SFA 2021: An Earned & Social Media Profile

Technology & Ideas

Hit Hard By Drought, Farmers Get Creative

Regenerative agriculture won't stop climate change. But it could mitigate the effects of extreme weather.

By Adam Minter
June 29, 2021, 9:00 AM CDT

In Goodhue, Minnesota, 60 miles southeast of the Twin Cities, the crops and pastures aren’t nearly as tall as they should be this time of year. I’m riding in an ATV next to Jared Luhman, a 27-year-old farmer, bouncing across the 700 acres where he and his family raise red angus cattle under the Grass Fed Cattle Co. brand.

The Luhmans’ farm is covered in grasses and other perennials thick on the glacial hills. In some places, the clover is still blooming. In others, the grasses have been nibbled and tamped down by cattle, creating a green cover for the soil. “It hasn’t been easy,” Luhman tells me over the buzzing engine. “But we’re doing better than most.”

How big a difference could such changes really make?

“These practices are scalable,” said Kent Solberg, the senior technical advisor of the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota. Solberg said that there are farms measuring in the tens of thousands of acres that are now using regenerative agriculture. On his own farm, he said, the improvements have been undeniable. In the fall, his cattle can now graze 60 to 90 days longer than those on conventional farms.

StarTribune

Dry conditions are hurting Minnesota's cattle farms first

Nearly half the state's pastures are in bad shape after the drier-than-normal June, forcing cattle producers to consider other ways to feed their animals.

By Kristen Leigh Painter Star Tribune | JUNE 29, 2021 — 10:09AM

Jared Luhman, who raises Red Angus with his family near Goodhue, said he’s never experienced anything like this, and his dad told him this is the worst it’s been since the drought of 1988.

Their pasture usually gets 60% of its grass growth in May and June before conditions dry out in July, Luhman said.

“But we are already dry in what is usually the wet season, so we don’t know what that means for the rest of the year,” he said.

The Luhmans use a rotational grazing system on their southeastern Minnesota farm that Jared believes makes the soil soak up water better, but there’s still uncertainty if the rainfalls don’t increase.

“It’s not about the rain we get, it’s about the rain we keep,” Luhman said. “We’ve never been in this position, so we don’t know when those hard decisions will need to be made.”
SFA Communications Director Katie Feterl and Associate Jason Walker prepare a communication plan that uses podcasts, guest commentaries, radio presentations, letters to the editor, social media, and press releases featuring soil health practitioners, Minnesota Department of Agriculture staff members, and other agencies. This plan works to spread awareness of our work on Soil Health, Silvopasture, promoting Minnesota-grown Garlic, and chapter festivals and events.

Agriculture

Hurdles for beginning farmers don't end with access to land

A panel of beginning farmers shared their stories of accessing land and other unique challenges affecting farming in metro areas in a recent session part of the Sustainable Farming Association 2021 annual conference.

Written By: Noah Fish | 5:30 am, Feb. 12, 2021

A parking lot is not the first place that comes to mind for a location of a farm.

But that's the reality for Taya Schultz and Seamus Fitzgerald, who operate Growing Lots Urban Farm on two converted parking lots in the Seward neighborhood of south Minneapolis. The farm grows vegetables to sell at farmers markets, community-supported agriculture ventures (CSAs) and wholesale.

Schultz and Fitzgerald were among the panel of beginning farmers who shared their stories of accessing land and other challenges they face farming in metro areas in a recent session part of the Sustainable Farming Association 2021 annual conference.

Business

Farm and Food: Local growers and rural grocers should be allies

By Alan Guebert
Published 10:20 a.m. CT Mar. 4, 2021

If you think growing food in rural America is a tough business, you should try selling food — groceries — in rural America.

Just how tough is it?

The 2019/20 Minnesota Rural Grocery Survey Report that found 71% of the state’s rural grocery stores make an average or lower than average net profit of 2.1% after taxes.

As thin as that ice might be, the Minnesota report, conducted by Regional Sustainable Development Partnership of the University of Minnesota’s Extension Service, still found many rural storeowners are committed to serving their communities and customers.

Soil health case studies share farmer experiences

February 1, 2021 by Fillmore County Journal — Leave a Comment


The farms featured in the study represent a range of acreage sizes, landscape challenges, livestock species and crops produced. The farmers also represent a range of experience levels, and skill sets. From first generation pastured pork farmers to large scale multigenerational operations, this set of case studies prove that soil health management practices can be implemented on any farm.

“As these successful farm management practices become more common, stories like these provide the inspiration farmers need to develop an optimistic view of their own farm futures,” said Theresa Keaveney, executive director of SFA.
SFA Communications Director Katie Feterl curates a robust presence on SFA social media pages and our podcast, ‘Dirt Rich.’

2021 MULTIMEDIA STATS

YouTube is really taking off thus far in 2021:
• 28 new videos added so far
• Total 439 subscribers, gained 158 so far in 2021 (+56%)
• 10,900 views in 2021
• 2,600 hours of watch time in 2021

Hot topics: asparagus, Gabe Brown MSHS presentation, silvopasture, garlic.

2020 YouTube stats (entire year)
• Gained 150 subscribers
• 7,000 views
• 770 hours of watch time

Dirt Rich Podcast (2020-2021)
Total Episodes: 35
Total Listens: 10,400

Twitter followers: 2,435
Facebook followers: 6,396

Sustainable Farming Association (SFA MN) @sfamm - Jun 18
A breath of fresh air and a little respite from the sun!
The TC Metro Growers visited Holistic Health Farms last week. Visitors got to see a hoop house, an herb spiral, hugelkultur, a hydroponic project, and a freshly-planted pollinator garden. Cheers to more days like these!

U of MN Extension

Sustainable Farming Association
Published by Katie Feterl March 23
Happy #AgDay! By using sustainable and regenerative practices, growers across Minnesota have the opportunity to benefit their communities beyond the delicious food they produce: they can steward our natural resources and sequester carbon—and even boost their bottom line in the process.
Meet several farmers doing just that in our just-released series of Silvopasture Case Studies with CNIRAM, University of Minnesota Extension, and Great River Greening: https://www.sfa-mn.org/
See More

Thom Petersen @ThommyPetersen - Feb 13
This 5.31.21 was very meaningful for me, especially now that the Dust Bowl is occupied MN to help us better interpret and use soil health measurements. Now it’s time to share the results and discuss. I hope you can join us.

You Attended
Drag Amendment @drewssofamer - Jun 17
Join us at the Larson Farm to learn about soil and soil health in the context you in the valley! It doesn’t get any better than this. Let’s learn together! (Damaged of Rainier Together AgHealth)

Sustainable Farming Association (SFA MN) @sfamm - Jun 16
For three crop years, @MNSoil and SFA have been collecting, analyzing and sharing on-farm soil health data across MN to help us better interpret and use soil health measurements. Now it’s time to share the results and discuss. We hope you can join us:

Sustainable Farming Association
Published by Katie Feterl March 31
"I haven’t yet found anything I would rather put my energy towards at this point in my life...
What started as a curiosity around food production and nutrition --- ‘What goes into food?’ --- rapidly grew into a new friendships, partnerships, transplanting out of the city, and a new career raising “free-range” poultry for Tony Wells (a co-op and board delegate of the Cannon River Sustainable Farming Association). Together with a few partners, Tony is developing a replicable, regenerative..." See More

Sustainable Farming Association
Published by Katie Feterl March 31

Episode 27
Dirt Rich
Home on the Tree-Range
1,086 People Reached 218 Engagements

Sustainable Farming Association (SFA MN) @sfamm - Jun 16
For three crop years, Minnesota Office for Soil Health and SFA have been collecting, analyzing and sharing on-farm soil health data across Minnesota. Now it’s time to share the results and discuss the lessons learned and how.

Sustainable Farming Association
Published by Katie Feterl June 20
"It’s a beautiful day!
Most of the SFA team met up in Hutchinson today for our first in-person staff meeting in, far too long. Between strategic-planning for the next several months, lots of field-tech training, 106°F and the possibility of a pretty nice Earth Day. How do I explain it?"