Ph.D., U. of M. Extension Educator
“Our Silvopasture Message: Talking Points for Farmers, Landowners & Forestry Professionals”
– Keefe Keeley, Co-Director, Savanna Institute
Moderated by Gary Wyatt, U. of M. Extension Educator, Agroforestry & Bio-Education

Noon-1 p.m. – LUNCH, Spotlight on Sponsors

1-2:30 p.m. – AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS: STAY IN YOUR TRACK

AGRONOMIC TRACK
“Economics of Soil Health” – Jennifer Hahn & Brian Pfarr, Minnesota Soil Health Coalition
Farmer Panel, “Vegetable Proteins: Friend or Foe for Soil Health?”
• Jordan Atchison, President, PURIS
• Grant & Dawn Breitkreutz, Stoney Creek Farm & Soil Health Academy, Redwood Falls
• Mary Jo Forbord, Registered Dietician, Prairie Horizon Farm, Starbuck
Moderator: Kent Solberg, SFA

SILVOPASTURE TRACK
Farmer Panel, “Restoring Savanna With Livestock”
• Tom Barthel, Snake River Farm, Becker
• Cody Nelson, Soil RX Inc, Belview
• Allysse Sorensen, The Munch Bunch, St. Croix Falls
• Doug Voss, SFA Soil Health Associate; Voss Farms, Paynesville
Moderator: Wayne Monsen, SFA

2:30-3 p.m. – BREAK/EXHIBITORS
Mentor Tables with Minnesota Soil Health Coalition Farmers (for more, see page 4)

3 p.m. – KEYNOTE SPEAKER: John Mesko, Senior Director, Soil Health Partnership, “Soil Health in the Mainstream”

3:45-4 p.m. – Wrapup, evaluation, adjourn

Jon Stika is a retired soil scientist and soil health instructor with the Natural Resources Conservation Service who currently serves as a part-time professional at the North Dakota State University Dickinson Research Extension Center. He is also an environmental consultant, contributing writer to AgDaily, and head brewer at Phat Fish Brewing.

In “A Soil Owner's Manual: How To Restore and Maintain Soil Health”, Jon helps folks understand how the soil operates as a living system, drawing on his lifelong experience as a farmer, dairyman, integrated pest management specialist, gardener, soil scientist, agronomist, horticulturalist, and soil health instructor. His honors and awards include: 2014 NRCS Legacy of Conservation Award; 2014 U.S. Zero Till Non-Farmer of the Year Award from the Manitoba-North Dakota Zero Tillage Farmers Association; 2002 & 2014 Professional Award from the North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts; and 2006 Fellow Award from the Soil & Water Conservation Society.

John Mesko, Senior Director, Soil Health Partnership

Farming practices that build soil health are being heavily promoted to and adopted by commodity farmers. As these ideas become more mainstream, what other connections are being made? How is the ag supply chain responding, and what does the future hold for these practices? John will address these questions and more.

In leading the Soil Health Partnership’s team, John is focused on their farmer-focused mission and a growing community of collaboration. They are expanding the resource base for the important work of building soil health while creating a sustainable future for farming and food. With a BS degree in Agronomy and a MS degree in Agricultural Economics, both from Purdue University, his diverse career in agriculture is put to use everyday bringing agriculture together toward better outcomes for farmers, consumers and the environment by focusing on soil health building practices. John is a former Executive Director of Sustainable Farming Association and co-creator of the Midwest Soil Health Summit.

Diomy Zamora, Ph.D., U. of M. Extension Agroforestry Educator

Dr. Zamora is working on applying the concept of silvopasture agroforestry systems in enhancing wood and grazing for environmental and economic productivity to develop a suitable farming system for landowners. He is the project leader for SFA’s LCCMR Silvopasture: Restoring Oak Savanna Project. His research includes using agroforestry systems and practices such as alley cropping and riparian buffers to improve water quality, increase carbon sequestration, and to produce feedstock for energy.

Keefe Keeley, Co-Executive Director, Savanna Institute

Keefe Keeley works to advance agroforestry as a land and climate solution. His experience includes farm business, research, public agency, and civil society initiatives. Keefe recently co-edited a bioregional anthology called The Driftless Reader about the unglaciated area just to the west of his home in Madison, Wis. He holds degrees in biology from Swarthmore College and in agroecology from University of Wisconsin, where he has a forthcoming dissertation on silvopasture.
Jerry Ackermann has been farming with his wife, Nancy, for the past 39 years near Lakefield in southwestern Minnesota. They are extremely active in on-the-farm research and test plots. They farm approximately 1,200 acres with 1/3 corn, 1/3 soybeans and 1/3 alfalfa as a cash crop. Along with the Heron Lake Watershed and Extended Ag Services they have participated in a number of grants doing research on cover crops. After six years of trials, cover crops were seeded on all corn and soybean acres in 2016. With the help of cover crops Jerry’s goal is to consistently produce 200-bushel-per-acre corn with 140# or less of nitrogen. The Ackermanns received the Midwest region’s “Responsible Nutrient Management” award at the 2016 National No-Till Conference in Indianapolis, Ind. The Ackermanns are currently participating in an MDA grant researching the effect of cover crops on soil moisture and temperature.

Ben Dwire’s farm rests in both Lincoln and Lyon counties, near Arco, Minn., where the Dwires farm about 650 acres of cropland and 150 acres of hay and pasture. Their crops are 100 percent no-till and non-GMO: soybeans, oats, wheat, corn, and various annual forage crops. Ben tries to have at least 2/3 or more of his acres receive cover crops each year. Ben’s farm was enrolled in the Minnesota Water Quality Certification Program in the fall of 2016. He practices managed intensive grazing, where animals are moved either daily or at three-day intervals, depending on time of year and management objectives. The Dwires raise beef, pork and chicken, all on pasture. Ben and wife, Kristi, a pharmacist, are both graduates of South Dakota State University and have two daughters, Sara and Madison, who are both in elementary school.

Jamie Labat grew up on a diversified grain and livestock farm in Lyon County that historically practiced conservation tillage. Working full-time off the farm, Jamie over the years has raised wheat, oats, corn, soybeans, and hay, and he recently began using cereal rye and other cover crops on row crop and small grain acres and will be implementing cover crop mixes across every acre this growing season and on. Growing triticale for seed was a new addition for 2019. Jamie successfully attempted his first field of no-till soybeans in 2013 and corn in 2015; though learning on the fly he was very happy with the results and his goal of 100 percent no-till is nearly reached. Jamie also has a small free-range flock of laying hens and an Angus-based cow/calf herd that rotationally grazes grass and cover crops.

Grant & Dawn Breitkreutz run Stoney Creek Farm along the bluff of the Minnesota River near Redwood Falls. Over the past 20 years, they have converted a conventional crop and cow/calf operation into a multi-enterprise regenerative family business. Their crops have changed from corn and soybean rotation to at least a three-crop rotation, with cover crops incorporated whenever and wherever possible in their 100 percent no-till cropping system. Cattle are grazed across nearly every acre throughout the year. They use managed intensive grazing throughout their pasture systems and they now can graze much longer, with many more head than ever before. Their overall goal is to heal the land, create a successful and enjoyable multi-generational family business, and ensure that future generations have a beautiful legacy to carry on the family farm. They have received numerous awards in the past years for their conservation efforts. They received their MN Ag Water Quality Certification in 2016.

Jennifer Hahn grew up on a dairy farm and has been assessing and providing conservation planning since 2005. Jennifer has provided soil and soil health technical support with the NRCS in Minnesota completing site evaluations, soil health testing, and providing technical services and outreach to staff and producers. She also spent time analyzing profitability of conservation practices to help producers increase their ROI. Jennifer is the Minnesota Soil Health Coalition Coordinator to provide administrative, educational, and outreach activities to support the Coalition and the voluntary adoption of soil health in Minnesota.

Brian Pfarr of Redwood County was on the steering committee that helped shape the Minnesota Soil Health Coalition and is also the Chair of the Board. Brian grew up farming with his father in Redwood County and always knew he wanted to continue the family farm. Brian and his father Bill, raise corn, soybeans, wheat, and rotationally graze cattle. Brian started experimenting with cover crops in 2010 and began integrating reduced tillage and no-till. They have also been reducing their fertilizer rates due to the increase in organic matter and the increased nutrient efficiency of their soils as they increase their soil health. Brian enjoys and is driven by the learning curve of increasing soil health and wants to improve his soils for his two children. Brian and Bill’s farm was Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certified in 2017.

At his farm in Redwood County, Matt Tiffany has grown corn, soybeans for seed, and sweet corn for over 19 years and always has looked for ways to do things better. The short-season soybeans and sweet corn he grows provides a great opportunity for cover crops and Matt has enjoyed the success of that for many years. He’s in his third year of strip tilling after soybeans and before corn, with which Matt has experienced great success. Half of Matt’s land is in continuous no-till corn/soybean rotation, and he feels there are numerous benefits to that as well. Matt has been Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certified for a few years and continues to implement practices to benefit our water such as rock intakes, sediment basins, and other conservation practices.