

## Minnesota Guide to Organic Certification

Organic agriculture is growing by leaps and bounds in Minnesota, and many farmers are asking what exactly they need to do to get organic certification. The Minnesota Guide to Organic Certification, a 52-page guide by Jim Riddle and Lisa Gulbranson, was recently jointly released by the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA), the Organic Ecology Program at the University of Minnesota, and University of Minnesota Extension. The Guide introduces farmers and those who work with farmers to the process of organic certification. Download the Guide from [www.misa.umn.edu](http://www.misa.umn.edu) or [www.organicecology.umn.edu](http://www.organicecology.umn.edu). For a print copy, contact MISA at 612-625-8235 or

800-909-6472.

The Guide explains the organic certification process, contains tips on how to choose a certification agency, how to set up a compliant recordkeeping system, and how to complete an organic certification application. It also explains what happens during an organic inspection and how certification decisions are made.

Requirements of the certification of organic crop, livestock, and processing operations are presented in clear and understandable language. The Guide contains a handy summary of the USDA Organic Standards, as well as sample recordkeeping forms and lists of resource groups and certification agencies operating in Minnesota.

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## Minars named 2007 MOSES Farmers of the Year

The Dave and Florence Minar Family of Cedar Summit Farm and Creamery in New Prague, MN, were named MOSES Farmer of the Year at the Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference in La Crosse, Wisc. in February. The Minars operate a 170-cow organic dairy farm on 200 owned and 270 rented acres. At their on-site creamery, they process organic milk into non-homogenized

milk, heavy cream and ice cream. Cedar Summit Farm and Creamery markets through their on-farm retail store, delivers to over 80 food stores in the Twin Cities area, restaurants and some local stores in the New Prague area. All five of the Minars' children as well as their spouses have roles in the operation. Dave and Florence are active in their local community, serving

with the Scott County Fair Board, Land Stewardship Project, Sustainable Farming Association and Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture. They host numerous farm tours, including Minneapolis inner city schools and senior citizen bus tours. [www.cedarsummit.com](http://www.cedarsummit.com)

## George Yokiel and Greg Reynolds honored by the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota

The Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota's (SFA of MN) Distinguished Service Award was given to Greg Reynolds at the SFA of MN's 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in February. This award is for a farmer or non-farmer who has shown a high level of dedication, commitment, service and perseverance in supporting sustainable farming in Minnesota. Greg owns and operated Riverbend Farm, a diversified organic vegetable farm, near Delano, Minn. He sells his vegetables to restaurants and co-ops through direct wholesale. Greg is also the chapter coordinator for the Crow River

Chapter of the SFA of MN, and has served on the MISA Board.

The Sustainable Farmer Emeritus Award was given posthumously to George Yokiel, and accepted by his wife, Leona, and son, Gary. This award is given to a farmer or farm family who have dedicated many years of their life to the advancement of sustainable farming in Minnesota. George and his family farmed in south central Minnesota, near Wells. It was a diversified farm with a dairy herd, pigs, chickens, row crops and small grains. In 1991, the farm was certified as organic. In 1998, they sold

the dairy herd and focused on beef cattle and replacement heifers. George was a leader in the organic community, always trying new things on his farm. He was always willing to share what he had learned and mentor other farmers. Gary now operates the farm and follows his father's vision.

## ***The Minnesota Department of Agriculture releases organic report and survey***

The amount of Minnesota farmland dedicated to organic production increased more than 50 percent since 2000, according to a new MDA report on the state's organic farming sector. The MDA report also shows Minnesota leads the nation in organic corn and soybean production, and remains in the top 10 for organic production of other grains, dairy and beef cattle.

According to the report, Minnesota had more than 525 certified organic farms in 2006. Certified organic acreage grew 57 percent from 2000 to 2005, to slightly more than 129,000 acres. The report provides background on the organic sector, supplies

up-to-date information on the economic and environmental effects of organic agriculture, presents statistics on the growth of organic crops and livestock in the state, describes government programs and University research related to organic production, and contains recommendations to remove barriers to expansion of organic agriculture, processing and marketing. The 47-page report, "2006: The Status of Organic Agriculture in Minnesota" can be downloaded from: [www.mda.state.mn.us/esap/organic/organicrpt2006.pdf](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/esap/organic/organicrpt2006.pdf)

The report uses results from a 2004 survey of Minnesota organic producers. MDA is

currently conducting a new survey of organic growers in the state. The anonymous survey asks questions about farmers' experiences, outlook, and challenges. This year's survey contains a special marketing focus, undertaken with assistance from the University of Minnesota's School of Agriculture Endowed Chair Program. Surveys were mailed in mid-February. Organic growers are not required to register with the state, so if you are an organic grower and haven't received a copy of the survey, please call the MDA at 651-201-6012.

## ***Up for Discussion***

Folks in northwestern Minnesota just wound up a lively discussion series about the "new agrarianism." Held at the public libraries in Fosston and Ada, interested citizens joined in discussions led by Gary Holthaus, the Director of the Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society (NPSAS) and a current holder of the University of Minnesota's School of Agriculture Endowed Chair for Agricultural Systems. Readings included: "A Banquet of Consequences," an essay in *The Party's Over: Oil, War, and the Fate of Industrial Societies* by Richard Heinberg; "Agriculture," a section from *Home Ground: Essays on Ecology* by Stan Rowe; "The WTO, NAFTA, CAFTA, and the FTAA," a chapter from a new book by Holthaus titled, *From the Farm to the Table:*

*What All Americans Need to Know about Agriculture*; a chapter from *Sustaining the Common Good*, by John B. Cobb Jr., and the executive summary of a study of local food systems by Ken Meter, *Finding Food in Farm Country: Northwest Minnesota*.

According to Holthaus "These documents are all related to our concerns about agriculture, food, the economy, and the environment. They raise important questions about what is often called, 'The New Agrarianism.' and though they are from widely different perspectives, they all have something to teach us." Linda Kingery, Director of the UM Northwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership (RSDP) said, "Our purpose is to contribute to a growing conversation

about the role of agriculture in our economy, its impact on our environment, and our sense of community." The discussions were made possible with funding and support from the Ada and Fosston Public Libraries, the Northwest RSDP, NPSAS and the University Of Minnesota School Of Agriculture Endowed Chair in Agricultural Systems.

As a part of his Endowed Chair work, Gary is planning an additional series of discussions to be held in the Twin Cities metro area. For more information about this discussion series, please contact Gary Holthaus 701-883-4304 or [ghnpsas@drtel.net](mailto:ghnpsas@drtel.net).

## ***New publication about Rural Living available***

The "Guide to Rural Living: Information for Rural Property Owners in East Central Minnesota," a 106-page publication for small acreage owners is available online or to purchase as a cd. This guide is divided into four sections: *Rural Living*, *Natural Resources*, *Resource Management and Protection*, and *Small Acreage Farming*, covering many of the aspects of living in a rural environment. Under *Rural Living*, read about land issues and zoning, rural fire safety, propane safety, recycling, composting, your septic system and many other topics. The *Natural Resources* section

has information on woodlands, wetlands, wildlife, rain gardens, native plants and more. In *Resource Management*, the reader will find information on surface and ground water quality including your well, air quality and more. Look in the *Small Acreage Farming* section for help in raising livestock such as beef or sheep, understanding soils, managing manure, establishing a pasture and much more. A *Resource Directory* at the end of the publication can point you toward more information. The "Guide to Rural Living" was a collaborative project with University

of Minnesota Extension, NRCS, SWCD, RC&D and other private and state sponsoring agencies. The cd version is available for \$5.00 or view the full text online at: [www.extension.umn.edu/ruralliving/index.html](http://www.extension.umn.edu/ruralliving/index.html) Contact the Onanegozie RC&D at 320-679-4604 or [Jan.Anderson@mn.nacdn.net](mailto:Jan.Anderson@mn.nacdn.net) to order the cd.

## ***Other resources that you might peruse as you contemplate the melting snow***

### *The New Agriculture Network*

The New Agriculture Network is a joint venture between the University of Illinois, Purdue University, Michigan State University and organic growers to bring seasonal advice to field crop and vegetable growers interested in transitioning to organic as well as those currently practicing low-input or organic agriculture. The website is: [www.new-ag.msu.edu](http://www.new-ag.msu.edu)

### *Sustainable Agriculture: Basic Principles and Concept Overview*

USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) program has developed an online course for Extension and other agricultural professionals. The course provides a detailed introduction to sustainable agriculture and what it means for farmers, ranchers and communities. Additional information on the course is posted on the web at [www.sare.org/coreinfo/ceprogram.htm](http://www.sare.org/coreinfo/ceprogram.htm).

### *Staying Home: How Ethanol Will Change U.S. Corn Exports*

This Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy report recommends that the government switch from spending on initiatives to expand transportation

infrastructure for export markets to building and diversifying opportunities for renewable fuels and energies. Posted at [www.iatp.org](http://www.iatp.org).

### *USDA's Economic Research Service(ERS) Data Sets: Organic Production*

Data based on survey of organic operations and acreage for crops and livestock. All 50 states now have some certified organic farmland, with an estimated total of about 4 million acres dedicated to organic production systems. About 2.3 million acres of the land is in crop production and 1.7 million acres in pasture and rangeland. California remains the leading state with more than 220,000 certified organic acres. Other top states include ND, MT, MN, WI, TX, and ID. Organic acreage doubled between 2002 and 2005. The updated information is posted on the web at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/Organic/>

### *Organic Poultry and Eggs Capture High Price Premiums and Growing Share of Specialty Markets*

This report finds that organic poultry and egg markets in the U.S. are expanding rapidly and that domestic supply, especially for organic broilers, is also expanding. A comparison of prices for conventional and

organic poultry and eggs shows significant organic price premiums. Online at: [www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/LDP/2006/12Dec/LDPM15001/](http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/LDP/2006/12Dec/LDPM15001/)

### *Greener Eggs and Ham: The Benefits of Pasture-Raised Swine, Poultry, and Egg Production*

A report on pasture-raised swine and poultry, released by the Union of Concerned Scientists, shows how pasture-raised pork, chicken, and egg production can avoid the problems conventional production poses for water and air quality and animal and public health. Online at: [www.ucsusa.org/food\\_and\\_environment/sustainable\\_food/](http://www.ucsusa.org/food_and_environment/sustainable_food/).

### *Livestock's Long Shadow*

This 390-page report from the United Nations Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO) assesses the full impact of the livestock sector the environment, along with potential technical and policy approaches to mitigating environmental problems. Online at: [www.virtualcentre.org/en/library/key\\_pub/longshad/a0701e/A0701E00.pdf](http://www.virtualcentre.org/en/library/key_pub/longshad/a0701e/A0701E00.pdf).

## ***Rescheduled: "The Home Grown Economy" – Foods from Local Farms as an Economic Development Tool***

Collin Peterson, Minnesota's 7th Congressional District Representative and Chairman of the House of Representatives Agriculture Committee, is sponsoring a conference on Monday, April 2, 2007 in Morris, Minnesota in conjunction with the University of Minnesota. The event will

enable attendees to learn about and explore how local foods can become an economic development engine for farmers and rural communities.

The cost is \$25.00 per person, and includes a locally grown lunch and breaks. Registration will begin at 8:00 a.m., with

speakers and panel presenters to follow, from 9:00 am- 3:30 p.m. A local foods reception will conclude the day. For more information or to register online, go to [www.regionalpartnerships.umn.edu](http://www.regionalpartnerships.umn.edu)

## ***Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)—Join now!***

"Forget Organic— Eat Local" reads the stamp on the apple on the cover of Time magazine's March 12 issue. The accompanying article follows the author's quest for the "best apple," and leads him to join a CSA farm in upstate New York. He finds that he likes knowing "the person who collects my eggs or grows my lettuce or picks my apples...Choosing local when I can makes me feel more rooted, and (in part because of that feeling, no doubt) local food tastes better."

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/>

[article/0,9171,1595245-1,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1595245-1,00.html)

Lucky for us—'tis the season to connect with your very own Community Supported Agriculture farm! Once again, Minnesota and western Wisconsin CSAs will be at the **Community Food and Farm Festival at Living Green**, May 5-6 at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds in St. Paul. The Festival, a joint effort of the Land Stewardship Project and the Minnesota Food Association, is a great opportunity to meet farmers who are direct marketing locally grown food. Farmers will be on hand to

answer questions about their sustainable production methods. Learn about joining a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm or buying food directly through various other means. For more information about the Festival, call LaVonne Murphy at 651-653-0618. A list of some CSAs serving the metro area can be found at: <http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/cfff/cfff.html>.

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## Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture

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



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