

OFFERING FOOD SAMPLES AT FARMERS' MARKETS ALLOWED UNDER NEW MINNESOTA LAW

The Minnesota Legislature passed a bill that defines farmers' markets and removes licensing requirements for offering food samples at farmers' markets, and Governor Mark Dayton signed the bill into law on April 11, 2014. The Minnesota Farmers' Market Association (MFMA) worked extensively on this bill along with Minnesota Department of Health and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture staff and many others. The new law affects several segments of state statute. The full text can be read here: https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bills/text.php?number=SF2060&version=3&session=ls88&session_year=2014&session_number=0&format=pdf

The "Farmers' Market Law" provisions:

- A "farmers' market" means an association of three or more persons who assemble at a defined location that is open to the public for the purpose of selling directly to the consumer the products of a farm or garden occupied and cultivated by the person selling the product.
- Farmers' market vendors offering food samples must comply with the food safety standards set forth in the Minnesota Department of Health's requirements for "Special Event Food Stands;" but are not required to purchase that Special Event Food Stand license.

- There is no limitation on days of operation for the offering of food samples by vendors at farmers' markets or community events.
- All food samples and food demonstrations allowed under this law must be prepared on-site at the farmers' market or community event.
- Utensils, cutting boards, bowls, etc. (collectively called "wares") must be clean. There are two options: 1) Clean and sanitize all wares off-site, and bring enough clean wares along with you that dirty wares are never re-used. 2) Bring three containers, clean and drinkable ("potable") water, detergent, and sanitizer along with you in order to wash, rinse, and sanitize wares at the market.
- Vendors are allowed to add off-farm ingredients to products of their farm in order to offer food samples. The main ingredient must be a product the vendor is selling at the market, but other food items like salt, vinegar, lemon juice, or spices may be added as minor ingredients.
- All food samples offered under this law must be offered for free, must be 3-ounces or less, and must be offered as single servings in disposable containers (such as plastic cups) or with disposable single-serve utensils (such as toothpicks).

- Vendors offering food samples must do so under a canopy or tent, wear disposables gloves, and have an approved gravity handwashing station. A fact sheet on how to build a simple, inexpensive handwashing station is available from the MFMA: <http://mfma.org/files/665.pdf>
- Wastewater must be collected in a container and disposed of in a wastewater treatment system. It may not be dumped on the ground or into a storm sewer.

It is also recommended that vendors have a written "Safe Food Sampling Plan" that they bring with them to markets where they offer food samples. A worksheet to help vendors write this plan is available from the MFMA: <http://mfma.org/pages/MFMAlibrary/>

MFMA is now offering training sessions and information to help vendors learn how to meet the provisions of the new law and succeed at food sampling. Check the MFMA website for links to materials and information about training sessions: <http://www.mfma.org>. Questions or requests for print versions of documents can be directed to MFMA at info@mfma.org, or call (320) 250-5087.

ORGANIC AGRICULTURE WEBSITE LAUNCHED

The Organic Initiative at the University of Minnesota announces the launch of the new Organic Food and Agriculture website: <http://www.organicag.umn.edu/>. The site features research, education, and outreach programs and projects at the U of MN.

The University of Minnesota Organic Initiative involves faculty from agronomy, horticulture, applied economics, entomology, animal science, veterinary medicine, and food science; and includes research on livestock, horticultural crops, field crops, economic analysis of organic cropping systems, and organic food processing. The University has invested in land and facilities for organic agriculture research. Certified organic acreage is maintained at the Southwest Research and Outreach Center at Lamberton; at the West

Central Research and Outreach Center at Morris; and on the St. Paul Campus. Land is in transition to organic status at the Rosemount Research and Outreach Center.

In addition to research projects, coursework and experiential learning opportunities are available through departments and centers at the University. One example is Cornercopia, a student-driven, certified organic farm supported by the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture. Cornercopia provides an opportunity for students to have the hands-on experience of growing 100+ varieties of fruits and vegetables, which are then marketed on the Twin Cities campus.

In their 2012 Organic Land Grant University Assessment, the Organic

Farming Research Foundation awarded the University of Minnesota a perfect score: one of only six such scores awarded out of 72 land grant institutions reviewed. This new website has been launched in an effort to keep the momentum going, foster collaborations among researchers and the organic agriculture community, and build the organic agriculture research capacity even more. The website is a collaborative effort of the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS) and University of Minnesota Extension, with website development by MISA.

Access the website here: <http://www.organicag.umn.edu/>

NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE (NASS) DATA COLLECTION & REPORTING PRACTICES

Minnesota farm families sold a staggering 20 billion dollars worth of agricultural commodities in 2013 and farming continues as a cornerstone industry of the state's economy. With an industry of that importance, the demand for information about crop and livestock production and the financial well being of farms and farm families is at an all time high. The USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is responsible for collecting and publishing that data.

NASS produces over 350 official USDA reports each year covering acreage, production, stocks, livestock inventory, prices, production inputs, expenses and income. Every five years, NASS also produces the Census of Agriculture, a nationwide data series covering all aspect of production agriculture including the demographics of farms and farmers at the county, state and national level. "All of that is possible through the help of farmers across Minnesota and the U.S.

who voluntarily take the time to supply the information. We are very thankful for their support." says Dan Lofthus, State Statistician, USDA NASS Minnesota Field Office.

NASS begins the process by randomly selecting a small sample of farm operators who produce the crop or livestock items of interest in each study. Each operator selected is mailed a pre-survey letter explaining the project and data collection period. Data are collected by mail, phone, on-line or in person, whichever method the farmer prefers. Farmer reported data is combined with all the other reports to calculate county, state and national totals. NASS is required by law to keep all reported information strictly confidential and the publication totals are also reviewed for confidentiality to ensure that no individual farm can be identified by reading the final report.

Each report is publicly scheduled on a particular date and time and all results are released to the public. That makes USDA NASS unique when compared to many other organizations and business that also collect data. All data users, whether you are a family farmer in Minnesota or the CEO of a corporation, have equal access to the NASS numbers. "This provides the market place a steady supply of timely, reliable and unbiased information that is needed by both buyers and sellers to arrive at a fair market price," says Lofthus.

The NASS release calendar and links to all reports can be found at www.nass.usda.gov.

NEW DOCUMENT DETAILS LICENSING & REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS FOR LOCAL FOOD

The Local Food Advisory Committee (LFAC) has released a document titled "Local Food Licensing and Regulatory Issues." It is available in PDF format on the LFAC web page: <http://www.misa.umn.edu/FarmFoodResources/LocalFood/LocalFoodAdvCmte/index.htm>

This document describes several of the Minnesota regulations that deal with the sale of local food. In particular, it lays out the different regulatory requirements if you sell the product of your own farm, or if you sell or distribute the products of any other farm. Selling the products of your

own farm is protected by the Constitution of the State of Minnesota, and no license is required for that activity. However, anyone who sells or distributes the products of another person's farm, or who sells products that include off-farm ingredients, may need a license for those activities. Read more detail about this in the document, which also includes links to the relevant Minnesota Statutes.

The Local Food Advisory Committee was established in January of 2013 and meets quarterly. It includes Minnesota Department of Agriculture and

Department of Health staff; University of Minnesota faculty, staff, and Extension educators; representatives of farmer organizations and community non-profit organizations; and representatives of the meat processing, grocery, and restaurant sectors of the food system.

If you have questions about the new document, LFAC, or any specific regulation pertaining to local food, contact: Wayne Martin, marti067@umn.edu; Jane Jewett, jewet006@umn.edu; Jan Joannides, jan@rtcinfo.org. You may also call the MISA office at 612-625-8235 or 800-909-6472.

NCRSARE ANNOUNCES FARMER/RANCHER AND YOUTH EDUCATOR GRANT AWARDEES

The North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (NCR-SARE) is pleased to announce the projects recommended for funding for the 2014 Farmer Rancher and Youth Educator competitive grant programs.

For the 2014 Farmer Rancher Grant Program, NCR-SARE awarded more than \$486,000 to more than 40 projects. The Youth Educator Grant Program supports educators who seek to provide programming on sustainable agriculture for youth. This year NCR-SARE funded 13 projects for a total of \$25,000 awarded.

The 2014 Minnesota projects are listed below:

Erik Gundacker of Scenic Valley Farm LLC in Rosemount, Minnesota; \$14,850 for "Management of the Spotted Wing Drosophila using High Tunnels."

Stephen Lunak of Cedar Creak Vineyard in Isanti, Minnesota; \$7,500 for "Open Source Solutions for Vineyard Health Management."

Taylor Morical of Morical Farms in Brandon, Minnesota; \$22,340 for "Cover Crop Network Costshare."

Jean Mueller of Wiscoy Valley Farm in Houston, Minnesota; \$19,800 for "Developing Profitable and Sustainable Fiber Markets in Southern Minnesota."

Troy Salzer of Carlton County Extension in Carlton, Minnesota; \$22,471 for "Adapting Cover Crops to Northern Climate Conventional Cropping Systems."

Read complete descriptions of these and other projects online here: <http://www.northcentralsare.org/Grants/Recent-Grant-Projects>

Learn more about NCR-SARE's grant programs here:

<http://www.northcentralsare.org/Grants/Our-Grant-Programs>
NCR-SARE's Administrative Council (AC) members decide which projects will receive SARE funds. The AC includes farmers and ranchers, Extension educators, university faculty and staff, and representatives of federal agencies, and nonprofit organizations.

For assistance submitting a grant application, please contact one of the Minnesota Co-Coordinators for SARE: Kate Seager, 612-625-8235, kseager@umn.edu; or Jill Sackett, 507-389-5541, sacke032@umn.edu.

Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture

411 Borlaug Hall
1991 Upper Buford Circle
St. Paul, MN 55108

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