

Sustainable Agriculture

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MISA funds five interdisciplinary research and education teams

The Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) is pleased to announce the formation of five new interdisciplinary teams. A competitive grants process was announced last fall that offered up to \$10,000 per project to help interdisciplinary teams form and become functional. By October 1996 each team will submit a complete proposal to MISA along with a request for continued funding. The teams that were funded in the team building planning phase include the following:

- Visioning, Whole Farm Planning, and Alternative Economic Uses of Environmentally Sensitive Areas in the Chippewa River Basin. Coordinators: Audrey Arner, Project Director/HRM Educator and Patrick Moore, Coordinator, Chippewa River Stewardship Partnership; Western Minnesota Office, Land Stewardship Project, 103 W. Nichols, Montevideo, MN 56265, (612) 269-2105. This team will implement a whole farm planning process that leads to successful demonstrations of alternative animal and crop production systems that enhance water quality in the Chippewa River Basin.
- Establishing Beginning Dairy Farmers Utilizing the Sharemilking Concept. Coordinators: Chuck Schwartau, Extension Educator, Minnesota Extension Service-Wabasha County, 611 Broadway Avenue, Suite 40, Wabasha, MN 55981-1613, (612) 565-2662; and Doug Nopar, Southeast Minnesota Director, Land Stewardship Project, PO Box 130, Lewiston, MN 55952, (507) 523-3366. The goals of this project are to establish a program for beginning farmers that includes the personal support of other farmers and related mentors to help beginning farmers become better managers. Schwartau developed the proposal in a sustainable agriculture course at the Minnesota Extension Summer School (MESS).
- Evaluating Approaches in Comprehensive Farm Planning. Contact: John Lamb, the Minnesota Project, 1885 University Ave., W. #315, St. Paul, MN 55104, (612) 645-6159. This team will work together to share information on comprehensive farm planning (CFP) approaches, and intends to develop a set of common criteria for successful CFP. The longer-term objectives include assessing a variety of farm planning processes; working with farmers to evaluate completed farm plans; and facilitating a state-wide CFP network.
- Southern Minnesota Cropping Systems Team. Coordinators: Dave Huggins, Southwest Experiment Station, PO Box 428, Lamberton, MN 56152-0428, (507) 752-7372 and Nick Jordan, Dept. of Agronomy & Plant Genetics, 411 Borlaug Hall, St. Paul, MN 55108, (612) 625-3754. This project brings together a team to identify and develop research and educational programs that focus on the sustainability of cropping systems in southern Minnesota.
- Integrated Approaches in Natural Resources and Agricultural Management: Establishing a Research and Educational Agenda for Minnesota. Contact: Jan Joannides and Scott Josiah, Coordinators, Center for Integrated Natural Resources and Agricultural Management (CINRAM), 115 Green Hall, U of MN, St. Paul, MN 55108, (612) 624-7418. The team will focus on determining how integrated approaches to natural resources management can blend economic,

social and ecological concerns associated with the long-term viability of agriculture in Minnesota, and to develop a series of proposals that addresses the priority issues identified. An example of a project addressing these concerns might be establishment of woody riparian buffers on farms that can be periodically harvested. This could help provide additional on-farm profit, help prevent water pollution, and provide wildlife habitat.

People should be more "connected" to land grant universities

Land grant universities must change, and the Visions for Change project has identified six elements of systemic change needed to prepare people for food systems careers. They include:

- Cultural renewal. In a renewed community people will feel connected to the land grant university and the food system. The institutions respond effectively to the short and long-term needs of their constituents.
- Food systems awareness. The general public must be aware of the vulnerability of our food system and of related employment opportunities. There must be a clear understanding of what it means to be a land grant university and its role in ensuring an abundant, safe food supply.
- Partnership/community building. Cultivation of partnerships across departments, colleges, universities and communities on local, national and global levels will build a renewed sense of community.
- Sustainability. If the elements of systemic change in our land grant universities are to be sustained, they must be integrated into the infrastructure of these institutions. Continued institutional commitment at all levels to positive, systemic change will be crucial to sustaining the elements of organizational transformation.
- Stewardship/citizenship. An increased sense of stewardship toward the community is needed. Organizational theorist Peter Block describes stewardship as "a way of governing that creates a strong sense of ownership and responsibility for outcomes at the bottom of the organization. It means giving control to customers and creating self-reliance on the part of all who are touched by the institution."
- Lifelong learning. People want access to education in many different forms throughout their lives.

Visions for Change is a joint project of the University of Minnesota, North Dakota State University and South Dakota State University. It is sponsored by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Phase one, just completed, consisted of over 50 visioning or listening sessions with a broad range of constituents. The second phase involves building and implementing programs. For more information, contact Visions for Change, 201 Haecker Hall, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN 55108. Telephone (612) 625-7062. E-mail: vision@beauty.agri.umn.edu

Organic Growers and Buyers Association annual meeting March 16

The Organic Growers and Buyers Association (OGBA) annual meeting is Saturday, March 16, at the Earle Brown Center on the University of Minnesota's St. Paul campus. The registration and social hour runs from 8 to 9 a.m., with the meeting and speaker portion from 9 a.m. to noon. The event is co-sponsored by MISA and there is no registration fee.

Here's your chance to learn more about the organic industry and the organic certification process. Feature

speakers are Don Wyse from MISA and Carmen Fernholz, MISA board member and organic producer. More information is available from the OGBA office at (612) 572-1967.

Spring sheep production workshop is March 16 at Prior Lake

Making sheep production more profitable and enjoyable is the objective of a spring lambing workshop Saturday, March 16 at Prior Lake. It's sponsored by the Scott County office of the University of Minnesota's Extension Service and the Minnesota Lamb and Wool Producers.

The workshop will be at the Marquette Bank, 16817 Duluth Ave. S.E. in Prior Lake. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. and the program begins at 10 a.m. The advance registration fee is \$10 per flock for the first person and \$5 for each additional person. To register, send a check to Scott County Extension, 123 First St. E., Jordan, MN 55352. Make checks payable to Scott County Extension. For more information or a workshop brochure, call Dave Resch at (612) 492-2370.

CRP conference is March 19 in Ivanhoe

"Life after CRP" is the title of a program scheduled March 19 at the Ivanhoe, Minn. VFW. The program will begin at 9:45 a.m. and run until 3:15 p.m. Included in the program will be a report on the Lincoln County CRP demonstration project. For more information, contact the Lyon County Extension Office at (507) 537-6702 or the Lincoln County extension office at (507) 694-1470.

Sow pools and producer networking compete with large-scale producers

By networking with neighbors and sow pooling, traditional family farms in Scandinavia have increased hog production by more than 100 percent. The increased efficiency and output, without major capital investment, has made family farms competitive with large-scale producers.

How the system works in Sweden, and how it can be applied to U.S. production is the topic of international seminars on alternative swine housing and production systems in late March. The identical sessions are Tuesday, March 26 at the University of Wisconsin, Madison; and Friday, March 29, at the University of Minnesota, St. Paul.

Animal scientists from these two universities and from Sweden and The Netherlands will be on the program. There is no charge for the seminars and luncheons, but participation on a first-come, first-served basis is limited to 60 in Madison and 40 in St. Paul. For more information, contact Larry Jacobson, Dept. of Biosystems and Ag. Engineering, 1390 Eckles Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108, phone (612) 625-8288.

Environmental Issues '96 conference is March 25 in Minneapolis

The "Environmental Issues '96" conference is scheduled for the Sheraton Metrodome Hotel in Minneapolis Monday, March 25. The keynote speaker is David Morris, co-founder and vice president of the Institute for Self-Reliance and columnist in the St. Paul Pioneer Press.

Three issues will be discussed. (1) Wetlands and "takings" legislation--public good vs. private property rights; (2) Sustainable development--which way do we go?; (3) Voyageurs and BWCA--park or not? Registration starts at 8:30 a.m. The conference registration and lunch is \$20. For more information, contact Tim Stanton at the Office Environmental Assistance, (OEA), 520 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155-4100. Phone (612) 215-0294 or 1-800-657-3843.

You can also call the OEA number if you're interested in environmental assistance grants. They have \$1.5 million available and individual research projects may receive up to \$100,000. Applications are due April 15.

SARE funding for farmer grant program increased to \$200,000

The North Central region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program has up to \$200,000 to award in competitive grant programs to producers. Individual farmers can apply for up to \$5,000 and groups of producers can apply for up to \$10,000 for the one-year grants. Program funding for the USDA-funded regional grant program was increased from \$150,000 last year to provide for increased emphasis on marketing projects.

Applications for the USDA-funded program are available now and are due May 1, 1996. For a grant application, contact Mary Hanks, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Energy and Sustainable Agriculture, 90 W. Plato, St. Paul, MN 55107, telephone (612) 296-1277.

Dick and Sharon Thompson are Iowa Farm Leaders of the Year

Dick and Sharon Thompson have been named "Iowa Farm Leaders of the Year" by the Des Moines Register. They farm 300 acres near Boone, in central Iowa. For the past 30 years they've researched, learned, taught and practiced alternative agriculture techniques. The award is given annual by the newspaper's editorial board. Past winners have included a Farm Bureau president and leaders of farm commodity groups.

A new editor

Joseph Kurtz will edit this newsletter the next three months, through the June issue. You can contact him at 405 Coffey Hall, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN 55108. Telephone (612) 625-3168, or e-mail pkurtz@extension.umn.edu

We can use your story ideas

Keep the story ideas coming. Send them to Editor Joseph Kurtz at the address above. Other editorial board members are Helene Murray (612) 625-0220, Don Olson (612) 625-9292 and Bill Wilcke (612) 625-8205.

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.