

## 2006 SARE Annual Conference Highlights

Over six hundred farmers, educators and others working in sustainable agriculture gathered in Oconomowoc, Wisc. in August. Attendees had the opportunity to learn from 13 tours, over 35 different presentations, 50 posters, and eat wonderful food provided by local farmers. If you weren't able to attend, or if you attended but just didn't have time to visit that poster you really wanted to see, or missed a session—you'll be happy to know that most of the oral presentations and many of the posters are available online at [www.sare2006.org](http://www.sare2006.org). If you don't have internet access, or have trouble downloading larger pdf files on your computer, it might be worth a trip to your local library to look up some of the presentations.

Several of the MISA staff who attended were willing to share some of the highlights from sessions in the three pieces that follow.

### Conservation Security Program: Lessons from the Field

Three speakers represented organizations that have worked directly with farmers to assist in their enrollment in the CSP: The Michael Fields Institute, based in Wisc; the Practical Farmers of Iowa; and the National Center for Agricultural Technology (NCAT), based in Butte, Mont.. The speakers shared insights on farmers' experiences with the CSP sign-up process.

The CSP has three "tiers" of participation. Tier I is the lowest level of participation, and Tier III is the highest. Farmers enrolled in Tiers II or III must have their entire operation enrolled; those with only a portion of their farm enrolled are limited to Tier I. It was noted during the session that it is important for farmers to get their foot in the door with at least a Tier I enrollment

### Publicity for your Farm Enterprise

Lisa Kivirist of "Inn Serendipity" Bed & Breakfast in Viroqua, Wisc. gave a lively presentation about low-cost ways to publicize your farm or rural enterprise. She suggested finding ways to connect your work with local journalists, who are often looking for a good story. Don't focus exclusively on local newspapers—radio and television stations look for good stories, too. A farmer with a vision of how their landscape will look in 50 years, or 100 years—that's a good story. A farmer wearing lots of different hats: producer, marketer,

of some portion of their farm when sign-up is available in their area. If they are in the program at Tier I, they have the opportunity to move up to Tier II or III at a later date.

Conservation practices that make a farm eligible for the CSP include: crop rotation, crop residue management, contour strips, grassed waterways, perennial border strips along waterways, nutrient and pest management plans, long rotations (such as several years of perennial hay crops), rotational grazing, and green manure and cover crop use. Farmers can receive an additional "enhancement" payment for some practices, such as wildlife habitat.

educator, tour guide—that's a good story.

Farmers should create fact sheets about their operation that they can hand out to journalists. If your farm has a website, create a "media room" on your site with press releases and fact sheets about your farm. That makes it easier for journalists to create an article or program about you.

Make use of trade associations for the enterprises that you have, and work their publicity efforts into publicity for your

Livestock farmers have had a difficult time getting into Tier III of the program. Often this is because of nutrient management issues: there might be a small area of the farm where manure accumulates, and this restricts the farm to Tier I because the entire farm does not qualify. The speakers also noted that it has been harder for organic farmers to achieve Tier III, and that this is typically due to the tillage used for weed control. Some of these issues of defining good, better and best conservation practices for the CSP can be addressed through the next farm bill.

Comprehensive information about the CSP is available online: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/>

farm. June is "dairy month," for example, but there are special days or weeks for just about any kind of crop or livestock.

The Renewing the Countryside website has a "Public Relations Toolkit" that includes worksheets for developing a farm publicity plan, sample press releases, and tips on dealing with the media. [www.renewingthecountryside.org](http://www.renewingthecountryside.org); click on "Tool Kit" on the left side of the home page.

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## *Sustainable Livestock Production*

Diverse workshops on sustainable livestock production and marketing covered topics ranging from “Freshwater Prawns and Fish Farming” to “Heritage Turkeys and Specialty Poultry”.

Don Struxness, of Milan, MN, shared results from his project of keeping beef cows on corn stalks throughout the winter months. The Struxnesses built a portable windbreak to give protection from the most severe winter weather, and installed water lines to bring water to the fields for the cows. Don showed that cows could do well outside, even in Minnesota winters, with minimal shelter that included good quality hay combined with corn stalks for feed. This method can offer low-cost housing as a

way to reduce expenses related to beef production. He received grants from both NCR-SARE and the MN Department of Agriculture to research this system.

Russell Ramsey of University of Missouri Extension stated that the demand for goat meat has increased dramatically during the past five years, creating the potential for a new farm enterprise. Goat meat is an important part of the diet for the new immigrant communities that have grown significantly during the past decade. However, meat goats are not a “get rich quick” operation. They do offer good potential profit since they gain weight while browsing on brush and low quality roughage, minimizing production costs.

They blend well with other animals, such as sheep and cattle and are sociable animals that are fun to raise.

Finally, the workshop on Missouri Grazing Schools demonstrated the need and value of a well-organized outreach program to help farmers improve production and profitability. This is a great model for university agricultural outreach providers. Since 1995, nearly 10,000 people have attended the grazing workshops, with 90% of those being farmers/ranchers. The workshops have been credited with helping increase rotational grazing and total cattle numbers in Missouri.

### *Time to apply for funding to test that great idea you've been thinking about!*

Farmers and ranchers always have new ideas they'd like to try—the problem is that those ideas usually require money! There are now several opportunities for Minnesota farmers to apply for funding for on-farm projects and research.

#### *The North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCR-SARE) Program*

is currently accepting applications for their 2006 Farmer Rancher grant program. NCR-SARE awards grants to farmers and ranchers for on-farm research, demonstrations, and education projects. By providing funds ranging from \$6,000 per individual grant to up to \$18,000 for grants awarded to groups of three or more, NCR-SARE helps facilitate essential agricultural research and development.

Last year NCR-SARE funded 47 grants totaling \$414,489. Grant proposals are due in the NCR-SARE office by Dec 1, 2006. Interested applicants may contact NCR-SARE at 800-529-1342 or [ncrsare@unl.edu](mailto:ncrsare@unl.edu). The current Farmer Rancher Grant Call for Proposals application can be found on the NCR-SARE web site at <http://www.sare.org/coreinfo/farmers.htm>. Previous project reports are made available through the national SARE web site at [www.sare.org](http://www.sare.org).

#### *Minnesota Department of Agriculture Demonstration grants*

The Demonstration Grant Program provides funds for farmers, agricultural researchers, educators and non-profit groups to explore innovative and creative

systems, soil fertility and manure management, alternative weed management, low-capital beginning farmer strategies, marketing and specialty crop opportunities. The application deadline is Dec 15, 2006. You can download instructions for applying and the application at: [www.mda.state.mn.us/esap/#demo](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/esap/#demo), or call 651-201-6686 to request an application.

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#### **NCR-SARE**

**1-800-529-1342**

**[ncrsare@unl.edu](mailto:ncrsare@unl.edu)**

**<http://www.sare.org/coreinfo/farmers.htm>**

**Deadline: December 1, 2006**

#### **MN Department of Agriculture**

**651-201-6686**

**[www.mda.state.mn.us/esap/#demo](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/esap/#demo)**

**Deadline: December 15, 2006**

#### **Organic Farming Research Foundation**

**831-426-6606**

**[jane@ofrr.org](mailto:jane@ofrr.org)**

**[www.ofrr.org/research/application.html](http://www.ofrr.org/research/application.html)**

**Deadline: December 15, 2006**

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#### *Organic Farming Research Foundation Request for Proposals*

The Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRR) funds research on organic farming and food systems and the dissemination of these research results to the greater agricultural community. Proposals must involve farmers or ranchers in project design and implementation and take place on working organic farms or ranches whenever possible. The Organic Farming Research Foundation grants program is open to all applicants residing in Canada, Mexico and the United States. Proposals are due Dec 15, 2006. Go to [www.ofrr.org/research/application.html](http://www.ofrr.org/research/application.html) for more information and to download the application form, or call 831-426-6606, or e-mail [jane@ofrr.org](mailto:jane@ofrr.org) to request an application.

ways to enhance the sustainability of a wide range of farming systems. Grants of up to \$25,000 are awarded on a competitive basis for up to three-year demonstration projects. Projects have demonstrated management intensive grazing, diversified cropping

## *Grant Programs Award Funding for Research, Product Development and Marketing*

### *Value-Added Producer Grant*

**Awards:** USDA announced the award of \$21.2 million in FY 2006 funds for Value-Added Producer Grants (VAPG) to 184 recipients in 40 states and Puerto Rico. The grant awards ranged from \$3,000 to the program maximum of \$300,000. The states with the highest number of grants include Nebraska-18, Iowa-17, Minnesota-15, New York-12, Oregon-11, Wisconsin - 9, Missouri - 9, California - 8, and Michigan - 8.

The awards included nine grants for organic milk and vegetable production activities, four grants for grassfed beef or intensive grazing beef production marketing activities, 20 awards for wine production and marketing projects, and one award for hard cider production. This year, 43 energy-related projects received grants with funding going to feasibility studies or capital costs for ethanol, biodiesel, biomass, and wind energy production. For a complete list of this year's grantees and a brief description of their projects visit

[www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/VAPG%202006%20Recipient%20List.pdf](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/VAPG%202006%20Recipient%20List.pdf)

**Organic Research Funding Awards:** USDA announced the award of \$4.5 million in 8 research grants to 12 land grants for projects in 13 states through the Integrated Organic Program of the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service. The grants focus on improving the competitiveness of organic producers and on assisting producers and processors who have already adopted organic standards to grow and market high quality organic agricultural products. More information, including the abstract of funded projects, is posted on the web at [www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/fundview.cfm?fonum=1141](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/fundview.cfm?fonum=1141)

**USDA Awards: Farmers Market Grants** USDA has announced the award of 20 grants totaling \$900,000 to establish, expand or promote local farmers markets, roadside stands, and similar agricultural ventures under the new Farmers Market Promotion Program. These grants will assist

regional farmers markets authorities; local governments; nonprofit and economic development corporations; and tribal governments in 17 states. A diverse set of initiatives was chosen to receive funding, ranging from a New York City project aimed at evaluating the influence of wireless EBT terminals in inner-city farmers markets to a Wisc. program hoping to increase the income of small-scale goat producers through direct marketing of Halal-slaughtered meat to a growing local Somali immigrant community. For a complete list of the FMPP grantees, go to [www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/FMPP/FMPPInfo.htm](http://www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/FMPP/FMPPInfo.htm).

The FMPP is a nationally competitive grant program that seeks to increase domestic consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, meats and other products directly marketed by farmers, who can benefit economically from the development of direct marketing opportunities.

## *Announcements*

### *How to talk about local food:*

Making the point that EVERYONE can be an advocate for local food and that word of mouth is a powerful tool, the New Farm on-line magazine has an interesting "how-to" article. It includes a "top 10" list of talking points about why local food is such a good thing. They also offer a canned speech that people can use as is, or can modify/build on. The article (including list and speech) is at: <http://www.newfarm.org/features/2006/0906/freespeech/bowman.shtml>

### *IFOAM Update*

According to Jim Riddle, Organic Coordinator for the UofMN, the first International Federation of Organic

Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) Conference on **Animals in Organic Production** was a "smashing success". It was held at the University of Minnesota-St Paul campus on August 23-25, with 250 participants from 25 countries participating. Proceedings are available on CD or can be downloaded from the IFOAM website, <http://www.ifoam.org/>. Audio recordings in MP3 format are also available.

### *USDA Releases Last of the 2007 Farm Bill Discussion Papers*

USDA Secretary Johanns released the fifth and last of his discussion papers for the 2007 Farm Bill. "Strengthening the Foundation for Future Growth in U.S.

Agriculture" is a catch-all, covering trade, research, plant and animal disease and protection, and beginning farmers and ranchers.

A fourth analysis paper on Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency was released in August! The energy paper looks at all of the potential sources of energy under agriculture's umbrella, from farm fields to pasture and forest lands. It also tracks the results of USDA's renewable energy and energy efficiency programs and contemplates enhancements and alternatives to those programs. All of the 2007 Farm Bill Theme Analysis Papers released to date are available online at: [www.usda.gov/farbill](http://www.usda.gov/farbill).

## *Upcoming Events — Mark your calendars!*

MFA Fall Festival at Wilder Forest, Oct. 14, 2006, Marine-on-St. Croix, MN. 651-433-3676, [www.mnfoodassociation.org](http://www.mnfoodassociation.org)

Central SFA Harvest Festival, Oct. 14, 2007, Deerwood, MN. (218) 764-3020

Save these dates! More info in an upcoming newsletter.

Midwest Value Added Conference. Jan. 26-27, 2007, Red Wing, MN

Minnesota Organic Conference, Jan...2007,

St. Cloud, MN

As always, check the MISA calendar, [www.misa.umn.edu](http://www.misa.umn.edu) for more upcoming events!

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