

# *Sustainable Agriculture*

**Volume 7, Issue 10 – October 1999**

## **New Senior Fellows named in agricultural systems at U of M**

Karen Lehman and Julie Ristau have been named Senior Fellows to the School of Agriculture Endowed Chair in Agricultural Systems at the University of Minnesota.

During the coming year, the team will work on the food system of southeast Minnesota in partnership with the Experiment in Rural Cooperation, one of three University-sponsored Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships.

“As a land grant institution, the University of Minnesota is in a remarkable position to provide services to stakeholders in our food system—farmers, business people, the general public—and help them build relationships resulting in further innovations,” Ristau said.

“What we see in southeast Minnesota is a tremendous commitment to quality,” added Lehman. “We believe that this region could be a leader in the state in demonstrating how coordinated action promoting a regional food identity can result in increased economic activity, enhanced quality of life and a better environment.”

Lehman and Ristau both have extensive experience in food and rural issues. Lehman directed the Food and Agriculture Program at the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) for seven years prior to coming to the University and was the co-director of the Youth Farm and Market Project. Ristau is the former director of the national League of Rural Voters, a national rural policy organization with offices in Minneapolis and Washington D.C. She is the co-founder of the Minnesota Rural Organizing Project and helped create the Utne Reader magazine, a nationally circulated magazine with more than 200,000 subscribers. Raised on a farm near Elmore, Minn., Ristau established a hog farm to develop and market high-quality swine breeding stock.

Ristau and Lehman will work with other University initiatives, and with James Van Der Pol, Jan Flora and Cornelia Flora, who also share the Endowed Chair.

The School of Agriculture Endowed Chair in Agricultural Systems was created in 1995 with funding from the School of Agriculture at the University of Minnesota (SAUM) Alumni Association, the Minnesota Legislature, and the University of Minnesota. The Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) manages the Chair, with support from board members of the School of Agriculture Alumni Association. For more information, call MISA at (800) 909-6472, or call Karen Lehman and Julie Ristau directly at (612) 625-8132.

## **Identity preservation of crops requires planning, records**

Preserving the identity of crops that have not been genetically modified is rapidly becoming part of the crop production process. These non-GMOs, as they are often called, may have extra value to buyers who don't want Bt corn, for example. Bill Wilcke, engineer with the University of Minnesota Extension Service, offers the following tips for approaching identity preservation of non-GMOs:

- Develop the proper attitude. Identity preservation is about meeting customer needs, maintaining specific quality levels, and avoiding crop mixing. With testing for genetically modified crops a possibility, honesty and trust are important. False claims could result in lawsuits and financial penalties.
- Know what the buyer wants. Check with buyers regarding levels of purity and identity preservation requirements, preferably before planting.
- Develop a plan for segregating crops. Draw a flowchart or list all crop production steps from seed to delivery of harvested crops. Try to anticipate all of the points where contamination could occur. Then develop a plan for taking action steps and documenting those action steps to reduce chances of contamination.
- Consider growing and storing non-GMO crops in separate locations. If you own or rent farms that are physically separated from one another, it would be much easier to maintain and prove crop separation if the entire non-GMO crop is grown and stored on a separate farm.
- Keep detailed records. Use names or numbers and perhaps signs or labels to identify each field, grain bin, and grain hauling vehicle.
- Clean equipment between crops. This includes combines, trucks, grain conveyors, and bins when switching from one crop to another.
- Make sure custom operators clean their equipment so your crop doesn't become contaminated. Record names, dates, and locations.
- Keep samples. Consider taking samples of your seed, of the harvested crop, and of the delivered crop, attaching meaningful labels. Preserve the samples until you are sure the final buyer is satisfied that the crop meets identity and quality standards.

More detailed information is available at [www.extension.umn.edu/ruralresponse/](http://www.extension.umn.edu/ruralresponse/), or from a county office of the University of Minnesota Extension Service.

## **MDA accepting applications for sustainable agriculture grants**

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is now accepting applications for grants from Minnesota farmers, researchers and educators, and non-profit organizations with innovative ideas for sustainable farming systems. The MDA's Energy and Sustainable Agriculture Program has \$150,000 available for grant projects this year.

Individual grants of up to \$25,000 are available for three-year projects that benefit the environment, increase farm net profits, and improve quality of life for farm families. Successful grant projects in the past have included rotational grazing systems, alternative swine production systems, weed control, alternative fertilizers, strip cropping, processing and direct marketing systems, tillage comparisons, composting, cover crops and more. Completed applications must be received by 4:30 p.m., Dec. 15, 1999. For more information or an application, contact Wayne Monsen, (651) 282-2261, e-mail:

[Wayne.Monsen@state.mn.us](mailto:Wayne.Monsen@state.mn.us)

## **Major conference celebrates sustainable agriculture coming of age in 2000**

“Farming and Ranching for Profit, Stewardship, and Community” is the theme of a major sustainable agriculture conference to be held in Portland, Oregon on March 7-9, 2000. Nationally known speakers, producers, researchers, agricultural extension agents and others from the Western U.S. and around the nation will share their sustainable agriculture successes, experiences and research results.

The USDA Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (Western SARE) program sponsors the event, with help from several land-grant universities and the federal sustainable agriculture efforts.

Program topics include: irrigated and dryland cropping systems; grazing and livestock operations; innovative marketing strategies, including eco-labeling and direct-marketing; soil quality; biological pest control; vegetable, tree fruit, wine grape and other crops; and more.

For more information about the conference, or to register, contact Gina Hashagen, Oregon State University, at [hashageg@bcc.orst.edu](mailto:hashageg@bcc.orst.edu) or (541) 737-5477. Conference information is also on-line at [wsare.usu.edu/2000](http://wsare.usu.edu/2000)

## **Sustainable farming systems project information packet available**

The Sustainable Farming Systems Project researches farm sustainability as reflected by farm economics, environmental impact, and the quality of home and community life. Integrated efforts occur in three Minnesota regions: the Chippewa River Valley in the west-central part of the state, the Sand Creek Watershed south of Minneapolis, and the Coteau Ridge and Lamberton areas in the southwest.

The team has developed a series of fact sheets about the on-farm water quality research, the economic task force, and the three local team's work. Copies are available from the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture. Contact: Helene Murray, (612) 625-8235 in the Metro area, or toll free at 1-800-909-MISA (6472). Or, contact us via email: [misamail@tc.umn.edu](mailto:misamail@tc.umn.edu). This effort is funded by the Environmental Trust Fund.

## **Regional partnerships program seeks coordinator**

The Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships are teams of citizens and University of Minnesota faculty and staff who organize themselves to identify and address issues that are important to bioregions of Minnesota. The partnerships are currently seeking a full-time coordinator to facilitate the work plan of the Statewide Coordinating Committee (75%) and University network building for the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (25%). A Master's degree is required. Closing date for the position is Nov. 1, 1999. A job description is available from the MISA office (612) 625-8235, outside the metro area call toll-free 1-800-909-MISA (6472). The announcement is also posted on the MISA www site: [www.misa.umn.edu](http://www.misa.umn.edu)

## **Sign up for Farm Beginnings class by Oct. 20**

The Land Stewardship Project's southeast Minnesota office is taking applications for its 1999-2000 Farm Beginnings class until Oct. 20. The class will begin in November, and is open to anyone interested in receiving firsthand experience and training in innovative farming methods. For more information, contact Karen Stettler in Lewiston at (507) 523-3366; [stettler@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:stettler@landstewardshipproject.org).

## **Farmer scholarships available for alternative marketing conference**

Farmer scholarships are available for an Alternative Agricultural Marketing conference Nov. 19-20 in Lincoln, Neb. Call (402) 472-2844, or e-mail [accpp1@unl.edu](mailto:accpp1@unl.edu).

## **Calendar of 1999 events...**

These events are sponsored by numerous organizations. More information is available on MISA's website: [www.misa.umn.edu](http://www.misa.umn.edu)

Tuesday, October 12, 3:00 p.m., Shevlin. **Increasing Quality and Quantity of Pasture Forage with Management Intensive Grazing as an Alternative to Grazing Wooded Land.** Contact Michael Harmon, (218) 657-2592.

Saturday, Oct. 23, Snowy Pines near Browerville. **Tour of Homes with Solar/Alternative Energy.** Contact Greg Nolan (320) 594-6317

Thursday, October 28, 1:00 to 5:00 p.m., Windom. **Development of a Low-Cost Mechanism for the Interseeding of Companion/Cover Crops in a Corn-Soybean Rotation.** Contact Tony Thompson, (507) 831-3483.

Friday - Saturday, October 29-30, Bloomington. **Sharing the Heartland Conference: Practical Tools for Conserving Farmland and Natural Resources.** Contact Julie MacSwain, (651) 430-6818.

Tuesday, November 2, Mosinee, Wis. **Farmstead Dairy Day—Producing and Marketing Value-Added Dairy Products.** Contact Paul Dietmann, (608) 355-3250.

Friday-Saturday, November 12-13, Baraboo, Wis. **Income Options for Small Farms.** Contact Paul Dietmann, (608) 355-3250.

Saturday, Nov. 20, Alexandria. **Sustainable Agriculture and Hemp Workshop.** Contact Marlene Weber (320) 762-2816.

Friday, November 26, swine field day, two on-farm research projects: **Converting Buildings to Deep Straw-Based Units/Raising Antibiotic-Free Hogs.** 10 a.m., Dave Serfling farm, Preston (call (507) 765-2797 for directions), and 1:30 p.m., Dwight Ault farm, Austin (call (507) 437-3085 for directions).

Monday-Tuesday, Dec. 6-7, Madison, Wis. **Adding Value Through Environmental Marketing: Opportunities for Food Producers, Processors and Retailers.** Contact DeEtta Bilek (218) 445-5475, [deebilek@wcta.net](mailto:deebilek@wcta.net).

## **About this newsletter...**

For the past year we've been funded by the Minnesota Extension Service and the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) with support from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

We're always looking for story ideas. Send them to the editor: Jack Sperbeck, 405 Coffey Hall, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN 55108, (612) 625-1794. E-mail: [jsperbeck@extension.umn.edu](mailto:jsperbeck@extension.umn.edu). Other editorial board members: Helene Murray (612) 625-0220, [murra@021.tc.umn.edu](mailto:murra@021.tc.umn.edu); Tom Wegner

(612) 374-8400, [twegner@extension.umn.edu](mailto:twegner@extension.umn.edu); and Bill Wilcke (612) 625-8205,  
[wwilcke@extension.umn.edu](mailto:wwilcke@extension.umn.edu)

**Our mission statement:** To help bring people together to influence the future of agriculture and rural communities to achieve socially, environmentally and economically sustainable farms and communities.