

Sustainable Agriculture

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Wilcke is new coordinator for SARE's North Central Region

Bill Wilcke is the new regional coordinator for the North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCR SARE) program.

Wilcke has been the coordinator for sustainable agriculture professional development programs with the University of Minnesota Extension Service and a key member of this newsletter's editorial committee. As an Extension engineer, he works with crop drying and storage programs.

From May 2000 through January 2002, Wilcke served as the acting administrator for the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture. He was on the NCR SARE administrative council from 1996 to 2001. For the last two years, he was an NCR representative on the national Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN) steering committee.

Wilcke will be housed at the University of Minnesota. He will have a 50 percent appointment as regional coordinator for the SARE program through the University of Nebraska and retain a 50 percent appointment at the U of M. In addition to serving as the key staff person to the 22-member administrative council as they develop program goals and make funding decisions, the regional coordinator oversees and promotes NCR SARE to a broad audience. The coordinator provides leadership for the research and education program, supervises staff and manages grants and budgets.

Wilcke was born in Iowa and raised on a diversified crop and livestock farm in northwest Iowa. He attended Iowa State University in Ames and received his B.S., M.S. and PhD degrees in agricultural engineering. While finishing his degrees at Iowa State, he was involved in teaching, research and extension programs in grain drying and storage, and in alternative energy sources for agriculture. After graduation from Iowa State, he worked as an extension post-harvest technology specialist at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg for three and a half years.

The national SARE program began with the 1985 Farm Bill. Congress appropriated initial funds in 1988 for grants in sustainable agriculture research, education and demonstration. Funding goes to producers, scientists, educators and public and private institutions and organizations in three grant programs. The North Central region, managed by a diverse Administrative Council and directed by a regional coordinator, is one of four regions in the SARE Program. See www.sare.org for more information.

Wilcke is available at (612) 625-8205 or wilck001@umn.edu. Or, contact NCR SARE administrative council chair Pat Johnson at (605) 394-2236 or patj@ces.sdstate.edu.

'Locally grown' more important than 'organic' for consumers

Consumers choose locally grown food for product freshness and to help support local small farmers. And they're also more willing to pay a higher premium for "locally grown" than for "organic," according to a new University of Minnesota analysis by economist Luanne Lohr.

Lohr held the School of Agriculture Endowed Chair in Agricultural Systems at the U of M. Her analysis, "Growth and Change in U.S. Organic Food Markets," focused on states in the north central region. Details she used for the analysis are in a chapter she wrote for a U.S. Department of Agriculture report at www.ers.usda.gov/publications/wrs011. The chapter is titled "Factors Affecting International Demand and Trade in Organic Food Products."

Lohr says there's some evidence that consumers may seek more locally grown products due to concerns about food safety and agroterrorism threats. "People feel safer buying local food, especially meat and dairy products," she says.

Savings of diesel fuel with the reduced carbon dioxide emissions is another argument for local foods. According to an Iowa State University study, regional distribution of produce could save 273 miles per truck haul from Chicago to the states of Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Indiana, Illinois and Michigan. This would save almost nine million gallons of diesel fuel per year and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 195 million pounds per year. Details of the Iowa State study are available at www.leopold.iastate.edu/pubinfo/papersspeeches/ppp/intro.html on the web.

Sales of organic food products have increased rapidly in recent years, although Lohr says there's some evidence that growth is slowing. Her analysis also discusses the relationships of organic products to genetically modified organisms (GMOs), foreign standards, eco-labels and social goals.

GMOs are not permitted in certified organic products. However, Lohr says entry of "mainstream" farmers and food processors into the organic industry may add pressure to permit GMOs. "Field contamination by cross-pollination with GM varieties may undermine efforts to keep organics GM-free," she says.

"U.S. refusal to label and regulate GMOs in conventional agriculture is a barrier to organic trade with Europe and Japan," Lohr says. "Fear of contamination means loss of markets to countries that don't permit GMOs."

"In terms of foreign standards for organics, protectionism is likely to continue in many European Union (EU) countries," Lohr says. "Producers and manufacturers in the U.S. will face greater competition from foreign sources than the EU will."

The Endowed Chair in Agricultural Systems is administered by the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA), and Lohr's report is available on the MISA website at www.misa.umn.edu. Lohr was on leave from the University of Georgia when she did her study. She may be reached at (706) 542-0847, llohr@agecon.uga.edu.

Over \$1 million available in research, education grants in North Central Region

The North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCR SARE) program is accepting preproposals for its research and education grant program from researchers and educators in the 12 North Central Region states. The maximum funding limit is \$150,000 per project and maximum

project duration is three years. About \$1.1 million dollars will be available for research and education projects in the North Central Region. The pre-proposal deadline is Sept. 6, 2002.

In November, the NCR SARE Administrative Council will select 40 to 45 preproposals that they would like to have developed into full proposals. Full proposals will be due in January 2003 and funding for successful projects will be available in summer 2003.

Program applicants should consider attending one of the outcome funding workshops that will be held at various locations around the North Central Region this summer. Last year, workshop attendees had a higher funding success rate than grant applicants who didn't attend.

The call for preproposals and information about the outcome funding workshops can be found on the web by going to www.sare.org/ncrsare and clicking on "calls for proposals" and then under "research and education grant program" click on "call for preproposals." If you have trouble accessing the call for preproposals, contact the NCR SARE office in Lincoln at (402) 472-7081.

New fact sheet addresses pharmaceutical traits in grains, oilseeds

A new fact sheet from Purdue University titled "Concerns over Pharmaceutical Traits in Grains and Oilseeds" emphasizes how rapidly new-generation transgenic grains and oilseeds are approaching commercialization.

The federal government must intervene soon with threshold limits and stricter regulation and oversight, says Dirk Maier, an agricultural and biological engineer and author of the publication. Otherwise, "it will be just a matter of time before trace amounts of unapproved and non-food/feed-safe pharmaceutical and industrial proteins will be detected in our domestic and export food and feed markets," Maier says.

"This potential scenario will likely cause a far greater public outcry than did the StarLink discovery in taco shells," Maier says. What's needed, Maier says, is an identity-preservation (IP) system "based on defining, meeting and monitoring statistically-based threshold limits that are reasonable and practically achievable with respect to containment, purity and contamination."

No identity preservation system will ever be able to contain 100 percent of seeds, kernels, pollen grains and harvested kernels, Maier says. "The seed industry cannot achieve 100 percent pure IP during production, handling, cleaning and bagging. Instead, a contamination level of one percent is the strictest limit the industry states can be achieved reasonable and practically, with respect to seed purity."

You can access the article at www.agcom.purdue.edu/AgCom/Pubs/grain.htm. Scroll down to Fact Sheet 47.

Third National Farm Conference is Sept. 17-20 in Albuquerque

Early bird registration for the Third National Farm Conference in Albuquerque, N.M. closes Aug. 16. The conference is Sept. 17-20 at the Albuquerque Convention Center. See the conference website at www.cahe.nmsu.edu/smallfarm or call (505) 852-2668.

Calendar of events, 2002

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

Aug. 8. **Manure Spreader Calibration and Nutrient Management Planning**, Wabasha County, Jim Straskowski, (651) 565-4673 ext. 109.

Aug. 11. **High-Tech Root Cellar Demonstration for Organic Vegetables**, John Fisher-Merritt, Wrensall, (218) 384-3356.

Aug. 12-14. **Windy River Renewable Energy Sustainable Agriculture Fair- Photovoltaic Workshop (siting and installing small photovoltaic or PV electric systems)**, Long Prairie, (320) 594-2456 or converse@rea-alp.com.

Aug. 13. **Grapes as an Alternative Crop for the Family Farm**, Don Reding, Morgan, (507) 249-3462.

Aug. 13. **Organic Management Practices for Prairie Land Watersheds**, Madison, Minn., (320) 598-7321-ext. 3, or srf@mnmadison.fsc.usda.gov.

Aug. 14. **Agricultural Drainage Field Day**, Southwest Research and Outreach Center, Lamberton, (507) 752-7372 or swroc.coafes.umn.edu.

Aug. 16. **Self-Medicating Livestock with Herbs and Management Intensive Grazing**, Doug Gunnink, Gaylord, (507) 237-5162.

Aug. 17. **Windy River Renewable Energy Sustainable Agriculture Fair**, Lion's Park, Long Prairie, (320) 594-2456 or converse@rea-alp.com

Aug. 20. **Manure as a Valuable Resource/Methane Digester Demonstration**, Haubenschild Farms, Princeton, (651) 645-6159, x21, or cnelson@mnproject.org.

Aug. 21. **Digesters for Managing Animal Waste**, Holiday Inn, St. Cloud, (651) 645-6159, x21, or cnelson@mnproject.org.

Aug. 21. **Mechanical Tillage on Existing Pasture and Hay Land**, Robert Schelhaas, Edgerton, (507) 442-8493.

Aug. 23. **Alternative Swine Production & Pasture Broilers and Layers**, Colin and Carla Wilson, Dan and Lorna Wilson, Paullina Iowa, (612) 625-6224 or (877) 258-4647, marti067@tc.umn.edu.

Aug. 24. **Big Woods Dairy Demonstration & Open House**, Nerstrand, (507) 526-2388.

Aug. 24. **Land Stewardship Project 20-year Celebration**, "Keeping the Land and People Together, Good Counsel Hill, Mankato, (651) 653-0618, lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org.

Aug. 27. **Women Who Brew—Compost Teas for the Small Market Grower**, Pat Bailey (field day at Sandy Deitz farm), Altura, (507) 936-5225.

Aug. 29. **Soil Conservation on Canning Crop Fields**, Andy Hart, Elgin (507) 876-2256.

Sept. 12. **50 Years of Weed Observations**, Alternative Beef & Hog Production, Richard and Sharon Thompson, Boone, Iowa, (612) 625-6224 or (877) 258-4647, marti067@tc.umn.edu.

Sept. 17-20. **Third National Small Farm Conference**, Albuquerque, N.M., (505) 852-2668 or www.cahe.nmsu.edu/smallfarm.

What we're about

This newsletter is supported by the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA). It's also supported by 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). MISA is a partnership between the Sustainer's Coalition and the University of Minnesota College of Agricultural, Food, and Environmental Sciences (COAFES).

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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.