

Sustainable Agriculture

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New sustainability monitoring guide available from LSP

The Land Stewardship Project (LSP) has published a guide for monitoring the sustainability of a farm. "Monitoring Sustainable Agriculture with Conventional Financial Data" by Dick Levins, is the first in a series based on the work of the Biological, Social and Financial Monitoring Team. For the past three years, LSP and its partners on the monitoring team have been experimenting with various ways farmers can measure their progress toward sustainability.

Monitoring sustainability using conventional financial indicators can be difficult. Farmers normally think of using income and expense figures to measure progress toward the goals of earning profits, says Levins, a monitoring team member and University of Minnesota agricultural economist. Like any producer, sustainable farmers are concerned about feeding their families and paying bills. But they also want to protect the land, improve their quality of life and enhance the communities they live in. To be sustainable, farm progress must be defined as movement toward a set of goals that include, but are not limited to, profitability, he says.

In this 30-page publication, Levins presents four indicators to evaluate the sustainability of farming operations: reliance on government programs; use of equipment, chemicals and non-renewable energy; creation of jobs; and balance between feed use and feed production. Using farm records or tax reports, farmers can transfer numbers to work sheets provided in the book, and thus evaluate their sustainability.

To order a copy of "Monitoring Sustainable Agriculture with Conventional Financial Data," send \$7 (that price includes postage; Minnesota residents add 6.5 percent sales tax) to: LSP, 2200 4th St., White Bear Lake, MN 55110. There is a 10 percent discount for LSP members and bulk orders of 20 or more copies. For more information about bulk orders, call LSP at (612) 653-0618, or contact Dick Levins, email: rlevins@extension.umn.edu or (612) 625-5238.

Holistic management gathering Aug. 16-17

"Share the Wealth" is the theme of the 1996 International Holistic Resource Management (HRM) Gathering, Aug. 16-17, at the Kahler Hotel in Rochester, Minn. The focus of this year's gathering will be on having HRM practitioners share their experiences in a participatory type of educational setting. There will be sessions on everything from HRM's basics, to testing guidelines and innovative marketing. It will feature a day of workshops and a day of farm tours in the Rochester area. The gathering will finish on Saturday evening with a BBQ dinner and live music.

HRM is a management process that is helping individuals, families, businesses and whole communities improve the quality of their lives and generate real wealth, while simultaneously restoring the environment and enhancing biodiversity. At the heart of HRM is a new decision-making process, based on people's personal values, which enables them to make decisions that are simultaneously economically, ecologically and socially responsible. This is designed to lead to true, long-term sustainability.

This year's gathering is being co-sponsored by the Minnesota-based Land Stewardship Project and the Center for Holistic Resource Management based in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The fee for the two-day event is \$100 for adults and \$50 for children (ages 5-12). For more information, contact Audrey Arner at the Land Stewardship Project (320) 269-2105, or the Center for Holistic Management at 1-800-654-3619.

Why all the fuss about sustainable agriculture?

Farmers ask that question of Lee Cunningham, extension educator in Walworth County, Wis. He gives them a bright red sheet of paper. The title is "The Year: 2020," from the President of the United States. "I tell them they have been appointed to a crisis team," Cunningham says. Criteria for the crisis team's decision-making process:

1. Our oil reserves are depleted. No chemicals can be produced for weed control products, limited fuel is available for use in farm equipment, and nuclear tractors are available.
2. A new natural resources law has been passed that dictates soil conservation and water quality as priorities. (Soil and water have been declared our two most valuable natural resources).
3. Too few people are available to actively farm and produce food for our nation.

Crisis team mission:

1. Design a food production farming system that takes items 1-3 (above) into account, and share it with the President.
2. Come up with a plan to create intergenerational equity transfer to make it possible to keep people in agriculture.

"The exercise gets the discussion going," Cunningham says. "It's especially thought-provoking for someone who's just said, 'Cunningham, what's the big deal with sustainable agriculture. I had a good year and just bought a new tractor.'"

There's a new CRP listserv

If you're interested in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) you can subscribe to a new listserv through the Minnesota Extension Service.

1. Send an e-mail message to: almanac@extension.umn.edu
2. Leave the subject line blank
3. Type this on the first message line: subscribe crp
4. Press return twice
5. Send the message

If you have problems, contact Robert J. Hursh, University of Minnesota, 475 Coffey Hall, 1420 Eckles Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108. Telephone (612) 624-7212, FAX (612) 625-2207, email: rhursh@extension.umn.edu

New insect management guide available

A new Insect Management Guide for the Midwest covers 14 vegetable crops and was written by extension specialists and other staff from Midwest universities. It's published by Purdue University and

Meister publishing (publishers of American Vegetable Grower and American Fruit Grower).

It has color photos of pests and covers key pest cycles, biology and timing of insect pests in relation to crop timing. There's also information on beneficial insects, crop damage, traps and monitoring methods. To get a copy, send a check for \$46 (\$40 for the book and \$6 for shipping) payable to the "University of Minnesota" to Bill Hutchinson, Dept. of Entomology, University of Minnesota, 219 Hodson Hall, St. Paul, MN 55108.

Gamebird Conference will be August 15-16 in Bloomington

Gamebirds as an economic enterprise will be the focus of a Midwest Gamebird and Hunting Preserve Conference August 15-16. It will be at the Airport Hilton in Bloomington, Minn. There will be sessions on preventive medicine, promotions and public relations, winter covers, business concepts, and ethics and traditions. Cost is \$60 if preregistration is postmarked by August 1, \$70 after that date. To obtain a brochure or further information, contact Peg Naumann, Veterinary Outreach Programs, University of Minnesota, at (612) 624-3434.

MISA Educational Materials Teams highlight: alternative hog production systems

As part of MISA's new Sustainable Agriculture Information Exchange, MISA funded six interdisciplinary teams to create educational materials on sustainable agriculture. One of these teams has initiated an exciting project showcasing a wide variety of pork production methods: Pasture farrowing, seasonal grazing, Swedish deep bedding, hoop housing, and conventional confinement. The regional team of swine experts is coordinated by Prescott Bergh (Energy and Sustainable Agriculture Program, Minnesota Department of Agriculture) and includes farmers, university researchers, agricultural lenders, extension educators, and others.

The team is working with producers who currently use these systems to compile data in eight key areas: economics; physical requirements; labor and management; animal performance; feed and health; environmental; marketing; and social concerns. The team's goal is not to recommend one system over another, but to allow individual farmers to evaluate and compare the different systems against their own personal goals and priorities. The final product, which is set to be released in late 1996, will be an interactive guide for current and prospective growers, which will include a self-guided printed manual, a videotape, and a slide set.

MISA's Sustainable Agriculture Information Exchange is made possible in part by a 1995 Minnesota Legislature appropriation, through a contract with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. For more information on this project, other educational materials teams, or the Information Exchange, contact Debra Elias, MISA Program Associate, at (612) 625-8217 (e-mail: elias005@maroon.tc.umn.edu).

We can use your story ideas

Keep the story ideas coming. 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. 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.

Calendar of events

August 13, 9 a.m	CRP bus tour, Norfolk, Neb., (402) 584-2837
August 14, 9 a.m	Adding diversity to a corn-soybean rotation, Eugene Bakko, Northfield, (507) 646-3399.
August 15, 1 p.m	Seasonal dairying and value-added enterprises, Robert and Sherrill Van Maasdam, Westbrook, (507) 274-5129
August 15, 7 - 9 p.m	Pastured poultry and CSA, Todd Lien farm, Northfield, (507) 645-9036.
August 15-16	Midwest Gamebird and Hunting Preserve Conference, Airport Hilton, Bloomington. Call Peg Naumann, (612) 624-3434
August 17, 1 p.m	Deep bedded system for hogs, Mark and Nancy Mouton, Rush City, (612) 358-4632.
August 17, 1 - 3 p.m	Pasture walk at the Dan and Rosie Middendorf farm near Osakis. Contact them at (320) 352-3397.
August 20, 1 - 3 p.m	Butcher hogs on pasture and marketing organic crops, Linda and Mike Noble farm, Kenyon, (507) 789-6679.
August 22, 9:30 a.m	On-farm forest utilization and processing demonstrations, Hiawatha Valley RC & D, Rochester, (507) 281-1959.
August 24, 9:30-11:30 a.m	Vegetable field tour at the Dan and Gilda Gieske farm near Sauk Centre, (320) 352-6255.
August 28, 3 p.m	Horticulture Day, North Central Experiment Station, Grand Rapids. Call (218) 327-4490.
Sept. 4, 11 a.m	Variable rate fertility on ridged corn and soybeans, Howard Kittleson, Blooming Prairie, (507) 593-7158.

Sept. 5, 1 p.m	Buckwheat growers group marketing, Tom Bilek, Alddrich, (218) 445-5475.
Sept. 7, 2 p.m	Low input hog system, James and LeAnn Van Der Pol, Kerkhoven, (612) 847-3432.
Sept. 7, 10 a.m	Perch enterprise budget, John Reynolds/Midwest Fish Crayfish, Merrifield, (218) 765-3030
Sept. 12, 10 a.m.	Increased forage production via better control of water runoff, James Sovell, Ivanhoe, (507) 694-1486.
Sept. 12, 11 a.m	Silage making demonstration, Doug Gunnink, Gaylord, (612) 237-5162
Sept. 13, 1 p.m	Non-chemical weed control, Craig and Joanie Murphy, Morris, (320) 392-5176.
Sept. 14, 10 a.m.	Diversified grazing, Ed and Cathy Radermacher, Bellingham, (320) 568-2110.
Sept. 16-18	New approaches to rural nonpoint source pollution, Holiday Inn, La Crosse, Wis., (612) 972-3908 for conference information
Sept. 26, 3 p.m	Interseeding hairy vetch in sunflower, Hans Kandel, Moorhead, (218) 253-2897.