

Green Eating and Playing in Minnesota

If you've ever been traveling in an unfamiliar part of Minnesota, had a hankering for some good locally grown food but did not know where to find it, you'll be happy to know that help is on the way.

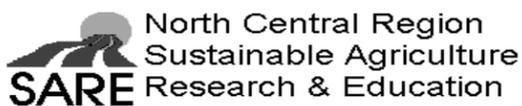
A wide array of organizations have come together to plan and carry out a high-profile public education campaign that will capture the attention of new audiences and give them easy, concrete ways to support local food systems while "Eating and Playing in Minnesota." The heart of the campaign is showcasing eating establishments across the state that buy from local farmers and providing information about the farms which supply those eateries. As part of the project, 40 stories of eateries and local farms, pictures and recipes will be compiled and published both in print and electronically. A series of regional "Green Route Guides" will also be developed—centered on some of the showcased eateries and including other activities, such as biking and birding trails and local arts and cultural activities. A state-wide, local foods festival is also being planned. Led by Renewing the Countryside, Inc., Green Eating is supported by a 2004 NCR-SARE Research and Education grant and has partners from multiple facets of Minnesota's sustainable agriculture and tourism communities, including: the Sustainable Farming Association, University of Minnesota Tourism Center, Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Minnesota Grown Program, Minnesota Food Association, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, U of M's Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture, Minnesota Bed and Breakfast Association, Land Stewardship Project, and the U of M's Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships. For more information or to become involved in this project, contact Renewing the Countryside at rtc@rtcinfo.org or 1-866-378-0587, or visit www.renewingthecountryside.org.

New MISA Board Members

Four new members have joined the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture's Executive Board as of July 2005. Representing the diverse agricultural community, they bring a wealth of experience to MISA's mission to "bring together the agricultural community and the University community in a cooperative effort to develop and promote sustainable agriculture in Minnesota and beyond."

Tony Thompson is a southwest Minnesota farmer growing "corn, soybeans, native plants for seed, and minds" on Willow Lake Farm in Jackson and Cottonwood counties. He stated that "in order for my farm to move through its second century intact and productive, we need an environment that values agriculture and farmers, a functioning ecology, long land tenure, stable communities and the health and welfare of its citizens and ecology."

Gigi DiGiacomo is a Farm Business and Market Planning consultant who lives in Minnetonka, a southern suburb of the Twin Cities. She has worked with MISA, to develop and write several publications over the last eight years, including the highly successful "Building a Sustainable Business" guidebook. She has also given seminars and conducted business planning workshops throughout Minnesota in cooperation with several of MISA's partner organizations.



Alvaro Rivera is the coordinator for the May Farm, site of Minnesota Food Association's new immigrant farmer program and CSA, now located on the former Wilder Forest farm in Marine on St. Croix. Alvaro has been working with MFA's new immigrant program since 1999, helping new immigrant farmers learn sustainable production methods, business management and marketing, and assisting them in applying for and securing loans.

Rick Olson owns and operates Olson's Organic Farm in Becker County, west central Minnesota, where he direct markets his grass-fattened beef and range-fed broilers. In addition to farming, he has been a vocational agricultural teacher, chaired the School Board, worked as a regional coordinator for the Minnesota Dairy Initiative and currently works with the Environmental Quality Assurance Program.

To learn more about the MISA Board, or to contact these new Board members or other current members, go to www.misa.umn.edu

Student Farm Update

It's been a busy summer on the student farm! Recently, students made deliveries to Mim's Cafe, North Country Co-op, Hampden Park Co-op and Muffuletta's. In early July they hosted interns from Garden Farme for the morning and got most of the field weeded. Recently, the students had a mid-season meeting and officially chose "Cornercopia" as the fun name for the University of Minnesota Student Organic Farm.

The students will host a field day on Thursday August 4th at 10:00 AM and are gearing up for the University of Minnesota Farmer's market which starts on July 13th! The market runs on Wednesdays through August 24, 2005 from 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. The market is located on the south end of Church Street near Washington Avenue on the east bank of the UofM Twin Cities Campus. The vendors will be selling locally grown fruits, vegetables and cut flowers.

Come check out the fields and lend a hand if you've got the time! For more information, contact Jared Ashling, or Courtney Tchida, (612) 625-2738, student.farm@umn.edu.

2005 Greenbook available!

The theme of the 2005 edition is the next generation of sustainable farmers with essays by Beth Waterhouse (from her book *Time, Soil and Children*), Gunnar Liden from the Youth Farm and Market Project, Yimeem Vu from the New Immigrant Agriculture Project at Minnesota Food Association, and John R. Baker from the Beginning Farmer Center at Iowa State University. There is also a mix of articles from grant projects funded through the MDA's Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant Program, organic agriculture grants awarded through MDA but funded by USDA Risk Management Agency, and producer grants funded by NCR SARE. Greenbooks can be ordered by calling Linda Bougie at 651-296-7673 or emailing linda.bougie@state.mn.us

Local Food is Best for Environmental, Health Benefits

Buying food that was grown close to home is a good bet for improving environmental and human health, according to a recent study in Great Britain.

British researchers calculated the "external costs" of food. External costs are things that don't show up in the price you pay for food. They are born by the environment or by society. For production of food, external costs include things like contamination of water by pesticides and fertilizers, methane and ammonia gases released into air, soil loss due to erosion, and human health effects from exposure to disease organisms. For food transport, the external costs include traffic congestion, asthma and other health hazards caused by vehicle pollution, climate change due to vehicle emissions, and damage to roadway infrastructure.

Currently in Britain, the researchers estimate that the total external costs due to food transport to grocery stores are \$4.3 billion per year (US Dollars). This could be reduced by about 90% with a shift to all food produced within 12 miles of where it is consumed. Further deep reductions in environmental and health costs could be achieved by reducing people's reliance on car trips for

shopping and transport of food from stores to homes.

Total external costs due to food production in Britain are about \$2.8 billion per year. Shifting to an all-organic food production system would reduce external costs to about one-fourth of the current amount. Since external production costs were lower to start with than external transport costs, the change to a local food transport pattern would have a far greater total benefit than the change to all organic production.

The researchers calculate that a shift to local food systems would allow British society to avoid \$3.9 billion per year in external costs. A shift to all-organic production would allow avoidance of \$2.1 billion in external costs. They note that a complete shift to either local food systems or organic production is not likely, but that any movement in those directions would be beneficial. Given the much greater impact of food transport on human health and the environment, they suggest that food and transport businesses and governments take action to reduce the distance that food travels.

Condensed from Farm costs and food miles: An assessment of the full cost of the UK weekly food basket. J.N. Pretty, A.S. Ball, T. Lang, J.I.L. Morison. Food Policy 30(2005) 1-19.
(online version available through www.sciencedirect.com)

The Heartland Food Initiative: Building a Local Food Identity in Minnesota

Picture it—students lining up early for lunch at the one cafeteria on campus committed to serving local food, and students bidding on a student’s I.D. card for the privilege of eating there. It’s happening all across the country, as people seek out institutions committed to supporting local food systems. Wouldn’t it be great if all the local food work in Minnesota could be easily identified by the people who eat in school or hospital cafeterias, or at local restaurants or shop in grocery stores? What would that look like?

Karen Lehman and Trish Johnson with The Minnesota Project, are coordinating the Heartland Food Initiative to discuss those very ideas. The Initiative is an effort to explore ways to make visible all of the work to promote the production and consumption of local and sustainably-produced foods currently underway in Minnesota. With funding from the Bush Foundation, their aim is to create more public awareness about the role chefs, retailers, distributors, and processors play in building strong local food systems.

And it begins by listening. March through June, groups have been gathering at restaurant tables throughout the state and representatives from all links in the food value chain have discussed building recognition and identity for all participants in strong local food systems. “At the mid-point in our series of dialogs, we paused to assess what we’ve heard so far, and we’ve identified some cross-cutting themes,” said Karen. “We also sensed a need to bring the larger buying group together to focus on their specific issues, and have invited over 136 chefs, catering and food service directors to convene July 19th at the Radisson Plaza in downtown Minneapolis, along with some farmer representatives. We also plan a September 22nd larger group meeting for farmers.” Based on information gathered at those meetings, the smaller dialogs will continue in the fall.

The Heartland Food Initiative Steering Committee includes Les Heen, Minnesota Farmers Union; Jim Ennis, Food Alliance Midwest; Chef Paul Lynch, Radisson Plaza; Debbie Hamernick, Sysco Minnesota; and Paul Hugunin, Minnesota Department of Agriculture. For more information, or to find out how you can become involved, contact Karen Lehman or Trish Johnson at 651-645-6159, tjohnson@mnproject.org, www.mnproject.org.

Upcoming Events

Organic Plot Tour, July 14, Lynn Brakke farm, Comstock, MN. For more information about the tour contact Hans Kandel, University of Minnesota Extension Educator at 1-888-241-0781 or e-mail kande001@umn.edu.

U of M Day at Lamberton, July 14th, Southwest Research and Outreach Center, Lamberton, MN. For more information on the program, contact the Southwest Research and Outreach Center at 507-752-7372.

Farm Beginnings Field Day, July 16th, LaFarge, WI. For more information and directions, contact: Laura Borgendale (laurab@lanstewardshipproject.org) or Cathy Twohig (cathyt@landstewardshipproject.org) at 320-269-2105.

Green Man Festival, July 17-19th, Spirit Mountain, Duluth MN. <http://www.greenmanfestival.com>.

Windy River Fair, July 27-30, Morrison County Fairgrounds, Little Falls, MN. <http://www.windyriver.us>.

Minnesota Rural Summit, July 28-29, St. John's University, Collegeville, MN. <http://www.minnesotaruralpartners.org/>

Fencing for Livestock, August 1, Location TBA. For locations and to register, please call Diana Strain, Hiawatha Valley Resource Conservation and Development, 507-281-1959 ext. 4. For other information, you are welcome to call Caroline van Schaik at LSPs Lewiston office, 507-523-3366.

Upper Midwest Grazing Conference, August 2-4, Dubuque, IA. To request a brochure, contact Vince Crary at 218-385-3000 or crary002@umn.edu. <http://www.cias.wisc.edu/uppermidwest>.

Community Gardening Conference, August 11-14, Minneapolis, MN. More information is available by calling Betsy Johnson, ACGA Interim Executive Director, at 877-275-2242. <http://www.communitygarden.org>.

UMore Park Open House, August 18th, Rosemount, MN. Visit <http://www.umorepark.umn.edu> for more information or call 651-423-2455.

What we're about...

This newsletter is supported by the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA)—a partnership between the Sustainer's Coalition and the University of Minnesota College of Agricultural, Food, and Environmental Sciences (COAFES); the University of Minnesota Extension Service; the North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCRSARE) Professional Development Program (PDP); and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA).

Send story ideas to MISA, 411 Borlaug Hall, 1991 Upper Buford Circle, St. Paul, MN 55108, (612) 625-8235, fax (612) 625-1268, e-mail: misamail@umn.edu. Editorial board members: Helene Murray, (612) 625-0220, murra021@umn.edu; Beth Nelson, (612) 625-8217, schre002@umn.edu; Bill Wilcke, (612) 625-8205, wilck001@umn.edu; Jane Jewett, jewet006@umn.edu; Kate Seager, (612) 625-8235, kseager@umn.edu and Jack Sperbeck, (612)625-1794, sperb001@umn.edu. Please send address changes directly to: Kate Seager, kseager@umn.edu, MISA, 411 Borlaug Hall, 1991 Buford Circle, St. Paul, MN 55108.

You can find more University of Minnesota Extension Service educational information at www.extension.umn.edu. Also check MISA's home page at www.misa.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. To stimulate thinking and discussion about sustainability, we try to present items that reflect different points of view. This being the case, we aren't promoting and don't necessarily agree with everything we publish.

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