

Agricultural News

Volume 3, Issue 8

November/December 1991

New Extension Service planned in St. Petersburg (Leningrad)

Farm families clear land, build farmsteads, live in temporary housing and ponder how to get tractors and fuel.

Family members care greatly about the welfare of their land, water and animals: A woman working in a swine barn worries about a sow that's getting too thin from nursing pigs. She cares for that sow--she wants to succeed.

If you think that sounds like teachable moments for the Extension Service, you're right. In fact, a "new" Extension Service is being created to get information from research centers to small farmers.

In this case, the place is the Leningrad Region of Russia, and the time is early November, 1991.

Five delegation members of the Minnesota/Iowa Leadership Empowerment for Agricultural Development (M/I LEAD) program were there: Gerald Miller, Steve Jones, David Kettering, Stephen Lacina and Carol Molnau.

Purposes of the visit included exploring farmer-to-farmer exchanges between Minnesota-Iowa and St. Petersburg farmers; developing linkages for the Minnesota Agricultural Student Trainee (MAST) program; starting an information exchange program with St. Petersburg farmers; and establishing Minnesota contacts for possible grain trade to St. Petersburg.



Alexander S. Belyakov, chair (governor) of Peoples Deputies, Leningrad Region, confers with Gerald Miller (left). Interpreter Ludmilla Briskina is on the right.

A memorandum of agreement on these issues was signed by Gerald Miller, assistant director (agriculture) for the University of Minnesota's Extension Service, representing Minnesota; and Stephen Lacina, representing Iowa.

Lacina is an Iowa farmer and M/I LEAD delegate; Kettering is a vice president of Farm Credit Bank, St.

Paul; Molnau is a city council person in Chaska, Minn., and operates a Guernsey dairy farm with her husband, Steve.

Steve Jones, program director for international training with the Minnesota Extension Service, says the MAST program will host six student trainees from St. Petersburg in 1992.

Continued on page 2

This archival publication may not reflect current scientific knowledge or recommendations.
Current information available from University of Minnesota Extension: <http://www.extension.umn.edu>.

Agent Profile

Although heavy spring rains washed out some of his farm demonstration plots, Steele County Agricultural Agent **Tim Arlt's** demonstration plots in the Cluster 16 Environmental Agriculture program have attracted attention.

"University research demonstrated on local farms lets producers see and use that research on their own farms," says Rod Hamer, Rice County agricultural agent who coordinated youth environmental field days as part of the project.

Cluster 16 includes Freeborn, Mower, Steele and Rice counties.

Arlt had 12 farm demonstration plots in 1990 and was planning on adding extra farms in 1991. However, the heavy spring rains prevented some



plots from being planted. The demonstration plots included giving proper nitrogen credits for alfalfa and manure; offsetting chemical weed control costs with a combination of tillage and cultivation; and reducing corn rootworm insecticide rates.

He worked closely with soil scientists Mike Schmitt, from the St. Paul

Campus, and Gyles Randall from the Waseca Agricultural Experiment Station to help develop a soil nitrogen test for Southeastern Minnesota.

A University of Minnesota graduate, he's been a crops and soils agent at Owatonna since 1980. Before joining the Extension Service, he was a private consultant in North Dakota.

His activities haven't been limited to crops and soils work. In the 1983-84 farm crisis, he was one of several released time agents who were involved in farm mediation, helping farm families develop financial plans.

He's also done commodity marketing classes for farmers and has established a marketing group in Steele County.

—Jack Sperbeck

St. Petersburg Extension Service/Continued from page 1

Assistant Director Miller thinks there's a "good chance" that Minnesota extension agents and state extension faculty could work in St. Petersburg to consult with farmers and government officials as the "new" Extension Service is being formed.

"Chances of that depend largely on funding for travel. Once agents are in the St. Petersburg area, their housing, food and transportation will be provided by the host regions," he says.

"We talked to one farmer who wanted to design a dairy barn for 15 cows," Jones says. The typical private farm had 25 to 60 acres.

"The land was given to them by the government, and the longest any pri-

vate farmers had been on the land was one year. Many of them were starting from scratch, much like our ancestors did when they settled the land," Jones adds.

(The following is condensed from a draft of Assistant Director Gerald Miller's report to the Leningrad Regional Council)

Frequently we were asked the reasons for our interest in the Leningrad Region. We want to share those reasons with you.

First, we are motivated by humanitarian concerns. This is a chance for us to help people with special needs at this time in history. It makes us feel good to be able to help.

Members of our delegation are fortunate—we have good jobs, businesses and sufficient personal resources. But our greatest satisfaction comes from helping people who need and want help.

Second, we are concerned about the world food supply. In the world, 15 million people die annually from starvation or malnutrition (28 people per minute). Our two counties have great

natural resources for agricultural production to feed the world.

Together we can eliminate starvation and malnutrition from the world. And, we can produce the quantity and quality of food needed in an environmentally sound manner.

Third, we have opportunities for international trade. Future sales of feed grains to your country would support your livestock industry and help our balance of trade.

Fourth, we want to help our people to think globally, to become world citizens. World citizenship is essential for the well-being of future generations. We must learn to treat each other like people and take more responsible actions to sustain a quality world ecology, including natural resource conservation, air quality and water quality.

Finally, we don't want to just fix the current situation at any cost. We want to help in a way that preserves your values. We want to support the spirit of entrepreneurship and self-help we have observed. We want what is in your best long-term, future interests.

—Gerald Miller & Jack Sperbeck

Agricultural News is a publication of the Agriculture Program Area, produced by Educational Development System, Minnesota Extension Service. Ideas for stories and letters to the editor are encouraged. Contact Jack Sperbeck, 447 Coffey Hall, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN 55108. Tel. 612-625-1794.

Editor: Jack Sperbeck
Design: John Molstad
Desk Top Editor: Phyllis Petersen
Photo Editor: Don Breneman

Wood ashes make good liming material

Wood ashes make a good liming material. And in Northeastern Minnesota, commercial wood ash has been a "savior" for farmers unable to afford ag limestone, says a University of Minnesota soil scientist.

"In Northeastern Minnesota, wood ash is especially useful since ag lime costs are expensive due to transportation costs," says Carl Rosen, soil scientist with the University of Minnesota's Extension Service. Wood ash from paper companies is given to area farmers in Northeastern Minnesota—with hauling costs the only charge.

"Wood ash has very good soil liming activity. It's fast reacting and compares to agricultural lime," Rosen says. Most soils in Northeastern Minnesota are less than pH 6.5, and hence benefit from lime.

Other areas of Minnesota with acidic soils (less than 6.5 pH), will also benefit from lime or wood ash. However, in Southeastern Minnesota, it may be cheaper to use agricultural lime due to transportation costs of hauling the wood ash from paper companies in northern Minnesota.

"Alfalfa growers in Northeastern Minnesota can benefit from using wood ash," Rosen says. Before applying a liming material, test your soil for pH to determine lime needs. Some wood ashes are high in sodium, so be careful not to overapply, he concludes.

—Jack Sperbeck

March In-Service training scheduled

Keep those March 24-26, 1992 dates on your calendar for in-service, specialized (agriculture) training.

The training session is set per the original schedule, says Agriculture Program Leader Marilyn Grantham. We're sorry if this conflicts with your Florida vacation plans! See you in St. Paul.

Planning Quality Extension Programs

"Gleanings" from the 1991 National Adult Education Conference

During Annual Conference week this year I participated in the annual meeting of my primary professional development organization, the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education, in Montreal. This organization includes a Cooperative Extension Unit and the annual meeting generally has several sessions devoted to Extension issues, as well as an Extension Pre-Conference.

The Pre-Conference content, which was devoted this year to discussing the future of extension in the U. S. and Canada, as well as the topics presented in many of the general and concurrent sessions are of interest to Extension faculty. In this *Agricultural News* issue and subsequent issues, I'll summarize some of this content.

If you are interested in more detail on any of the topics discussed here please contact me. In most instances I have papers or other materials distributed by the conference presenters.

The presenter in one of the Adult Education Conference general sessions was Dr. Norman Henchey, a Professor of Administration and Policy Studies on the Faculty of Education at McGill University in Montreal. Dr. Henchey is an educational futurist and spoke on the topic of "Learning Challenges for Adults in the 21st Century."

Professor Henchey cited six major social trends which he believes are shaping all learning in North America. The **first** of these major social trends is the **new place of knowledge in society**.

In the information age, knowledge is a source of wealth and power. "Knowledge industries" have become an important part of the service sector of our economy. The transformation and dissemination of knowledge is increasingly complex and challenging because access to new information is essential for continued economic growth. Some of the challenges related to acquiring knowledge are what information to select and how to transform it in order to bridge intellectual needs with societal needs.

The **second** major trend cited was the **rapid development and deployment of communications technology**. The difficulty here is our tendency to focus mainly on the hardware and underestimate the value and importance of the content. The challenge is to rethink **what** we're teaching and learning and where, when, and **why**.

The **third** trend Dr. Henchey mentioned is **global economic competition**. He believes we are all "nations at risk" in the competition for intelligence and acquisition of new learning.

The **fourth** social trend is the **increasing pressure of environmental constraints vs. the free market**, or the "sustainability" of our ecological system. In his discussion of this trend, Professor Henchey noted that there is "no national sovereignty for either creating or solving ecological problems," they are global in nature and require global action.

"**Cultural pluralism**" was indicated as the **fifth** major trend—the difficulty of developing workable relationships among diverse peoples. Dr. Henchey commented that as soon as we get beyond cuisine and art, diversity tends to be seen as a **problem**, rather than as an opportunity.

The **sixth** and final trend Dr. Henchey mentioned is **finding meaning in a changing world**. Many of our traditional belief systems are being challenged by pervasive social change—our cultures, values, religions. On the one hand there is a rise in fundamentalism, on the other "New Age" beliefs. Dr. Henchey indicated that the role of education here is not to take sides, but to maintain a balance between polar opposites by providing a forum for debate.

The result of all of these trends is an increasingly precarious world situation, according to Dr. Henchey. In this situation, the challenge for all of us is and will be to maintain acceptable standards of living without further environmental decline and to continue to find meaning in our lives.

Following his comments on the major social trends, Dr. Henchey traced the changes

Continued on page 4



Campus Profile

"College was the best 13 years of my life," jokes **Bill Wilcke**, who earned three degrees at Iowa State University, then worked full-time as an extension agricultural engineer to complete the 13-year stint.

Wilcke went to Virginia to work for the Extension Service at VPI after leaving Iowa State. He's been with the Minnesota Extension Service since July, 1989.

At Minnesota, his specialty is post-harvest technology. Farmers are his primary audience, but he also works directly with ag businesses, such as grain elevators.

While at Iowa, his primary responsibilities were grain drying and storage, but he also did some work with agricultural energy sources. "Work on energy crops slowed down. About 10 years ago projections of rapidly rising fuel prices



were wrong. Without the price incentive, progress on alternative energy sources has been hindered," he says. Since coming to Minnesota, he's seen his share of unusual weather conditions—directly relating to his crop harvest and storage responsibilities. "It was dry in 1989, and this last year was unusual in all ways with a wet spring and late planting season, early frost and very early snow.

But for many farmers, the 1991 crop year turned out better than we'd ex-

pected. Problems weren't as severe on a statewide basis as we'd been concerned about earlier in the year.

Wilcke works with corn and soybeans, small grains, potatoes and some fruits and vegetables. The national extension issues he's been involved with include conservation of natural resources, food safety and quality, and ag profitability.

More efficient grain drying makes energy use more efficient. With food safety and quality, crops that are conditioned and handled properly after harvest make higher quality food products with less mold and mycotoxin problems.

"And farmers who handle crops efficiently and reduce losses improve profits," he adds.

—Jack Sperbeck

Planning Quality Extension Programs/Continued

that have occurred in education since the 1950s. He noted that the decade of the 90s will see yet another shift in emphasis, this time on the importance of goals and priorities in a time of scarce resources. The trend now is toward focusing on outcomes, rather than on process, with stress on performance and the assessment of performance.

Dr. Henchey also said that the formal (K-12 and higher) educational systems seem determined to continue to expand, a "relentless institutionalization of learning." In this regard, he commented that the educational system is the **only** social institution that keeps trying to retain clientele for longer and longer periods of time. Most other social services, such as welfare systems and prisons, at least have as their goal the rehabilitation of clientele, rather than custodial care.

The answer to bridging the social trends and to the future of education, Dr. Henchey believes is yet another "paradigm shift." Our existing assumptions are being challenged and we must learn to look at education in a global sense—to develop a "learning culture."

We will have to work together, adult educators with elementary, secondary, and higher educators and with broad citizen representation, to integrate learning focused on global social and economic change and societal needs and concerns. We also must break down the barriers between "formal" education and "informal" adult education programs, such as Extension.

Marilyn Grantham
Program Leader, Agriculture

Direct marketing materials coming

If you haven't already received camera-ready copy to promote the National Farmers' Direct Marketing Conference, you soon will.

Here's what Earl Tywater, Franklin, Tenn., had to say about the conference:

"Wouldn't miss it. Attending the last three national conferences has been an enjoyment. After 35 years with a business at the same location, you are always looking for new and intelligent ideas. I am looking forward to attending the (conference) and seeing so many friends I have made along the way. **Wouldn't miss it for the world!**"

Make plans to promote and attend the conference.