

Food policy and sustainable agriculture in the news

In his October 12th New York Times letter to the "Farmer in Chief", Michael Pollan lets the president-elect know that "food is about to demand your attention." He goes on to state that "...you will need not simply to address food prices but to make the reform of the entire food system one of the highest priorities of your administration: unless you do, you will not be able to make significant progress on the health care crisis, energy independence or climate change." If you haven't yet read Michael Pollan's 13-page "Farmer in Chief" letter, you can find it at: [www.nytimes.com/2008/10/12/magazine/12policy-t.html?](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/12/magazine/12policy-t.html?scp=1&sq=Farmer%20in%20Chief&st=cse)

[a](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/12/magazine/12policy-t.html?scp=1&sq=Farmer%20in%20Chief&st=cse) It's received a lot of attention, including being mentioned by President-elect Barack Obama in an interview with Joe Klein of Time Magazine. Complete transcript of Obama's interview with Joe Klein: <http://swampland.blogs.time.com/2008/10/23/>

Conferences, conferences, conferences!

As you get ready for winter, we expect you're pulling out your calendars and making plans to attend the winter conferences available to Minnesotans! Our conferences always bring in great speakers from various parts of the country, balanced with plenty of time to tap local expertise and share information with other farmers. This year is no exception! We highlight a few of the major conferences below, but check out the MISA calendar (www.misa.umn.edu) for more events and workshops.

The Minnesota Organic Conference & Trade Show, January 16-17, St. Cloud

This conference provides great information about organic agriculture to excite experienced organic producers as well as people new to this farming system. Eliot Coleman, a nationally renowned market gardener and organic farmer from Maine will deliver one keynote address, while Fred

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Will Allen of Growing Power receives MacArthur Fellow "Genius" grant

A little closer to home—congratulations to Will Allen, urban farmer and the founder of "Growing Power" in Milwaukee (www.growingpower.org), and the "Growing Food and Justice for All Initiative", who was notified in late September that he is one of 25 MacArthur Fellows, or "genius grant" recipients for 2008. Will is only the second farmer to be named a Fellow. Will uses a holistic approach to grow food on less than two acres of land in north Milwaukee, and to promote novel food distribution channels. Growing Power uses low-cost production methods—including use of raised beds, aquaculture, vermiculture, and heating greenhouses through composting—to grow food for the community and for area restaurants.

Will and staff from Growing Power have

visited the Twin Cities several times in the past year, and are working with several Twin Cities area urban farming groups, including the Women's Environmental Institute, Dream of Wild Health, and the Minnesota Food Association. A group of urban agriculture advocates have been meeting to explore promoting Growing Power-type neighborhood food systems in the Twin Cities.

And even closer to home:

Congratulations to our own MISA student intern, Megan Hines, who was crowned the 2008 University of Minnesota Homecoming Queen! Megan is a junior majoring in Environmental Sciences - Policy and Management with a minor in Sustainability Studies on the Twin Cities campus. Megan also volunteers with Renewing the Countryside, www.renewingthecountryside.org

Kirschenmann, organic farmer and longtime leader in national and international sustainable agriculture will deliver the second keynote. There will be more than 30 breakout sessions on organic production of crops, dairy, livestock, fruits and vegetables, marketing, and many more topics. For more information, go to: www.mda.state.mn.us/food/organic/conference.htm

Eliot Coleman will lead a season extension workshop prior to the conference: "Expand your zone - Extend your season," Thursday, January 15, 1:00 to 5:30 in St. Cloud. The workshop will cover suitable crops, soils and fertility management, tunnels and tunnel construction, timing of plantings, yearly scheduling, and much more. There will be plenty of time for discussion and questions. The \$50 registration fee for this one-day course includes the workshop, afternoon break, and a copy of Eliot Coleman's book,

"Winter Harvest Manual". Seating is limited, and preregistration is required by January 7, 2009. Please contact Mary Hanks at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture for more information: 651-201-6277 or mary.hanks@state.mn.us

Midwest Value Added Conference, January 22-23, 2009, Rochester

Farm and Home Added Value: Profiting from Renewable Energy and Regional Food.

The conference brings together farmers and ag folks to discuss topics like farm business management, marketing your products and on-farm bio energy options. Please join the round table discussions, break out sessions and general session speaker presentations. The keynote speaker will be Kate Clancy, one of the nation's leading authorities on food systems. Kate has expertise in

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sustainable agriculture, food policy, food systems planning, and organic food. For more information, go to: www.rivercountryrcd.org/valad.html or call River Country RC&D 715-834-9672.

Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota Conference, February 21, Northfield

Mark your calendars for the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota's 18th Annual Conference on Saturday, Feb. 21, 2009. The event is being held in Buntrock Commons on the campus of St. Olaf

College, Northfield, MN. Joel Salatin, grass-farmer, author and lecturer, will be the keynote speaker and will close the event with his address, "Everything I Want to Do Is Illegal," followed by a question and answer session and reception. The SFA Annual Conference registration opens November 15, 2008. Visit www.sfa-mn.org for conference details, or contact Anne with SFA at communications@sfa-mn.org, 320-226-6318.

MOSES Organic Farming Conference, February 26-28, 2009, La Crosse, Wisconsin. Celebrating 20 YEARS of sharing knowledge, finding solutions, and moving

the organic movement forward together. Learn from a community of over 2,000 farmers, educators, and advocates. Share best practices, enjoy incredible food, choose from over 60 informative and dynamic workshops and experience 130+ booths in our exhibit hall!

Keynote addresses will be given by Vandana Shiva, "Agriculture for Life: Beyond Industrial Farming & Globalised Agriculture" and Alan Greene, "Why Farmers Are My Heroes." For more information, go to: www.mosesorganic.org or call 715-772-3153.

Deadlines approaching for farmer-rancher grant applications!

Don't forget that those deadlines are coming up for grants to support on-farm innovative research and demonstration projects!

The North Central Region-Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCR-SARE) farmer-rancher grants are due December 1, 2008. Application materials can be found at: www.sare.org/nrcsare/

[prod.htm](http://www.misa.umn.edu/prod.htm). Additional support materials, including a Spanish-language presentation about the SARE farmer-rancher grants, can be found at: http://www.misa.umn.edu/Application_Information2.html. For more information about the grants, contact Beth Nelson, Minnesota State SARE Coordinator, 612-625-8217 or schre002@umn.edu.

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture Sustainable Agriculture grants are due January 16, 2009. For information and a 2009 application packet, go to: www.mda.state.mn.us/about/divisions/esap.htm. You can also contact Jeanne Ciborowski, Grant Program Coordinator, Energy & Sustainable Agriculture Program, Jeanne.ciborowski@state.mn.us, 651-201-6217.

Wholesale Success: A Farmer's Guide to Selling, Post Harvest Handling, and Packing Produce

Now that the busy harvest season is over for many, you might actually have time to read through some of the great new materials and information resources that have been developed in the past year! "Wholesale Success" is a 174-page manual produced by FamilyFarmed.org staff and 9 authors, as well as a 27-member steering committee consisting of leading farmers, retailers, distributors, academics, and NGO leaders. The goal of "Wholesale Success" is to build

the capacity of Midwest farmers to meet the burgeoning demand for local food. It includes comprehensive sections on issues such as Building Relationships with Buyers, Food Safety, and Calculating Return in Investment. It also includes 63 crop profiles that give specific harvesting, cooling, storage, and packing information on most of the fruits and vegetables grown in the Midwest. The manual is available from the Michael Fields Agricultural Institute for

\$80.00 plus s&h. You can view the Table of Contents and Introduction, and find ordering information at: www.michaelfieldsagainst.org/news/newsrelease_postharvest_handling_resources.html. A copy is also available in the MISA office (413 Hayes Hall, St. Paul campus) if you'd like to page through it!

High tunnel workshop

The first frost may have ended your growing season this year, but there are ways to be picking tomatoes in October, even in Minnesota! High tunnels are an efficient way to extend the growing season by as much as six weeks in the spring and six weeks or longer in the fall in Minnesota. Though introduced in Minnesota just a few short years ago, high tunnels are now being used from the southern Minnesota border to International Falls in the north.

The 2008 Minnesota High Tunnel/Season Extension Conference, December 4-5 in Alexandria, will highlight opportunities for season extension in our region. Details and registration forms are also available on line at www.extension.umn.edu/Vege&Fruit/. Invited speakers include Ted Carey from Kansas State University, who will present research on salad greens and flowers and Kathy Demcheck from Penn State, who will discuss research with brambles and pest management in high tunnels. University of

Minnesota researchers will address topics ranging from interplanting and unique crops in high tunnels to economics of high tunnel production and soil fertility in high tunnels.

An "Introduction to High Tunnels" session will precede the main conference on December 4 from 9-12. For more information contact the University of Minnesota Extension Crookston Center at 888-241-0781.

USDA releases proposed organic pasture rule

The USDA has released a proposed rule to clarify access to pasture requirements for organic livestock. Access to pasture for organic ruminant animals (i.e. cows, sheep and goats) has been a requirement of the USDA organic regulation since its inception, but ambiguous wording of the definition has led to complaints that some

producers were not following the intent of the rule. In response to the organic community's request for a strict standard to protect the integrity of organic, the USDA's proposed rule attempts to clarify the standard by requiring that animals raised under organic standards have access to natural pastures. The proposed rule is open

for public comment, and comments are due by December 23, 2008. For more information on how to view the proposed rule and submit comments, see the MISA website: www.misa.umn.edu/Access_to_Pasture_Rule.html

Tidbits and other news you can use:

"Planning an Event—Consider Serving Local Food"

You can support local farmers by serving locally grown food at your workshops, conferences, and special events. Extension educators and Wisconsin chefs teamed up to share their experiences—ranging from how to successfully source and serve local food for snacks at short meetings, to serving three meals a day during major winter and summer conferences. View or download the 10-page publication at: <http://learningstore.uwex.edu/pdf/A3873.pdf>

Follow up to September SAN's article on Bovine TB in Minnesota

Three years after detecting bovine tuberculosis (TB) in northwest Minnesota, the United States Department of Agriculture has approved Minnesota's Split State Status effective Oct. 10, 2008. For the latest information on TB regulations, including research-based resources from University of Minnesota Extension and other state agencies working cooperatively to help eradicate the disease, visit the state's one-stop website, www.mntbfree.com; or call the toll free hotline: 877-668-2373

Minnesota landowners can receive carbon credits for conservation practices

A new two-page fact sheet from U of MN Extension and CINRAM (Center for Integrated Natural Resources and Agricultural Management) details who is eligible and how to go about it claiming carbon credits! Download "How to Utilize Carbon Payments" at: www.extension.umn.edu/Environment/00014.pdf. For more

information, contact: Dean Current, St. Paul, curre002@umn.edu; Diomy Zamora, Brainerd, zamor015@umn.edu; Gary Wyatt, Mankato, wyatt@umn.edu.

Best management practices for nitrogen application

U of MN Extension has updated its publication, "Best management practices for nitrogen use in Minnesota." As noted in the publication, "There can be no 'one size fits all' approach. The BMPs are different [in different parts of the state] because soils and factors of soil formation are different. Recognition of these differences will result in more efficient management of fertilizer N, and maximum profit." To view or download the document, go to: www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/cropsystems/DC8560.pdf or order copies by calling 800-876-8636.

CSP Fact Sheet released from LSP

The Land Stewardship Project has just released its ninth fact sheet on the Conservation Stewardship Program. "CSP: The New & Improved Conservation Stewardship Program"

(www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/CSP09.pdf) is a 2-page fact sheet that details changes and highlights of CSP under the 2008 Farm Bill. Significant changes to the program are that enrollment is now continuous, on a whole-farm basis, and open to any farmers nationwide. The fact sheet also describes the process USDA is expected to follow in releasing the interim final rule on the revised CSP.

CIAS Releases Grazing Reports

The Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems (CIAS) recently published two grazing-related reports. "How does managed grazing affect Wisconsin's environment"

(www.cias.wisc.edu/crops-and-livestock/how-does-managed-grazing-affect-wisconsins-environment/) covers what scientific studies have shown about the effects of managed grazing on the environment. This report presents results from papers which are the most relevant to managed grazing systems in Wisconsin and similar regions. "Forage

Fescues in the Northern USA" (www.cias.wisc.edu/crops-and-livestock/forage-fescues-in-the-northern-usa/) discusses the background and latest research on meadow fescue, tall fescue and festulolium. Special emphasis is on productivity and performance in the northern USA.

CSAs in the Workplace

A new resource, "Community Supported Agriculture for the Workplace: A Guide for Developing Workplace Community Supported Agriculture Distributions," has been released from CISA (Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture.) The 59-page manual shares key lessons learned from CISA's Workplace CSA program in Western Massachusetts, and is designed to help other non-profits, farmers, and workplaces replicate the project. View the pdf: www.buylocalfood.com/WorkplaceManual2008.pdf or contact Claire Morenon for a print copy, 413-665-7100, ext 16.

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