

COMMERCIAL KITCHENS GUIDE

The Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships and MISA are pleased to announce this new resource for anyone considering building, retrofitting, owning, managing, or renting a multi-user commercial kitchen. The Guide provides crucial but hard-to-find information such as how to make sure you stay on the right side of zoning laws, how to interact effectively with your food inspector, the steps needed to plan the kitchen and

secure approval for the plan, licensing and training requirements for each entity involved and for a variety of potential business models, and information on the food safety requirements for a variety of types of food products.
www.misa.umn.edu/Publications/CommercialKitchenGuide/index.htm

Besides being a valuable resource in itself, the Guide's acknowledgements page also

identifies many people in Minnesota who have considerable expertise on one or more areas covered in the Guide. If you need more in-depth information on any topic, contact one of the project team members; or contact MISA for assistance in locating an expert: misamail@umn.edu, 612-625-8235, or 800-909-6472.

NORTH CENTRAL SARE GRANT PROGRAMS CURRENTLY ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

The North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program of the USDA is part of a nationwide grants and education program to advance sustainable innovation to American agriculture. Read more about NCR-SARE on their website: www.northcentralsare.org

NCR-SARE grant programs currently accepting applications:

Research and Education Grants:

For researchers and educators involved in projects that explore and promote environmentally sound, profitable, and socially responsible food and/or fiber systems. Research and Education projects include a strong outreach component and significant farmer/rancher or other end user involvement. **Deadline to apply is Thursday, October 23, 2014.** More information: <http://www.northcentralsare.org/Grants/Our-Grant-Programs/Research-and-Education>; or contact Beth

Nelson, 612-626-4436, bethnelson@umn.edu.

New: Partnership Grants: For on-farm research, demonstration and/or educational projects intended to foster cooperation between agriculture professionals and small groups of farmers and ranchers. Any agriculture/natural resource professional in the North Central region may apply. **Deadline to apply is Thursday, October 30, 2014.** More information: www.northcentralsare.org/Grants/Our-Grant-Programs/Partnership-Grant-Program; or contact Beth Nelson, 612-626-4436, bethnelson@umn.edu; or Rob Myers, 573-882-1547, myersrob@missouri.edu.

Youth Educator Grants: Support opportunities for youth educators to research, demonstrate, and learn more about sustainable agriculture; and to provide programming on sustainable agriculture for youth. **Deadline to apply**

is Thursday, November 13, 2014. More information: <http://www.northcentralsare.org/Grants/Our-Grant-Programs/Youth-Educator-Grant-Program>; or contact Joan Benjamin, 573-681-5545, toll free: 800-529-1342, BenjaminJ@lincolnu.edu.

Farmer-Rancher Grants: For farmers and ranchers who want to explore sustainable solutions to problems through on-farm research, demonstration, and education projects. Farmer-Rancher grants have funded 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. **Deadline to apply is Thursday, November 20, 2014.** More information: www.northcentralsare.org/Grants/Our-Grant-Programs/Farmer-Rancher-Grant-Program; or contact Joan Benjamin, 573-681-5545, toll free: 800-529-1342, BenjaminJ@lincolnu.edu.

FOR-PROFIT FARMS SHOULD NOT USE UNCOMPENSATED VOLUNTEER LABOR

A recent case involving a California winery highlighted the pitfalls of using volunteer labor: www.mercurynews.com/my-town/ci_26541167/castro-valley-winery-fined-115-000-using-volunteers. For farms that aren't part of a non-profit organization and for all other for-profit businesses, anyone working for the business – including a “volunteer” – is considered an employee under both federal and Minnesota employment laws (some of the employment laws have exemptions for owners and family members.) Minimum wage, workers' compensation,

unemployment insurance, payroll tax, and income tax withholding requirements apply to all workers, including those whom both the employer and the worker consider a “volunteer.” In-kind forms of payment, such as products from the farm, may be used to compensate workers; but the laws on this are very complex. The in-kind compensation must be valued appropriately; and minimum wage, payroll tax, withholding, and other employment requirements still apply to in-kind forms of payment. Farmers and other for-profit businesses that do not follow employment

laws risk costly fines. Rachel Armstrong, attorney with Farm Commons (www.farmcommons.org), recommends that farmers know their risks and obligations with regard to compensation of farm labor. She has a webinar available to introduce farmers to the issues: “Workers and Employees: Understanding the farmers' responsibilities.” <http://farmcommons.org/workers-and-employees-understanding-farmers%E2%80%99-responsibilities>.

HONEY BEE COLONY LOSS, 2013-2014

The Bee Informed Partnership has compiled data collected from beekeepers and released its National Management Survey: <http://beeinformed.org/results/the-bee-informed-partnership-national-management-survey-2013-2014/>. This 2013-2014 survey represented 564,522 (21.7%) of the USA's 2.6 million honey bee colonies.

Individual beekeepers in northern states on average lost 51% of their colonies, while beekeepers in southern states on average lost 34% of their colonies over the winter. Larger commercial operations

tended to have lower percentage losses than smaller and part-time operations, and more colonies were reported from southern states than from northern states, so the overall colony loss rate nationally was estimated at 23.2% for winter of 2013-2014. That is lower than last winter's (2012-2013) estimate of 30.5% loss and lower than the 8-year average loss of 29.6%. In spite of the national decrease in colony mortality shown in this study, these numbers are still far above an acceptable range of loss, particularly in some regions. A breakdown of results by region and by beekeeper practices is

available here: <http://beeinformed.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Summery-of-Respondant-Losses1.pdf>

The Bee Informed Partnership (<http://beeinformed.org/>) is a collaborative effort dedicated to finding best beekeeping management practices and reporting the results back to the industry. The colony loss report was created in collaboration with the Apiary Inspectors of America (AIA) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

HELPING POLLINATORS

Insect pollination results in an estimated \$26.9 billion in crop value per year, according to research published in 2012 [*Insect Pollinated Crops, Insect Pollinators and US Agriculture: Trend Analysis of Aggregate Data for the Period 1992-2009. May 2012. Nicholas Calderone. PLoS-ONE 7(5): e37235. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0037235>.] The decline of pollinator insect species in general, including honey bees but also many species of native bees, is of great concern because we depend on them for production of many human and animal food crops. A Whole Foods Market store in Providence, RI brought that point*

home to customers last fall by removing from their shelves all produce that came from plants dependent on pollinators – which amounted to more than half of their usual product mix! <http://beeinformed.org/2013/09/whole-foods-market-takes-a-stand/>

The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation just released a new, comprehensive book on how to encourage and benefit from insects on the farm: *Farming with Native Beneficial Insects*, <http://www.xerces.org/farming-with-native-beneficial-insects/>

For more information on how you can help pollinators, visit the Natural Resources Conservation Service's pollinator page: www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/plantsanimals/pollinate/?cid=stelprdb1142431

Another way to help is by sponsoring a hive through the University of Minnesota Bee Squad's Bee Supporter Program: http://beelab.umn.edu/BeeSquad/bee_supporters/index.htm

THE FAMILY TREE OF FARM-TO-SCHOOL

The national Farm to School program of the USDA, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school>, has some Minnesota roots, which were nurtured and grown through a whole lot of community effort here in our state, beginning more than a decade ago. A new USDA guide to use of local food in schools can trace one branch of its ancestry back in a direct line to the Pride of the Prairie Initiative in western Minnesota. Here's part of that family tree:

Excerpt from a National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition press release, April 7, 2014 (<http://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/new-farm-to-school-guide/>):

"The USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has published Procuring Local Food for Child Nutrition Programs, a guide to help K-12 schools operating one or more Child Nutrition Programs with identifying and procuring locally grown and produced food for use at school cafeterias . . . [b]ased in part on A School's Guide to Purchasing Washington-Grown Food, which was developed by the Washington State Department of Agriculture, NSAC member Washington Sustainable Food & Farming Network, and the Washington Environmental Council in September 2012."

That Washington State Guide mentioned above includes the "Washington Grown Food Kit," <http://www.wafarmtoschool.org/ToolKit>, which was directly based on the Farm-to-School Toolkit developed by the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture in 2007. The MISA Farm-to-School Toolkit was also modified and expanded by University of Minnesota Extension to become the current

FALL & WINTER CONFERENCES

It's not too early to begin planning your attendance at winter conferences!

In some cases, registration is not yet open – so check back on websites as we head into fall and early winter.

October 28 – 31: Food Access Summit, Duluth, MN. www.foodaccesssummit.com/

Minnesota Toolkit for Foodservice: <http://www.extension.umn.edu/food/farm-to-school/toolkit/>.

MISA's work on the Toolkit was based on a Farm-to-School pilot project that took place in the Willmar School District in 2005 and 2006. That project was led by Annette Derouin, school food service manager for the district; and Lynn Mader, a registered dietitian who was employed by Pride of the Prairie at the time.

The Willmar pilot project was the outcome of strategic planning by Pride of the Prairie in 2004, as described in this excerpt from the files of Kathy Draeger, U of MN Regional Sustainable Development Partnership:

"Farm To School is a Pride of the Prairie/ West Central Regional Sustainable Development Partnership strategy initiated in 2004 to improve healthy eating habits of young and school age children in West Central Minnesota through educational programs, experiences and school foodservice that connects farming and nutritious and health foods.

"Students receive hands-on experience in harvesting, cooking, and enjoying fresh, local products, to promote a healthier lifestyle using the 3 C's approach: Cafeteria: School cafeterias prepare, serve and offer tastings of local foods in the cafeteria on special days throughout the school year. Nutrition information is provided about the featured foods. Curriculum: Teachers are provided resources and offered training for classroom teaching about foods produced in the region. Community: Farmers teach about local foods at schools, students have field trips to local farms and participate in growing local foods through community gardening experiences.

November 2 – 3: FEAST Local/Regional Food Conference & Trade Show, Rochester, MN. www.renewingthecountryside.org/feast_festival_and_tradeshaw

November 6: Minnesota Farmers' Market Association 8-location videoconference; Bemidji, Duluth, Fergus Falls, Mankato, Marshall, Rochester, St. Cloud, and St.

"Partners in the Pride of the Prairie initiative: U of MN West Central Regional Sustainable Development Partnership Willmar Public Schools Food and Nutrition Services Steps to a Healthier MN, Kandiyohi Public Health University of Minnesota Children's Garden Morris Public Schools Food and Nutrition Services Morris ECFE Montevideo Public School Sustainable Farming Association Land Stewardship Project Lac qui Parle Valley Community and Early Childhood Education"

Even before that, in 2002-2003, Lynn Mader was working on behalf of Pride of the Prairie with staff at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and Minnesota Department of Health to draft and gain approval for fact sheets on the regulations for sales of local food. That work was an important first step toward farm-to-school sales, and was supported by a NCR-SARE Professional Development Program grant: <http://mysare.sare.org/mySARE/ProjectReport.aspx?do=viewProj&pn=ENC02-068>. MISA was also involved in helping to advise that project and get fact sheets into print.

These west-central Minnesota folks who put their time and care into Farm-to-School work a decade and more ago should look now with fondness and pride upon how far their work has traveled and grown.

Paul, MN. www.mfma.org

November 7 - 9: Growing Power Urban & Small Farm Conference, Milwaukee, WI. www.growingpower.org/events.htm

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Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture

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1991 Upper Buford Circle
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FALL & WINTER CONFERENCES (continued)

November 19 – 20: Green Lands Blue Waters 2014 Conference: Biofuels & Sustainable Agriculture, Decatur, IL. www.greenlandsbluewater.net

December 4 – 6: ACRES U.S.A: The Conference on Ecological Farming, Columbus, OH. www.acresusa.com/events

January 8: Winter Workshop Day, St. Cloud, MN. www.mda.state.mn.us/food/organic/conference.aspx

January 9 – 10: Minnesota Organic Conference, St. Cloud, MN. www.mda.state.mn.us/food/organic/conference.aspx

January 15 – 16: Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference, St. Cloud, MN www.mfvga.org/index.cfm?nodeID=71059&audienceID=1

January 22 – 24: Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society Winter Conference, Aberdeen, SD. www.npsas.org/news-events/winter-conference.html

January 23 – 24: Practical Farmers of Iowa Annual Conference, Ames, IA practicalfarmers.org/news-events/events/annual-conference/

February 7 – 8: Immigrant & Minority

Farmers Conference, St. Paul, MN

February 14: Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota Conference, St. Joseph, MN www.sfa-mn.org/conference/

February 18-19: Midwest Soil Health Summit, Alexandria, MN. www.sfa-mn.org/midwest-soil-health-summit/

February 26 – 28: MOSES Organic Farming Conference, La Crosse, WI. <http://mosesorganic.org/conference/>

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