

Sustainable Agriculture

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Local food in Italy is part of culture, source of pride

"Local" food in Italy means more than just the geographical area where it was grown, says Lynne Rossetto Kasper, food writer and co-producer of the national radio show "The Splendid Table." Kasper says there are 20 regions in Italy, all with distinct foods that are part of local culture and citizens are proud of.

"In Italy, there is no such thing as 'Italian' food. People in Italy's 20 regions don't 'marry' foods from different regions," says Kasper, who spoke at the recent conference, "Food Chains and Food Change: Food and Agricultural Issues at the Turn of the Century," in Minneapolis.

Italy, like the U.S, is an industrialized country. But Kasper says, "Most Italians like to think they know where their food comes from. Food is part of who the people are, and local food is most prized."

Unfortunately, economics and new laws are threatening some local food producers in Italy, she said. For example, two brothers in the Sicily area have sheep and goats. They hand-milk the sheep, and make cheese every morning. "But due to new European Union laws, they may not survive past another six months," she says. Check her website at www.Splendidtable.org/.

Lohr, Tiffany named to endowed chairs in agricultural systems

Luanne Lohr and Douglas Tiffany will be the 2001-2002 School of Agriculture Endowed Chairs in Agricultural Systems at the University of Minnesota. They will work on organic marketing and agricultural energy issues.

Lohr, an associate professor in the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics at the University of Georgia in Athens, will take a sabbatical to serve in the chair from Aug. 1, 2001 to May 31, 2002. She is now completing an organic marketing study with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

In Minnesota, she would like to develop her USDA project into a case study of how to build a regional or state organic food network to keep more value-added proceeds from organic production and processing in Minnesota. She will also work with the organic industry and University students and staff to develop a graduate course on the economics of agroecology.

Tiffany is a research fellow in the Department of Applied Economics at the U of M, where his work has included a variety of energy projects. He will serve in the chair from Aug. 27, 2001 to Aug. 25, 2002 and plans to:

- Conduct research on energy requirements for the production, transport and processing of Minnesota ag commodities.

- Collaborate with others interested in agricultural energy to identify strategies that offer the greatest payoffs in energy efficiency and cost savings.
- Stimulate and publicize farmer innovations to reduce energy costs.
- Facilitate discussions on energy policy.
- Identify the vulnerability of Minnesota ag enterprises where energy use is high.

The School of Agriculture Endowed Chair in Agricultural Systems was created in 1995 with financial support of alumni from the School of Agriculture at the University of Minnesota (SAUM), which was an agricultural high school located on the St. Paul campus of the University. Other contributions were from the Minnesota State Legislature and the University of Minnesota.

The chair is part of the College of Agricultural, Food, and Environmental Sciences (COAFES) and is managed by the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA). For more information about the chair, contact MISA at (612) 625-8235 or misamail@umn.edu.

Initiatives for Revitalizing Minnesota's Rural Communities

The University of Minnesota College of Agricultural, Food, and Environmental Sciences (COAFES) is moving into the implementation phase of its prioritization process. For the last year, COAFES faculty, staff, and students and Minnesota citizens have been developing visions and goals in these theme areas:

- Emphasizing exemplary education
- Promoting safe and healthy foods
- Improving environmental quality
- Serving urban communities
- Revitalizing Minnesota's rural communities
- Enhancing agricultural production systems

Small teams of COAFES faculty have now been appointed to develop one to three initiatives, by Sept. 30, 2001, for the college to start implementing goals for each theme. The team for revitalizing Minnesota's rural communities includes:

- Dan Erkkila, interim director of the Tourism Center, North Central Research and Outreach Center, Grand Rapids.
- Richard Joerger, Work, Community/Family Education Department, St. Paul.
- Dennis Johnson, Animal Science Department, West Central Research and Outreach Center, Morris.
- Steve Jones, Office of International Ag Programs/Minnesota Agricultural Student Trainee Program, St. Paul.
- Roger Moon, Entomology Department, St. Paul.
- Claudia Parliament, Applied Economics Department, St. Paul.
- Thomas Stinson, Applied Economics Department, St. Paul.
- Cindy Tong, Horticultural Sciences Department, St. Paul.
- Bill Wilcke, acting administrator for the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture, Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering Department, St. Paul; team chair.
- Jerry Wright, Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering Department, West Central Research and Outreach Center, Morris.

If you have ideas for initiatives to help revitalize rural communities, feel free to contact Bill Wilcke at wilck001@umn.edu or (612) 625-8205. If you'd like to learn more about the prioritization process or the other theme areas, see the website at: www.coafes.umn.edu/listening/.

Ag sociologist to leave position at Morris

Wynne Wright, research associate and agricultural sociologist at the University of Minnesota West Central Research and Outreach Center (WCROC) in Morris, has accepted a position as assistant professor of sociology at the University of Northern Iowa (UNI). She'll be leaving Morris to start her new position in August 2001.

Wynne says that it was a difficult decision, but the new position is well suited to her professional and personal development. The UNI position is a more typical faculty job with more classroom teaching and less outreach and research than the U of M position. Wynne will be replacing a retiring professor, Ron Roberts, who introduced her major professor at the University of Kentucky, Patrick Mooney, to the discipline of sociology. This cycle of life coincidence reaffirms for Wynne that this is a positive move for her. The new position will allow her to teach and do research on agro-food systems, rural communities, and social equality; and to re-embrace her previous work in political sociology.

Wynne started her position at the U of M in July 1999 after receiving her Ph.D. from the University of Kentucky. Funding for the agricultural sociology position was a one-time allocation from the legislature that also funded alternative swine production research. At Morris, Wynne's accomplishments included conducting a study on women on swine farms, which found individual depression and cultural alienation among the women due to vertical integration of the swine sector.

She co-directed (with Cornelia Flora from Iowa State University) the social and community impacts research for the Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) on animal agriculture that was funded by the state legislature. Other accomplishments include organizing a symposium on building bridges between the social and natural sciences, teaching classes at the University of Minnesota-Morris and organizing a sustainable development international field school between U of M students and students from Hungary. She also worked with U of M-Morris students to organize a community food expo and initiated more use of locally produced food on the Morris campus.

She would like to thank the sustainable agriculture community for its overwhelming support of the rural sociology position and her efforts while in Minnesota. She hopes to maintain a strong connection to those of us in Minnesota. —Bill Wilcke

Rosemount will host forage expo, horse and small acreage program

If it's green and grows in Minnesota and cows, sheep or horses will eat it, it's likely you can learn more about it at an upcoming event at Rosemount, Minn. The University of Minnesota's Rosemount Research and Outreach Center is the site for the 2001 Minnesota Alfalfa and Forage Expo July 17-18.

The event is open to all interested persons and includes a special program for horse and small acreage owners July 17 from 5-9 p.m. The expo features a continuous educational program from 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. each day. Some of the topics will be forage establishment, corn silage, use of manure on alfalfa, alfalfa potato leafhopper management, nitrogen fertilization of grass-legume mixtures, and farmer innovations such as bale sleeves.

Grounds will open at 8:30 a.m. each day. A clinic that provides an opportunity for forage producers to have insect, weed and disease problems diagnosed will be open from 8:30-11 a.m. Varietal plots will provide comparisons of the latest alfalfa and corn silage varieties. Field demonstrations of cutting equipment will take place from 9 a.m.- 10:45 a.m., and harvesting equipment will be demonstrated from 1:30-3 p.m.

The program for horse and small acreage owners will also include field equipment demonstrations, which will begin at 6 p.m. An educational program at 7 p.m. will cover poisonous plants for horses and other livestock, feeding horses, pasture management, weed control in pastures, and fencing and watering systems.

The expo site is located just east of Rosemount in Dakota County, a half-mile south of the County Road 42 and Akron Ave. intersection. This intersection is a half-mile west of the Dakota County Technical College or three miles west of Highway 52. The expo will include a trade show with commercial exhibits of forage-related production, handling and feeding equipment. Admission and parking are free, and there will be food concessions on site. For more information, contact the Minnesota Forage and Grassland Council at (651) 436-3930, e-mail mfgc@umn.edu or visit the website at www.umn.edu/mfgc.

Calendar of events, 2001

These events are sponsored by numerous organizations. More information is available on MISA's website: www.misa.umn.edu.

July 16. **Farm tour, Homeplace Organic Beef**, 5 p.m., Marvin and Laura Bihl, Clearwater, (320) 558-6392, lenk@lkdllink.net.

July 19. **Farm tour, Dan and Cara Miller farm**, Spring Valley, (507) 346-7875, miller@deskmedia.com.

July 25. **Tour, Greg Reynolds organic vegetable production**, 7.p.m., (763) 972-3295.

July 22-26. **Fourth Annual Minnesota Rural Summit**, Duluth, (507) 637-2010, mmclaugh@means.net.

Aug. 11. **Farm tours**, 9 a.m. Meadowbrook Organic Acres, then Gary Schmiege intensive rotational grazing, Howard Lake, (320) 543-3225.

Aug. 16-17. **Organic Field Day**, Southwest Research and Outreach Center, Lamberton, (507) 752-7372.

What we're about

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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.