

Sustainable Agriculture

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Tacheny and Thell retire from MISA board

When the gavel sounded to call the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) board of directors to order for the July meeting, two long-time members of the board were missing. Mark Thell of Wrenshall and Sister Mary Tacheny of Mankato retired June 30 after serving two three-year terms on the board. Both directors are retiring since MISA bylaws specify a limit of two consecutive terms. Their terms were scheduled to end Dec. 31, 2000, but they agreed to stay an extra six months to help finish work on an amended set of MISA bylaws.

Mark Thell and his family operate a 230-acre beef and vegetable farm in Carlton County. They use rotational grazing practices with their 50-head cow-calf operation. They are able to market most of their beef, chicken, eggs, sweet corn, raspberries, peas and barley through direct marketing. In addition to serving on the MISA board, Mark has served on the local Resource Conservation & Development Council Board, as vice-president of the Carlton County Farmers Union, and as president of the Lake Superior Meats Cooperative. Mark also works off the farm at a paper mill. Mark has been especially helpful in working with legislators and helping them see the value of more sustainable approaches to agriculture.

Sister Mary Tacheny, a School Sister of Notre Dame, has worked as a resource person, educational consultant and activity coordinator for rural concerns for the Diocesan Rural Life Directors and the Catholic Bishops of Minnesota. She is also one of the founders and the co-director for the Center for Earth Spirituality in Mankato. Sister Mary is an advocate for farmers and other rural residents, supports sustainable farming methods and is motivated by the belief that creation has integrity and inherent value beyond its usefulness to human beings.

She has served as the MISA board chair for the last year and a half and has skillfully led the board during negotiations over MISA's bylaws. Sister Mary is also finishing her term as an at-large citizen representative on the Statewide Coordinating Committee of the Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships.

MISA is a partnership between the University of Minnesota's College of Agricultural, Food, and Environmental Sciences (COAFES) and six non-profit organizations that make up the Sustainer's Coalition. The MISA board of directors, which is made up of farmers, representatives of non-profit organizations, and representatives of the University of Minnesota, sets policy and program direction for MISA. Participation by people who are not University employees on the MISA board is essential for carrying out MISA's mission of "bringing together the agricultural community and the University community in a cooperative effort to develop and promote sustainable agriculture in Minnesota and beyond."

But participation on the Board represents a great commitment of time and effort, and the commitment of individuals like Mark and Sister Mary is greatly appreciated. A nominating committee will soon be

soliciting nominations for new directors to fill open slots on the board. We'll be looking for Minnesota residents interested in agricultural sustainability and in participating on an active board of directors.

For more information, contact Bill Wilcke at (612) 625-8205, wilcke001@umn.edu.

Preproposal deadline for SARE grants is Sept. 10

Grant preproposals for USDA's North Central Region (NCR) SARE research and education program are due Sept. 10, 2001, for 2002. Preproposals must address sustainable agriculture issues of current and potential importance to the region and nation. Projects should contribute to:

- Improving the economic viability of various agricultural operations.
- Sustaining agriculture's environmental quality and natural resource base.
- Enhancing the quality of life for farmers/ranchers, rural communities and society.

SARE stands for Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education, a competitive grants program funded by the USDA. Its research and education grant program provides funds to teams of scientists, farmers, institutions, organizations, educators and others exploring sustainable agriculture.

More information, including help on writing your grant application, is available at www.sare.org/ncrsare, ncrsare@unl.edu, or by calling (402) 472-7081.

Agroforestry publication wins national award

A recent agroforestry publication from MISA, CINRAM and the University of Minnesota Extension Service has won a national award. "Discovering Profits in Unlikely Places: Agroforestry Opportunities for Added Income" by Scott Josiah, won the Silver Award for a short publication in a national contest sponsored by the Association of Natural Resources Extension Professionals.

The publication introduces landowners to agroforestry opportunities. The goal is to help them boost farm profits by turning marginal areas of land into profit centers. It encourages farmers to take a close look at their land--to look for areas where trees or shrubs could be planted along streams, in field borders or other areas not suitable for row crops. Color illustrations depicting "before and after" scenes help farmers see how these practices could be implemented on their own farms to generate income while enhancing their natural resources.

It was designed, written and reviewed by a team of Extension educators, farmers, researchers and other agricultural community and state agency members in cooperation with:

- The Center for Integrated Natural Resource and Agricultural Management (CINRAM), a joint venture of the University of Minnesota's College of Natural Resources and College of Agricultural, Food, and Environmental Sciences.
- The Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA), a partnership between the University's College of Agricultural, Food, and Environmental Sciences and the Sustainer's Coalition.

It was produced in cooperation with the University of Minnesota Extension Service and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Energy and Sustainable Agriculture Program. The 20-page publication, "Discovering Profits in Unlikely Places: Agroforestry Opportunities for Added Income," is available from

county offices of the U of M Extension Service, or from the Distribution Center by calling (800) 876-8636 or (612) 624-4900. Ask for publication 7407.

Northeastern Minnesota industries face competitive challenges, study shows

Northeastern Minnesota's four key industries--forestry products, health services, information technology and tourism--face a different set of competitive challenges, according to a recent study.

Local forest products firms face tremendous pressure from global competition at a time when predictable and affordable timber sales are uncertain. Health care providers are dealing with crisis-level workforce shortages and insufficient federal reimbursements. The region's tourism industry faces challenges drawing more year-round activity, as well as penetrating national markets. And the information technology industry, which holds substantial promise for the future, presently lacks the critical mass to be competitive.

Collaboration and a strong regional focus are the keys to enhancing competitiveness of the four industries, the study concluded. It was conducted by the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota, and the Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER), University of Minnesota-Duluth. It was co-sponsored by the Northeast Minnesota Sustainable Development Partnership (NMSDP), a University of Minnesota Regional Partnership; and the University of Minnesota Extension Service.

Over 100 individuals representing local business, government, economic developers, trade associations and other industry stakeholders participated in the study through a series of focus groups, interviews and meetings.

A copy of the report is available at www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/slp. Or, call Okey Ukaga, NMSDP director, at (218) 879-0850, ext. 107.

Five slots open on National Organic Standards Board

Contact the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture if you're interested in serving on the National Organic Standards Board, or if you'd like to nominate someone. Nominations are being sought for an organic producer, organic handler, consumer/public interest representative, environmentalist, and a scientist in the fields of toxicology, ecology or biochemistry.

Applications are due to USDA by Oct. 11, 2001, but contact the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture by Sept. 14. They will make the list of candidates and their application statements available on their website and e-mail network. Send nominations to Liana Hoodes at liana@sustainableagriculture.net, or call (845) 744-2304.

Annual organic field days at Lamberton Aug. 16-17

The fourth annual Organic Field Days will be held at the University of Minnesota's Southwest Research and Outreach Center in Lamberton Aug. 16-17. Aug. 16 will be an in-depth day on topics in organic/alternative agriculture. Sessions will include building sustainable soils, biology and ecology of major weed species, livestock and poultry, and cover crops and green manures.

Aug. 17 is a day full of tours. A number of stops will be devoted to food topics such as edible soybeans and a wide variety of vegetable crops including greens, ethnic vegetables, broccoli, cauliflower and hot

peppers. John Ikerd, agricultural economist from the University of Missouri, will be the keynote speaker Aug. 17.

To pre-register for the workshops or other information, call (507) 752-7372.

Calendar of events, 2001

These events are sponsored by numerous organizations. More information is available on MISA's website: www.misa.umn.edu.

Aug. 11. **Open farm day**, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the PastureLand Cooperative, a dairy cooperative of six farm families in Southeastern Minnesota. Contact Dan or Muriel French, Dodge Center, at (507) 635-5619, or Pastureland@isd.net. Due to animal health concerns, the farmers request that persons who have visited Europe within the past two months refrain from attending.

Aug. 11. **Farm tours**, 9 a.m. Meadowbrook Organic Acres, then Gary Schmiege intensive rotational grazing, Howard Lake, (320) 543-3225.

Aug. 16-17. **Organic Field Day**, Southwest Research and Outreach Station, Lamberton, (507) 752-7372 (see article above).

Sept. 15. **Solar kiln wood drying**, Backus, Minn. Call (218) 894-5196.

Sept. 29. **Eighth Annual Country Living Field Day**, Carroll County, Ohio, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call (330) 627-4310.

Oct. 20. **Climate Change-Greenhouse Warming**, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Central Lakes College Campus, Staples. Includes several speakers and exhibit booths of vendors of renewable resource products and organizations working for the environment. Contact Lynda Converse at (320) 594-2456, converse@rea-alp.com.

What we're about

This newsletter is supported by the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA). It's also supported by 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). MISA is a partnership between the Sustainer's Coalition and the University of Minnesota College of Agricultural, Food, and Environmental Sciences (COAFES).

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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.