

## Volume 23, Issue 3\_Fall 2015

### MISA WELCOMES TWO NEW ENDOWED CHAIRS

The Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture welcomes two new individuals to the Endowed Chair in Agricultural Systems. The Chair represents a unique opportunity for leaders in the academic, business, farming, government, and non-profit sectors of agriculture, rural development, and related fields to contribute to and help shape the future of rural Minnesota. The Chair is intended to serve as a catalyst for innovation and progress on agricultural and rural issues within the College and Minnesota, and can be filled by individuals or project teams which rotate through the position, serving flexible, varying-length terms as appropriate for their proposed activities. Find out more about this program and how to apply here: [misadocuments.info/ended.html](http://misadocuments.info/ended.html)

**Lisa Kivirist** will be working with rural women farmers in Minnesota to provide them with support to be in leadership positions within their communities - for example leadership in Farm to School efforts, Farm Service Agency boards, etc. She will do this through a series of efforts including capturing 20 Minnesota women farmer stories via written and oral podcasts, and by conducting focus groups of sustainable agriculture farmers to connect people. She will partner with several groups in Minnesota including Renewing the Countryside, MOSES, Women's Environmental Initiative and others. Her work began in November 2015. Lisa can be contacted via email at [lisa@innserendipity.com](mailto:lisa@innserendipity.com).

**Ron Kroese** will conduct a series of video-recorded interviews to document

the formation and evolution of sustainable agriculture policy efforts in the mid-west and on a national scale. Topics he will cover include the formation in the early 1980s of what became National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. He will also conduct a review of policy gains that support sustainable agriculture achieved in the last 6 farm bills, including an analysis of subjects where efforts came up short of goals, and explore further policy changes needed to advance sustainable agriculture. He will be working with a staff member from the Bell Museum of Natural History to film the interviews, will prepare materials to be presented over time and identify possible next steps for using information learned. Ron can be contacted via email at [rkroese@visi.com](mailto:rkroese@visi.com)

### MINNESOTA FARMERS' MARKET ACADEMY

The Minnesota Farmers' Market Association (MFMA) is offering the Farmers' Market Academy at seven locations around Minnesota in December, January, and February:

- Dec. 15 – McIntosh
- Dec. 16 – Fergus Falls
- Jan. 5 – Little Falls
- Jan. 6 – Cloquet
- Jan. 20 – Redwood Falls
- Feb. 9 – Mankato
- Feb. 10 – Rochester

Each session except Rochester runs from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Rochester will be from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Lunch is provided. The academy is free to members, and \$35 for non-members of MFMA. MFMA is offering a "NEW Member Special" for this Academy: workshop participants can

become members at a 50% membership discount of \$35 and then attend the Academy for free. Register on the MFMA website: [www.mfma.org](http://www.mfma.org)

Get your Cottage Food Safety Training at these workshops!

The new Cottage Food law allows individuals to sell homemade non-potentially hazardous food items from their home, through a delivery route or meeting place, or from other venues like farmers' markets or community bazaars. People who sell homemade foods under the Cottage Food law are required to have food safety training that is approved by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), and to register yearly with the MDA. The food safety training offered at

these workshops will qualify you for three years'-worth of Cottage Food registrations. Even if you are not a farmers' market vendor but you want to sell homemade baked goods, jam, pickles, salsa, etc. – you can take this training and then register with the MDA as a Cottage Food operator. Farmers' market vendors who attend will learn how to price products to be profitable, marketing strategies, spreadsheet programs you can use for free...and more!

Farmers' market managers will join an interactive session with seasoned and successful managers to share tactics on how to grow vendors and customers and raise money for special events, and get the latest information on SNAP EBT.

## PRODUCE SAFETY RULE IS RELEASED

The Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has released the final Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Standards for the Growing, Harvesting, Packing, and Holding of Produce for Human Consumption, otherwise known as the “Produce Rule.” The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) has a good explanation of what this means for small- and mid-scale fruit and vegetable farms, including detailed information about the conditions for being exempt from the Produce Rule: [sustainableagriculture.net/blog/produce-rule-analysis-part-1/](http://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/produce-rule-analysis-part-1/)

Here’s a brief list of the exemptions that are described in detail on the NSAC blog:

- Farms with gross sales of produce less than \$25,000 in a rolling three-year average are exempt from the Produce Rule.
- Food grains are exempt from the Produce Rule. This includes sales of whole grains or seeds that are typically intended for use as meal, flour, baked goods, cereal, or oils.
- Types of produce that are rarely consumed raw are exempt from the Produce Rule. Minnesota crops on the “rarely consumed raw” list: asparagus,

dry beans, garden beets, sugar beets, sour cherries, sweet corn, cranberries, dill, eggplant, hazelnuts, horseradish, peppermint, potatoes, pumpkins, winter squash, sweet potatoes.

- Produce that is not sold raw is exempt from the Produce Rule. However, the processing activities (jam or cider production, for instance) may fall under a different part of FSMA, such as the Preventive Controls Rule.
- Produce that is being shipped to a commercial processor is exempt from the Produce Rule (for example, sweet corn or peas shipped for canning). However, there must be documentation that the shipments go to a commercial processor, and assurance that the processing “adequately reduces the presence of microorganisms of public health significance.”
- Farms with gross sales of produce totaling more than \$25,000 per year; but that sell produce primarily to buyers within their state, within their Indian Reservation, or within 275 miles of their farm; may be “Qualified Exempt” farms under the Tester-Hagan amendment to FSMA. The categories of exemption and the

modified requirements that go with those categories are complex. See the NSAC blog for more detail. If you are not able to access the Internet and need a print copy of the NSAC blog, please contact the MISA office: [misamail@umn.edu](mailto:misamail@umn.edu), 612-625-8235, 800-909-6472.

If you would like to read the FSMA Produce Rule for yourself, you can find it in the Federal Register: [www.federalregister.gov/articles/2015/11/27/2015-28159/standards-for-the-growing-harvesting-packing-and-holding-of-produce-for-human-consumption](http://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2015/11/27/2015-28159/standards-for-the-growing-harvesting-packing-and-holding-of-produce-for-human-consumption)

The actual Produce Rule is in Part 112 of this Federal Register article. You will have to scroll way, way, way down in order to find it because there are many sections detailing public comments received by FDA, before you get to the Produce Rule itself.

More information and fact sheets from the FDA are available here: [www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/ucm334114.htm](http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/ucm334114.htm)

## NEW SARE RESOURCE: COVER CROPPING FOR POLLINATORS AND BENEFICIAL INSECTS

This new 16-page bulletin was written by staff members of the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation (<http://www.xerces.org>), with contributions from the NRCS, and is available from Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE). Cover Cropping for Pollinators and Beneficial Insects presents information on cover crop selection and management techniques that support pollinators along with other goals, such as suppressing weeds, managing nitrogen

and improving soil health. The bulletin includes sections on pollinator ecology, cover crop management, selection of cover crop species and mixtures, suggested crop rotations, impact of insecticides on pollinators, and navigating USDA crop insurance rules when support for beneficial insects is a priority. There are also stories of farmers who are making choices to use cover crops to provide pollinator food and habitat.

Cover Cropping for Pollinators and Beneficial Insects is available for free as either a download or in print, and can be ordered for use as a handout at conferences, workshops and field days. Download link and ordering information is on this web page:

<http://www.sare.org/Learning-Center/Bulletins/Cover-Cropping-for-Pollinators-and-Beneficial-Insects>

## NEW BUSINESS PLANNING MANUAL FOR ORGANIC TRANSITION

The booming profit potential of organic production has farmers, ranchers and food business owners nationwide switching to organic production, but successfully managing the multi-year transition requires careful business planning.

The new Organic Transition: A Business Planner for Farmers, Ranchers and Food Entrepreneurs is the perfect tool to help business owners develop an actionable organic transition plan suitable for management teams and lenders. It

explores organic transition strategies and asks critical questions that help you decide whether organic makes sense for your farm or business.

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Farmers bring the planning process alive by sharing their personal transition challenges and the business plans that helped them succeed. Minnesota dairy producers Nate and Angie Walter relate that going organic “was a way for us to remain a family farm. We were considering growing the farm (conventionally); getting bigger in hopes of paying off our debt. We knew that might be a losing proposition.” The Organic Transition Planner also includes an overview of certification, helpful worksheets and AgPlan, a business planning software program that facilitates the business planning process.

The Organic Transition Planner was developed by SARE and MISA as part of the Tools for Transition Project,

a four-year research program on the economics of organic transition funded by USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture. You can visit the MISA website to find the Planner; downloadable spreadsheets; and downloadable, fillable PDF worksheets: [www.misa.umn.edu/Publications/OrganicTransitionPlanner/index.htm](http://www.misa.umn.edu/Publications/OrganicTransitionPlanner/index.htm). The Planner is also available as a free download at [www.sare.org/organic-transition-planner](http://www.sare.org/organic-transition-planner), and the Tools for Transition Project website ([eorganic.info/toolsfortransition](http://eorganic.info/toolsfortransition)). Print copies are available for \$16 plus shipping and handling. Discounts are available for orders in quantities of 10 items or more. Order print copies from the MISA office: [misamail@umn.edu](mailto:misamail@umn.edu), 612-625-8235, 800-909-MISA (6472.)

The Organic Transition Planner can be used as a companion to the popular business planning guide, *Building a Sustainable Business: A Guide to Developing a Business Plan for Farms and Rural Businesses*: [www.misa.umn.edu/Publications/BuildingaSustainableBusiness/index.htm](http://www.misa.umn.edu/Publications/BuildingaSustainableBusiness/index.htm)

Both were written by University of Minnesota Department of Applied Economics Research Fellow Gigi DiGiacomo, University of Minnesota Department of Applied Economics Professor Robert P. King and Center for Farm Financial Management Associate Director Dale Nordquist.

## WINTER CONFERENCES

More workshops and events are listed on the MISA Calendar: [www.misa.umn.edu](http://www.misa.umn.edu)

### January 7: “Cabin Fever” Workshop

Day hosted by Minnesota Department of Agriculture. River’s Edge Convention Center, St. Cloud, MN

[www.mda.state.mn.us/cabinfever](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/cabinfever) Contact: 651-201-6012.

Full-day or half-day workshops:

- Passive Solar Deep Winter Greenhouses
- Practical Homeopathy
- Transitioning to Organic for Field Crop Producers
- Introduction to Perennial Fruits

### January 8-9: Minnesota Organic Conference

hosted by Minnesota Department of Agriculture. River’s Edge Convention Center, St. Cloud, MN

[www.mda.state.mn.us/food/organic/conference.aspx](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/food/organic/conference.aspx)

Contact the Organic Conference Team: 651-201-6012

### January 13: Minnesota Fruit & Vegetable Growers Workshop Day.

River’s Edge Convention Center, St.

Cloud, MN

[www.mfvga.org](http://www.mfvga.org) Contact: 763-434-0400

### January 14-15: Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference & Trade Show.

River’s Edge Convention Center, St. Cloud, MN

[www.mfvga.org](http://www.mfvga.org) Contact: 763-434-0400

January 14-16: GrassWorks Grazing Conference. Chula Vista Resort, Wisconsin Dells, WI

[grassworks.org/?110340](http://grassworks.org/?110340)

### January 21-23: Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society Conference.

Aberdeen, SD

[www.npsas.org/component/eventbooking/?task=view\\_event\\_id=69&Itemid=355](http://www.npsas.org/component/eventbooking/?task=view_event&event_id=69&Itemid=355)

January 22-23: Practical Farmers of Iowa Conference. Iowa State University, Ames, IA

[practicalfarmers.org/news-events/newsroom/news-release-archive/19738/](http://practicalfarmers.org/news-events/newsroom/news-release-archive/19738/)

### January 30-31: Immigrant & Minority Farmers Conference.

St. Paul Campus, University of Minnesota.

This conference is FREE for all farmers

and language interpretation is available in Spanish, Hmong, Karen, Bhutanese, Vietnamese, and Somali.

Register: [www.eventbrite.com/e/11th-immigrant-and-minority-farmers-conference-tickets-17811327159?aff=erelexporg](http://www.eventbrite.com/e/11th-immigrant-and-minority-farmers-conference-tickets-17811327159?aff=erelexporg)

### February 13: Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota Conference.

College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph, MN

[www.sfa-mn.org/conference/](http://www.sfa-mn.org/conference/)

### February 17-18: Midwest Soil Health Summit.

Arrowwood Resort, Alexandria, MN

[www.sfa-mn.org/midwest-soil-health-summit/](http://www.sfa-mn.org/midwest-soil-health-summit/)

### February 25: MOSES Organic

University. La Crosse Center, La Crosse, WI

[mosesorganic.org/organic-university/](http://mosesorganic.org/organic-university/)

February 25-27: MOSES Conference. La Crosse Center, La Crosse, WI

[mosesorganic.org/conference/](http://mosesorganic.org/conference/)

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