

## Volume 23, Issue 2\_Summer 2015

### THE NEW COME & GET IT! MANUAL FOR ON-FARM FOOD SERVICE

*Come & Get It! What you need to know to serve food on your farm*

Lots of Minnesota and Wisconsin farmers are creating value-added products with ingredients that they grow themselves. Farmer-made jams, jellies, pickles, salsa, sauerkraut, and other products have graced farmers' market tables for years and the volume and variety are only increasing. But ... what about taking value-added agriculture a step further? Some farmers are inviting the public out to their farms for meals created using their own farm produce. DreamAcres near Wykoff, MN (<http://www.dreamacresfarm.org/pizza.html>) and Stoney Acres Farm near Athens, WI (<http://stoneyacresfarm.net/>) both serve wood-fired pizza on Friday nights, May through October. The Red Barn Farm in Northfield, MN (<http://www.redbarnfarmofnorthfield.com/>) is another popular pizza destination.

Pizza isn't the only option—lots of CSA farms offer a harvest celebration meal to their customers. There are businesses and organizations that coordinate on-farm meals--the farmer just provides the space and show ups to enjoy the party. Dinner on the Farm is a Minnesota-based example ([www.dinneronthefarm.org](http://www.dinneronthefarm.org)). On-farm food and entertainment can combine, too. In Minnesota this summer, the "Mixed Precipitation" theater troupe has a picnic operetta tour schedule that includes three farms (<http://mixedprecipitation.org/the-2015-picnic-operetta-tour/>).

Serving food on the farm is a value-added and agritourism opportunity for farmers, but it does come with some risks and need for infrastructure investment; and with food service regulations that are unfamiliar to many farmers. The new Come & Get It! Manual is a great resource for those just exploring the idea of on-farm food service, as well as for those who might

be a little farther along in their planning. The manual covers business planning, time management, needed skills, financing, food safety, licensing, liability, insurance, employment law, and business structure considerations. Find the manual and links to related materials on the MISA website: [www.misa.umn.edu/Publications/ComeandGetIt](http://www.misa.umn.edu/Publications/ComeandGetIt)

The Come & Get It! Manual was a collaborative effort of the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture, Renewing the Countryside, Farm Commons, and Inn Serendipity with support from the MISA Information Exchange and USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program.

### CONTINUOUS LIVING COVER MANUAL FROM GREEN LANDS BLUE WATERS

Continuous Living Cover farming systems keep roots in the ground and plant cover on the soil all year round, with goals of improving soil health, water quality, and farm profitability and resilience. The Green Lands Blue Waters program promotes and educates about five strategies to achieve continuous living

cover: agroforestry, biomass, cover crops, perennial forage and grazing, and perennial grains. The newly-revised Continuous Living Cover manual provides information about these strategies, how they can work together on a farm or a larger landscape, and profiles of 10 farmers who are using combinations of these strategies on

their farms. The manual was produced through a North Central Region SARE Professional Development Program (PDP) grant. [www.greenlandsbluwaters.net/resources2/clc-manual](http://www.greenlandsbluwaters.net/resources2/clc-manual)

### MAKING THE TRANSITION TO ORGANIC: TEN FARM PROFILES

Transitioning to organic production can be exciting and at the same time a bit daunting. Farmers considering transition often cite concerns about weed management, input supplies, labor requirements, yields, and cash flow.

This new publication discusses how recently certified and transitioning farmers

have addressed production, labor, and financial concerns. During a series of interviews, authors Gigi DiGiacomo and Robert P. King asked field crop, livestock, and vegetable farmers about transition strategies, challenges encountered, and outcomes deemed most satisfying.

Making the Transition to Organic: Ten Farm Profiles is available electronically at <http://eorganic.info/toolsfortransition/reports>. It was developed as part of the Tools for Transition project funded through a grant from the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative of USDA's National Institute for Food and Agriculture.

## NORTH CENTRAL REGION SARE HAS FOUR OPEN GRANT PROGRAMS

[www.northcentralsare.org](http://www.northcentralsare.org)

### **Farmer-Rancher Grants: apply by December 3, 2015**

Farmer Rancher grants have funded on-farm research, demonstration, and education projects on a variety of topics including pest/disease management, crop and livestock production, education/outreach, networking, quality of life issues, marketing, soil quality, energy, and more. Farmer Rancher grants are offered as individual (\$7,500 maximum), team of two (\$15,000 maximum), or group (\$22,500 maximum) grants for ideas initiated by farmers and ranchers. Projects may last up to 24 months, and about 50 projects are funded each year.

### **Youth Educator Grants: apply by November 12, 2015**

The North Central Region SARE (NCR-SARE) recognizes that youth programs are a way to introduce new and exciting

farming and ranching options to youth, parents, and community members. The program supports opportunities for youth educators to research, demonstrate, and learn more about sustainable agriculture. There is a \$2,000 maximum award.

### **Partnership Grants: apply by October 29, 2015**

The Partnership Grant program is intended to foster cooperation between agriculture professionals and small groups of farmers and ranchers to catalyze on-farm research, demonstration, and education activities related to sustainable agriculture.

Partnership Grants are funded for up to 24 months with a maximum award of \$30,000. An Agricultural Professional is the grant applicant and the principal investigator, and typically three or more farmers or ranchers are expected to be substantially involved in the project.

### **Research and Education Grants: apply by October 22, 2015**

Research and Education projects explore and promote environmentally sound, profitable, and socially responsible food and/or fiber systems. Projects include a strong outreach component and significant farmer/rancher or other end user involvement from inception of the idea through implementation of the project. Many projects are interdisciplinary and/or multi-institutional, involving a broad range of agricultural interests such as biocontrol, crop production, education/extension, networking, livestock production, marketing, quality of life, soil quality, value-added marketing, waste management, water quality, and weed control. Projects may last up to 36 months with a maximum award of \$200,000.

## THREE FALL READS TO GET YOU THINKING, AND PERHAPS COOKING

*Homemade for Sale*, by Lisa Kivirist and John D. Ivanko, is a guide to conceiving and launching your own home-based food start-up. Packed with profiles of successful cottage food entrepreneurs, this comprehensive and accessible resource covers everything you need to get cooking for your customers, creating items that by their very nature are specialized and unique. Topics covered include: Product development and testing; Marketing and developing your niche; Structuring your business and planning for the future; Managing liability, risk, and government regulations. For more information go to <https://www.newsociety.com/blog>

*Minnesota's Bounty* is a user's guide to shopping and cooking from your local farmers market, and it applies a practical, easy approach to creating a truly seasonal kitchen. Organized alphabetically by type of food, it encourages readers to scrap predetermined recipes and forget the long lists. Instead, shop with an eye for what looks best and what you are hungry for. With more than twenty-five years of firsthand experience and a deep knowledge of Minnesota farmers markets, seasoned cook and food writer Beth Dooley has suggestions and recipes that inspire simple, modern, and healthy meals following an ingredients-first philosophy,

helping readers to be more confident and spontaneous both at the market and in the kitchen. <http://www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/books/minnesotas-bounty>

*Lentil Underground: Renegade Farmers and the Future of Food in America*, by Liz Carlisle, is an account of how a diverse group of Montana farmers came to realize that the health of their soil, the health of those who eat the foods they raise, and the health of their own pocketbooks depend on radically altering almost everything they know about working the land. <http://lentilunderground.com/>

## MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE HAS FOUR OPEN GRANT PROGRAMS AVAILABLE FOR FARM AND LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

[www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/grants](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/grants)

### Minnesota Value Added Grant Program: apply by October 6, 2015

Individuals (farmers) or businesses, agricultural cooperatives, and local government entities are eligible to apply for this grant. Funds are to be used for equipment purchases or physical improvements and are intended to:

- Start, expand, or update livestock product processing businesses;
- Purchase equipment to start, upgrade, or modernize value-added businesses;
- Increase the use and processing of Minnesota agricultural products (required for all grants);
- Increase on-farm food safety (ex. Implementing a food safety plan); and
- Increase farmers' processing and aggregating capacity to sell to schools, hospitals, or other institutions.

Priority is given to applications that have a meat processing, Farm to School, or other institution component, or are addressing a Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) or similar type of food safety plan. Maximum grant award is \$150,000; minimum grant award is \$1,000 and grant funds can pay up to 25% of equipment purchase or physical improvement projects.

More information and application materials:

[www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/grants/valueaddedgrant.aspx](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/grants/valueaddedgrant.aspx)

### Livestock Investment Grant: apply by December 18, 2015

Qualifying Minnesota livestock producers can apply to be reimbursed ten percent of the first \$500,000 of investment, with a minimum investment of \$4,000. Qualifying expenditures include the purchase, construction, or improvement of buildings or facilities for the production of livestock; the purchase of fencing; feeding and waste management equipment. Producers who suffered a loss due to a natural disaster or unintended consequence may also apply. The grant will not pay for livestock or land purchases or for the cost of debt refinancing.

More information and application materials:

[www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/grants/livestockinvestment.aspx](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/grants/livestockinvestment.aspx)

### Farm to School Grant: apply by November 4, 2015

This grant supports Minnesota school districts and child care providers in the preparation and serving of Minnesota agricultural products. Public or private schools or school districts; child care providers; economic development organizations, non-profit organizations and educational service cooperatives are all eligible to apply. Grants can be used to:

- Create a feasibility plan that identifies specific equipment, tools, training or policies needed by school districts

and child care providers (grant covers 75% of project cost up to \$30,000 maximum)

- Purchase equipment to allow schools and child care providers to purchase, prepare and serve more Minnesota grown and raised food (grant covers 50% of project cost up to \$50,000 maximum)

More information and application materials:

[www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/grants/mnfarmtoschool.aspx](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/grants/mnfarmtoschool.aspx)

### Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant: apply by December 15, 2015

This 25-year old program provides small grants to test sustainable agriculture practices and systems that could conserve natural resources, enhance profitability, and improve life on the farm. Applications from farmers receive priority, but the program also funds Minnesota nonprofit and educational organizations as long as Minnesota farmers are meaningfully involved in the project. Funds should be used for on-farm research and demonstrations. Projects can last for up to three years, with maximum award of \$25,000.

More information and application materials:

[www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/grants/demogrant.aspx](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/grants/demogrant.aspx)

## MINNESOTA ORGANIC CERTIFICATION COST-SHARE

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is accepting applications for the Minnesota Organic Cost Share Program from now until October 31, 2015. Funds for the cost share program come from a cooperative agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Operations that received certification (or had ongoing certification) between

October 1, 2014 and September 30, 2015 are eligible for reimbursement of up to 75 percent of certification-related expenses, with a maximum of \$750 per category (crop, livestock, processing/handling, wild harvest).

To qualify, applicants must be certified organic by a USDA-accredited certifying

agency. The MDA has already mailed application packets to all certified organic operations in the state. Any certified organic farmer or processor who did not receive a packet can obtain all the program details and necessary materials on the MDA's web site [www.mda.state.mn.us/organic](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/organic) or by calling 651-201-6012.

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