

MISA programming expands to include alternative livestock

We can all envision the idyllic picture of cows peacefully grazing on the hillside. But beyond the aesthetics of this image, livestock can be an important part of a sustainable Minnesota farm. Diversifying into livestock is one way to minimize risk from weather, pests, and market forces, and to add value to crops produced on the farm. Livestock also provide important biological benefits. Livestock are a source of nutrients for subsequent crop years and provide opportunities to grow a wider array of crops.

How livestock is incorporated into Minnesota agriculture is something a lot of groups have given some serious thought to. Last winter, the Citizen Task Force on Livestock Farmers and Rural Communities* gathered to discuss this issue, and to put their thoughts and recommendations on paper. They felt that agricultural services and policies must support an agriculture that benefits existing livestock farmers and encourages beginning farmers. They must promote a family farm-based system of

agriculture that is committed to stewardship of the land. And they must respond to consumer demand for high quality and safe food and help to increase profits for producers. The Citizen Task Force proposed several recommendations, including expanding the University of Minnesota's Alternative Swine Program to include dairy and other livestock systems.

In response and with funding appropriated by the Minnesota Legislature, the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) will expand the Alternative Swine Production Systems Program to include sustainable dairy and livestock production. Wayne Martin, current Alternative Swine Systems Coordinator, will work with the sustainable agriculture community and University of Minnesota researchers to initiate outreach programs that respond to producer information needs in dairy and beef cattle, dairy and meat goats, sheep, poultry, and swine. Roundtable discussion groups consisting of farmers and stakeholders will

identify needs and develop newsletters, listservs, and workshops that focus on each livestock enterprise based on the information gleaned from those discussions. A great deal of work is underway in the state, and MISA's intention is to make that work and information readily available to a broad audience.

*Four Minnesota farm groups (Minnesota Farmers Union, National Farmers Organization of Minnesota, Land Stewardship Project and Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota) -came together to create the Citizen Task Force on Livestock Farmers and Rural Communities in January, 2004. The Livestock Report is available at <http://www.sfa-mn.org/documents/publications/2004/citize6l.pdf>.

For more information, or to discuss program ideas, contact Wayne Martin, 612-625-6224, marti0067@umn.edu.

So what's new? Building on current livestock efforts and events

Small Ruminants

Meat goat production is a hot topic, fueled in part by increased demand from the growing immigrant population of Latinos, Somalis, and Ethiopians. Several efforts are underway throughout the state to increase meat goat production. Farmers have voiced demand for educational programs that focus on meat goats. Consequently, a group of interested stakeholders including farmers, extension educators, sustainable agriculture advocates, and veterinarians, have been meeting regularly to plan workshops to cover all aspects of the meat goat business. The workshops will be held around the state during January to March 2006. Information about the educational programs will be available through websites, listservs, news releases, newsletters, etc.

Dairy

Wayne Martin was invited by Jeremy Lanctot, Minnesota Dairy Initiative (MDI) Coordinator for the Sustainable Farming Association, to meet with MDI member and discuss ways to work together in sustainable dairy production. The Minnesota Dairy Initiative is a state funded project designed to help dairy farmers in Minnesota successfully continue producing dairy throughout the 21st century.

This past summer, the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota hosted GrazeFest Minnesota 2005, an educational grazing event which featured locally produced food and music. Held on Mary Jo and LuVerne Forbord's Prairie Horizons Farm north of Benson, MN, speakers addressed grazing

season extension, and conducted in-depth pasture walks, covering pasture health and grazing methods. Close to 120 people attended the event and attendees came from all over Minnesota and adjoining states. Future GrazeFests will continue to focus upon animals on grass, including dairy and hogs, with increased emphasis on beef production. The GrazeFest sponsors included the USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service, Minnesota Department of Agricultural Energy and Sustainable Agriculture Program, Minnesota Farmers Union, Ag Resource Consulting, Organic Land Management, and the University of Minnesota.

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

Meg Moynihan of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and Beth Nelson of MISA are working with Dennis Johnson, University of Minnesota, Morris, and a multi-state project team to develop a publication on dairy alternatives for farmers in the Upper Midwest. The publication, "Dairy Your Way: A Guide to Management Alternatives for the Upper Midwest," will offer basic information and side-by-side comparisons of dairy options, and real life stories about farmers using those systems.

Poultry

Minnesota chefs are looking for locally grown meats, eggs and chicken. Wayne Martin is working with Jacquie Jacob, Department of Animal Science and Extension specialist at the University of Minnesota specializing in small flock production to help farmers expand pasture raised broiler and egg production in the state. Workshops to address poultry marketing are planned for winter. Ideally,

small networks of 3-4 producers could be established, to respond more quickly to increased demand, and easier connection to local buyers.

For more information contact

Wayne Martin
612-625-6224
marti0067@umn.edu

Jacquie has also been working with MDA and MISA to assemble information about poultry alternatives. A publication, "Poultry Your Way: A Guide to Management Alternatives for the Upper Midwest" will expose producers to basic information about poultry production options, and include profiles about farmers in the Upper Midwest who are using those systems. Look for this publication, as well as "Dairy Your Way," in early 2006 and be sure to check out the MDA and MISA websites for ordering information as it becomes available.

Swine

Wayne plans to expand the alternative swine outreach programming as research in the facilities at the West Central Research and Outreach Center continues to develop new information about alternative production systems.

For more information, or to discuss program ideas, contact Wayne Martin, 612-625-6224, marti0067@umn.edu.

Grant Opportunities

MDA accepting applications for sustainable agriculture grants

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is now accepting applications for grants from Minnesota farmers, researchers, educators and non-profit organizations that have innovative ideas for sustainable farming systems. The MDA's Agricultural Resources Management and Development Division has up to \$70,000 to award this year. Individual grants up to \$25,000 are available for three-year projects that benefit the environment, increase farm net profits through cost reduction or enhanced marketing, and improve the farm family quality of life. The results and details of past grant projects are highlighted in the Greenbook publication, which is free and available to the public. Applications and more information are available on the MDA website, <http://www.mda.state.mn.us/esap>, or by contacting the Agricultural Resources Management and Development Division at 651-296-7673. Completed applications must be received by December 16, 2005.

MDA Deadline

December 16, 2005

www.mda.state.mn.us/esap

651-296-7673

NCR-SARE Deadline

December 1, 2005

www.sare.org/ncrsare/cfp.htm

612-625-8217

800-529-1342

NCR-SARE 2005 Farmer Rancher Grant Proposals

NCR-SARE announces 2005 call for farmer rancher grant proposals. Farmer/Ranchers are invited to submit proposals that test, evaluate, and adapt sustainable agriculture practices for their operations; conduct learning circles, educational events, field days or demonstrations to further disseminate information to farmer/ranchers; develop new technologies; or create or modify equipment. Applicants must identify specific problems and potential solutions to those problems. More information can be downloaded at www.sare.org/ncrsare/cfp.htm. The deadline for receipt of proposals is December 1, 2005. For more information, please contact Joan Benjamin, jbenjamin2@unl.edu, (800) 529-1342 or in Minnesota, contact Beth Nelson, schre002@umn.edu, (612) 625-8217.

Alternative swine scientist hired

Dr. Yushi Li will join the University of Minnesota on November 1st as Assistant Professor in Animal Science with responsibilities for research and education on alternative swine production systems. Li is currently at the Prairie Swine Centre, a research and education facility affiliated

with the University of Saskatchewan. She has a long history of research and education in animal production systems, environmental management and animal behavior. At the University of Minnesota, she will be part of the West Central Research and Outreach Center's nationally-

recognized swine research and outreach efforts, focusing on the production of high quality pork within sustainable systems. For more information about the alternative swine program at WCROC, contact Lee Johnston, johnstlj@umn.edu, (320) 589-1711.

Announcements

The Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships (RSDP) announce the hiring of a new Statewide Director as well as a new Executive Director for the Central Region. Kathy Draeger began work as the Statewide Director in July. This position provides overall leadership and coordination for the statewide RSDP, integrating goals of building and strengthening effective relationships between citizens, communities and the University of Minnesota. Kathy has a Ph.D. in water resources science, an M.S. in soil science and a B.S. in rhetoric/life sciences, all from the University of Minnesota.

Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships www.regionalpartnerships.umn.edu

Linda Ulland is the new Executive Director for the Central Region Partnership. The Central Minnesota Sustainable Development Partnership serves the counties of Becker, Otter Tail, Hubbard, Cass, Wadena, Morrison, Crow Wing, and Todd. The partnership works to address locally identified issues in a manner consistent with sustainable development principles. For more information, contact Linda, ulland012@umn.edu, (218) 894-5192.

The RSDP is a joint effort of the College of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences, the College of Natural Resources and the University of Minnesota Extension Service. For more information, visit www.regionalpartnerships.umn.edu, or contact Kathy Draeger, draeg001@umn.edu, 612-625-3148.

Upcoming Events

Grazing Field Day. October 22, 2005. The Cannon River-Hiawatha Chapter of the Sustainable Farming Association announces a field day at the Ralph Lentz farm near Lake City, MN. A potluck lunch starts at 12 noon, followed by Ralph's presentation at 1 p.m., with the pasture walk starting about 1:30 p.m. There is no charge. For further details or directions, call Ralph at 651-345-2557.

Sustainable Development Conference. October 24-25, 2005. University of Minnesota, Crookston. The Sustainable Development Conference: Global Priorities and Local Applications Workshop will explore the future of small towns and rural areas as participants consider which local and global trends are likely to continue. For more information contact Jennifer Severinson at 218-281-8681 or visit <http://www.uncrookston.edu/CAL/SustainableDevelopmentConference.htm>

Success Strategies for Small & Limited Resource Farmers and Ranchers, Midwest Regional Outreach Conference, November 1-2, 2005, Des Moines, IA. Sponsored by USDA's Risk Management Agency, Farm Service Agency, and Natural Resources Conservation Service. For more information visit <http://www.rma.usda.gov/calendar/2005/MidwestRegOutrchConf.pdf/> or contact Laurie Fredricks, Laurie.Fredricks@rma.usda.gov, (651) 290-3304, ext 232

The 6th annual Fall Harvest Gathering for Women in Sustainable Agriculture. November 11-13, 2005. Spring Valley, MN. For more information contact Cassi Johnson cassi@wfan.org or 319-354-3760.

**Minnesota Institute for
Sustainable Agriculture**

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



This newsletter is supported by the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA)—a partnership between the Sustainer’s Coalition and the University of Minnesota College of Agricultural, Food, and Environmental Sciences (COAFES); the University of Minnesota Extension Service; the North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCRSARE) Professional Development Program (PDP); and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA).

Send story ideas to MISA, 411 Borlaug Hall, 1991 Upper Buford Circle. St. Paul, MN 55108, (612) 625-8235, fax (612) 625-1268, e-mail: misamail@umn.edu. Editorial board members: Helene Murray, (612) 625-0220, murra021@umn.edu; Beth Nelson, (612) 625-8217, schre002@umn.edu; Bill Wilcke, (612) 625-8205, wilck001@umn.edu; Jane Jewett, jewet006@umn.edu; Kate Seager, (612) 625-8235, kseager@umn.edu and Jack Sperbeck, (612)625-1794, sperb001@umn.edu. Please send address changes directly to: Kate Seager, kseager@umn.edu, MISA, 411 Borlaug Hall, 1991 Buford Circle, St. Paul, MN 55108.

You can find more University of Minnesota Extension Service educational information at www.extension.umn.edu. Also check MISA’s home page at www.misa.umn.edu.

Our mission statement: To help bring people together to influence the future of agriculture and rural communities to achieve socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable farms and communities. To stimulate thinking and discussion about sustainability, we try to present items that reflect different points of view. This being the case, we aren’t promoting and don’t necessarily agree with everything we publish.