

# **Community Assistantship Program**

**Sustainable Farming Association Survey**

# **Sustainable Farming Association Survey**

Prepared in partnership with  
Sustainable Farming Association of MN

Prepared by  
Christine Vatovec  
Graduate Student

University of Minnesota  
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Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA)  
University of Minnesota  
330 HHH Center  
301--19th Avenue South  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455

Phone: (612) 625-1551

Fax: (612) 626-0273

E-mail: cura@umn.edu

Web site: <http://www.cura.umn.edu>

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Christine Vatovec  
University of Minnesota  
Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota  
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## Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	4
Introduction .....	5
Survey results .....	6
Basic Information.....	6
Field days .....	11
Sustainable practices .....	15
Marketing.....	18
Dairy.....	21
Grazing.....	23
Crop production.....	26
Closing .....	27
Comments .....	27
Recommendations.....	29
Appendix 1 Introductory letter .....	32
Appendix 2 Survey instrument .....	33
Appendix 3 Weed identification photographs .....	40

## **Executive Summary**

The Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota (SFA), a non-profit, farmer to farmer information sharing network, conducted a survey of its membership during the spring of 2001. The purposes of the survey were to determine beneficial relationships between members, gain insight on where to focus its energies and resources, and to create a database of its members to promote networking. The survey was sent to 498 individuals in mid-March 2001. The response rate was 38% and included both farmers and non-farmers. Ninety percent of respondents were members of the organization, with an average length of membership of six years. The primary reason for joining the SFA was to support sustainable farming practices (91%), followed by meeting people with similar interests (79%), and using SFA programs to improve practices (51%). Thirty percent of members reported that their expectations of the SFA were met, 42% said expectations were generally met, and for 18% expectations were partly met. Seventy-two percent have suggested the SFA to a friend. Fifty percent have experienced life improvements on their farm as a result of SFA membership. Thirty-three percent attend programs twice per year, and 81% have attended field days. Ninety percent of field day attendees reported that field days are effective in communicating information to farmers, reasons being farmer to farmer communication (87%) and seeing and comparing practices first hand (78%). To improve field days, 49% would like more farmers to share experiences with practices, and 35% would like cost analyses of practices. Seventy-nine percent of farmers gave changed practices in the past three to five years to make their production more sustainable, and continue to use those practices. The number one reason to adopt sustainable practices was to farm in a way that is better for the environment (89%), and the greatest barrier to adopting sustainable practices was the greater time requirements (83%). Seventy-six percent of farmers direct market, with neighbors making up the top customers (48%). Sixty percent of dairy farmer respondents have participated in the Dairy Diagnostic Team program, and the top area of improvement on farms resulting from the program was physical dairy facility improvement (17%). Seventy-three percent of grazers practice Management Intensive Grazing, of which 24% participate in a grazing group. Recommendations include extending field day topics to cover new areas of interest proposed by respondents (page 13), providing help to direct marketers with processing, and to create active dialogue between farmers interested in adopting new practices with those using those practices, possibly through a column in the Cornerpost newsletter, or through web-based media.

## **Introduction**

The Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota (SFA) was founded in 1988 by farmers interested in creating a network for sharing information about sustainable practices. The organization's founders believed that "farmers, better than anyone, can inform each other what is needed to sustain our farms and communities." Today, the organization has over five hundred members in twelve chapters throughout the state. The mission of the SFA is stated as follows: "The SFA recognizes the wisdom within ourselves and our communities to find ways of farming that are economically viable and ecologically sound. In the spirit of cooperation we offer mutual support and fellowship to strengthen our families and communities. Our diversity enhances the sharing of resources, new ideas and approaches to farming." The aims and purposes of the organization are:

- To develop a support group for family farmers to acquire knowledge and understanding of economically and environmentally sound practices of production farming.
- To support this group through newsletter, farm tours, seminars, on-farm meetings and research opportunities.
- To serve as a vehicle for information sharing about farming methods, without endorsing commercial products.
- To support and encourage Extension and University research programs that promote sustainable agriculture.
- To promote farming as a positive way of life.

During the winter of 2001, the SFA sought to systematically collect information about its membership in order to assess the progress and success of the organization's current programs. The information gained will be used to 1) determine what practices are currently being used by members, 2) what interests and needs members have, and 3) to develop a database of current members with the purpose of creating beneficial relationships between members (e.g. farmers producing organic grain and those needing organic grain to feed livestock).

The introductory letter (Appendix 1) and survey instrument (Appendix 2) were sent out in mid-March 2001 to 498 individuals. The survey response rate was 38%.

## **Survey Results:**

**Basic Information** *This information will provide us with a demographic look at the members of the Sustainable Farming Association.*

Total number of respondents: 190 (38% response rate)

153 farmers (80% of respondents)

37 non-farmers (20% of respondents):

2 non-farmers (5% of non-farmer respondents) were associated with SFA through direct marketing

Relationship of other non-farmers with SFA:

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Agriculture policy director with DNR                     | Previous board member               |
| Rodale Institute Sustainable Agriculture Coordinator     | Chapter coordinator                 |
| SWROC assistant scientist                                | Occasional facilitator              |
| UMN Extension staff                                      | Charter member                      |
| MISA staff   | Retired farmer                      |
| Feed mill owner/work with farmers                        | Future farmer                       |
| Seed sales/marketing                                     | Gardener                            |
| Soil consultant  | Family member is a farmer           |
| Hired on contract basis                                  | Supportive of goals, mission of SFA |
| Involved with SFA through Harvest Festival               |                                     |
| Consumer interested in local sustainable food production |                                     |
| Interested in promoting organic family farming           |                                     |
| Interested in educational projects sponsored by SFA      |                                     |
| Attendee of lectures, workshops, field days, seminars    |                                     |

**Farmers**

Farmland

Farmers who own all land worked	62%
Farmers who own and rent	35%
Farmers who rent all land worked	3%

Farm size

Acreage owned

Average	188 acres
Median	160 acres
Low	0 acres
High	1200 acres

Acreage rented

Average	170 acres
Median	110 acres
Low	5 acres
High	780 acres

Years farming

Average	22 years
Median	20 years
Low	½ year
High	60 years

Farmer age

20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
2%	9%	40%	29%	20%

Business type

Sole proprietorship	Partnership	Corporation	No response
84%	12%	3%	1%

Record system

Manual	Computer-based	Manual & Computer	Other (none)	No response
45%	20%	33%	1%	1%

Organized record system

Yes	70%
No	19%
No response	11%

Useful record system

Yes	75%
No	9%
No response	16%

Farms with whole farm plan

Yes	42%
No	55%
No response	3%

69% of farmers without a whole farm plan are interested in creating one.

Farmers with a whole farm plan attended the following:

3 day Holistic Workshop	37%
Decision Case Study Workshop	4%
WFP Workshop Series	7%
Field day covering elements of WFP	14%

Farmers without a whole farm plan attended the following:

3 day Holistic Workshop	14%
Decision Case Study Workshop	5%
WFP Workshop Series	5%
Field day covering elements of WFP	20%

**Practices**

Conventional	9%
Organic	40%
Transitional	14%
Sustainable	34%
Other	3%

“Other” was reported as: permaculture, biodynamic, appropriate technology, or ecological.

Organic producers

Certified	64%
Non-certified	36%

Certifying agency

OGBA	39%
OCIA	26%
Oregon Tilth	8%
FVO	11%
MOSA	13%
Demeter Association	3%

**Products** (reported as a percent of 153 farmers)

*Livestock*

beef 47%  
dairy 20%  
swine 12%  
sheep 12%  
goats 5%  
poultry 29%

*Crops*

grain 42%  
hay 47%  
silage 8%  
vegetables 27%

*Fruits&Nuts*

tree fruits 14%  
small fruits 10%  
nuts 3%

*Miscellaneous*

ornamentals and turf 2%  
trees(forest&Christmas) 14%

*Other*

maple syrup 2%	wildflowers 1%	asparagus 1%	eggs 1%
honey 3%	cut flowers 2%	pumpkins 1%	Christmas wreaths 1%
lumber 1%	dried flowers 1%	sweet corn 1%	hunting dogs 1%
pasture 1%	tree mushrooms 1%	earthworms 1%	cotton clothing 1%
herbs 2%	fruit trees&shrubs 1%	horses 3%	Agroforestry 1%

**SFA Membership**

Of the total 190 respondents, 89% are members, 10% are not members, and 1% did not answer.

Farmers

Member	90%
Non-member	9%
No response	1%

Non-farmers

Member	84%
Non-member	14%
No response	2%

Chapter response (reported as percent of 169 SFA member respondents)

Chapter	% of total respondents	% of surveys sent to Chapter
Central	24%	27%
Northeast	23%	25%
Southeast	9%	100%
Western	9%	33%
Cannon River	7%	33%
South Central	6%	26%
Coteau Ridge	5%	47%
Princeton	5%	36%
Crow River	4%	42%
Lake Agassiz	2%	80%
Hiawatha	2%	38%
Other	1%	na
No response	3%	na

Length of membership

Average	6 years
Median	5.5 years
Low	1 year
High	13 years

Reasons for joining SFA (reported as percent of 169 SFA member respondents)

Support sustainable farming practices	91%
Meet people with similar interests	79%
Use SFA programs to improve my practices	51%

Direct contact with farmers as food source	18%
Other	12%

“Other” was reported as:

- Field days
- Information exchange with other farmers
- To learn
- Help with marketing
- Feeling of not being alone
- SFA philosophy
- To gain a mentor
- To contribute to sustainable agriculture
- To support organic farming
- Sales
- SFA is better than alternatives

Participation in SFA (reported as percent of 169 SFA member respondents)

Field day host	37%
Board member	31%
Chapter officer	22%
Event sponsor	12%
Other	26%

“Other” was reported as:

- None
- Coordinator
- Organizer
- State chair
- Exhibitor
- Consumer
- Consultant
- Read newsletter
- Volunteer
- Active in email
- Speaker
- Grazing circle member
- Casual observer
- Harvest festival
- Staff
- Product seller
- Sustainable ag. grant
- Former chapter president
- Advisor

Fulfillment of expectations

<b>Yes</b> , expectations met	30
Expectations <b>generally</b> met	42
Expectations <b>partly</b> met	18
Expectations <b>not really</b> met	7
Expectations <b>not met at all</b>	1
No response	2

Suggested a friend to join

Yes	72%
No	24%
No response	4%

Life improvement on farm as result of membership

Yes	50%
No	16%
Not sure	34%

Attendance at SFA programs

More than once per month	5%
Once per month	7%
Six per year	11%
Twice per year	33%
Once per year	30%
Other	14%

“Other” was reported as:

- Three per year (3%)
- Four per year (2%)
- Seldom (3%)
- None (5%)
- No response (1%)

Farm diversification as a result of SFA information (reported as percent of 138 farmer members)

Yes	46%
No	54%

**Field Days** *This information will be used to determine the effectiveness of SFA sponsored field days and ways we can improve them.*

Section respondents=176

Field day attendance

Yes, attended SFA field day	81%
No, never attended	17%
No response	2%

Preferred time of day for field day events

Morning	29%
Afternoon	72%
Evening	31%

Preferred day of week for field day events

Monday	32%
Tuesday	38%
Wednesday	35%
Thursday	40%
Friday	37%
Saturday	58%
Sunday	29%

Observed practices (reported as percent of 143 field day participants; usefulness reported as average on a scale of 1-very useful, to 5-not useful)

Practice	Percent of total participants	Perceived usefulness
Other alternative weed control	8%	1.5
Intensive grazing management	67%	1.8
No herbicide application	48%	1.9
Alternative weed control	34%	1.9
Cover crops	45%	1.9
Alternative crops	48%	2.0
Alternative pasture forage	49%	2.0
Flame weeding	29%	2.1
Alternative tillage	32%	2.2
Reduced herbicide application	36%	2.3
Other	8%	1.9

**Field day influence on practices** (reported as percent of 143 field day participants)

Farmers who changed practices: 33%

Which practices?

Became Organic	Flame weeding	Species management
Ridge tillage	Micronutrient fertilizer	Non-GMO corn
Reduced tillage	Reduced fertilizer	Management Intensive Grazing
Cultivation	Grasses instead of row crops	Pasture management
Rotary hoe	Crop rotation	Pasturing poultry
Weed control	Late planting	Grazing dairy
Reduced herbicides	Living mulch	Wintering cattle on pasture
Liming pastures	Cover crops	Bluebird nests for fly control
		Reduced fuel consumption

Why changed practices?

Soil improvement	Became organic	Better feed quality
Increased soil cover	Better weed control	Animal health
Reduced time	Eliminate chemical use	Family/personal health

Profit/ Economics	Improve farm	Quality of life
Reduced costs	Appeared to work better	Increased carrying capacity
Environmental protection	Practices made sense	No rock picking
Learned different practices	Practicality	

Farmers considering changing their practices: 26%

Farmers who did not change practices: 17%

Why not?

Practices not applicable to my farm	Need more information	Cost prohibitive
Concern for timing of practices	I am slow to change	Beginning farmer
Current practices work better	Equipment requirements	Time for marketing
Nothing new learned	Already using practice	
No response: 24%		

***Effectiveness of SFA field days*** (reported as percent of 143 field day participants)

Effective	90%
Not effective	1%
No response	9%

Reasons for effectiveness:

See and compare practices first hand	78%
Farmer to farmer communication	87%
Information is good and well presented	57%
Other	9%

“Other” was reported as:

- Farmers organizing own events are very effective
- Farmers are the best presenters
- Presenters are encouraging and supportive
- Seeing other farms stimulates own thinking
- Learn from others mistakes
- Networking
- Visiting with other farmers about practices
- Refreshing new ideas
- Learn something new at every field day

Improving field day effectiveness (reported as percent of 143 field day participants)

Increase discussion time/more time at each location	16%
Provide yield results/observations sent after harvest	24%
Provide cost analysis	35%
Need more farmers to share experiences with practice	49%
Display and describe farm equipment	18%
Provide information on <i>why</i> to try alternative practices	25%

Field day expectations (reported as percent of 143 field day participants)

Field day exceeded expectations	16%
Met expectations	71%
Fell short of expectations	4%
No response	9%

*Continue topics:*

Diversity of farm types/cropping systems  
 Scientific comparison of sustainable concepts  
 Alternative cropping  
 Crop rotation  
 Tillage and rotation effects on pests/disease  
 Weed control/alternative weed control  
 Insect control  
 Mulch residues  
 Cover crops  
 Organics  
 Organic transition  
 Organic fertilizers  
 Zoning and land-use planning  
 Tax incentives  
 Non-GMO corn  
 Value added practices/marketing  
 Pasturing poultry  
 Alternative forage in pastures  
 Gardening

Rotational grazing  
 Watering systems for grazing  
 Poultry health/processing  
 Sustainable hog production  
 Alternative energy/appropriate technology  
 Pasture walk  
 Greenhouses/season extenders  
 Direct marketing  
 New Technology Use  
     Flame weeding  
     Hoop houses  
     New crops  
 Drainage  
 Research agenda and partnerships  
 Sustainable pasture management  
 Herbicide reduction  
 Alternative livestock  
 Composting manure  
 Using equipment variables

*New topics:*

Passing on farms to next generation  
 Youth in agriculture  
 Agritainment as income source  
 Political action  
 How to leave farming without high costs  
 Cost analysis comparisons  
     (ex. Grazing vs. confined)  
 Marketing  
 Local processing plants (small, regional)

Weed biology  
 Organic control of fruit tree pests  
 Biocontrol of leaf hoppers with wasps  
 Diversify species for better ecology  
 Beneficial insect habitat  
 Farm fertility  
 Soil compaction  
 Soil as a carbon sink  
 Soil building practices/soil restoration

Crop field as pasture in rotation  
 Grazing groups  
 Rotational grazing of beef on corn ground  
 More on livestock  
 Alternative turkey production  
 Draft animals  
 Worms  
 Woodlot management  
 Agroforestry  
 Grape production  
 Increasing meaningful profits  
 Integrated pest management  
 Decreasing prejudice against organic production  
 Potato insect control  
 Whole farm system management  
 Grass-fed beef  
 Tree nursery production  
 Growing Nitrogen fixers for soy/corn  
 New equipment ideas  
 Programs for women and children  
 Support for people trying to return to farming  
 Profitable shelterbelts  
 Organic certification  
 Northern fruit and berry production  
 Value added practices  
 Permaculture

Balancing soil for organic production  
 Plant in bed system with cover crops  
 Crop rotation/cover crops  
     what compliments next crop?  
 Organic gardening/vegetable/fruit growers  
 Flower production  
 Raspberries  
 Raising greens in greenhouse  
 Seed saving techniques  
 Alternative energy  
 Humane treatment of animals  
 Small corrals for handling cattle/calves  
 Improving prairie plantings with grazing  
 Goat production  
 Animal behavior in sustainable systems  
 Soil biology testing  
 Hemp  
 Diversified farm layout plans  
 No-till soy in rye  
 Effects of cover crops and fertilizers on soil  
 Human nutrition for marketers  
 Sustainable fencing/hedgerows  
 Multi-species grazing integration  
 Practical farming skills  
 Energy conservation in agriculture  
 Collaborative marketing

**Sustainable Practices** *This information will help us understand how SFA programs can be directed to alleviate barriers to sustainable practices and help farmers achieve their desired lifestyle.*

Section respondents = 173

Changes made in last 3 to 5 years to make farm operations more sustainable

No changes	6%
Tried change, but abandoned	4%
Changed and continue to use	79%
No response	11%

Practices changed

Practice	No change	Some change	Major change	Tried but dropped	No response
Agroforestry	19%	11%	6%	0%	64%
Grazing management	6%	26%	19%	1%	48%
Livestock health/facilities	10%	28%	12%	1%	49%
Marketing	14%	28%	19%	1%	38%
Manure management	11%	29%	14%	0%	46%
Types/mix of crops/livestock	12%	29%	13%	1%	45%
Fertility management	10%	30%	19%	0%	41%
Alternative marketing methods	10%	30%	22%	2%	36%
Tillage	14%	34%	13%	1%	38%
Weed/insect management	11%	36%	18%	1%	34%
Decision making approach	10%	39%	12%	0%	39%
Other	2%	1%	2%	0%	95%

“Other” was reported as:

- Season extending
- Greenhouse extenders
- Permaculture system
- Overwintering cattle without buildings
- Composting poultry

**Reasons to adopt sustainable practices** (reported as percent of 173 respondents to this section; importance level reported as average on a scale of 1-very important, to 5-no importance)

Reason	Response rate	Importance
To farm in a way that is better for the environment	89%	1.3
To produce a higher quality product	88%	1.6
To pass on productive land to future generations	87%	1.7
To contribute to changes in the direction of ag. in this country	87%	1.7
To reduce input costs	87%	1.7
To consume less energy	89%	1.8
To achieve a higher net income	86%	1.9
To improve my family life	83%	1.9
To improve the health of my livestock	78%	2.0
To be less dependent on outside suppliers	86%	2.0
To improve the viability of my community	83%	2.1
To have fewer insects and/or weeds	84%	2.2
To decrease dependence on outside income	80%	2.2
To be less dependent on government subsidies	81%	2.9
Other	9%	1.8

“Other” was reported as:

- Personal health

Produce healthy food  
 Animal comfort (physical and psychological)  
 Soil health  
 Satisfaction of endeavor  
 Build work ethic in children  
 Revert to an older way of doing things

**Barriers to adopting sustainable practices** (reported as percent of 173 respondents to this section; importance level reported as average on a scale of 1-no barrier, to 5-strong barrier)

Reason	Response rate	Importance
Greater time requirements	83%	2.9
Availability of market outlets	83%	2.9
Greater management complexity	83%	2.6
Lack of necessary knowledge/skills/information	86%	2.6
Concerns about weed pressure	82%	2.5
Possibility of lower profit	82%	2.3
Fear of lower yields	81%	2.1
Government program (eg. crop insurance requirement)	81%	2.0
Requirement of credit institutions	82%	1.8
Peer pressure	83%	1.6
Pressure from agribusiness	84%	1.6
Other	11%	4.0

“Other” reported as:

MN Department of Agriculture	Weather
Lack of equipment	Lack of price stability
Personal physical barriers	Capital
Government regulations	Labor shortage
Cost (no government payments)	Lack of support from family/friends
Density of producers for coop development	

**Value of SFA programs in alleviating barriers** (reported as percent of 173 respondents to this section; importance level reported as average on a scale of 1-very valuable, to 3-not valuable)

Program	Response rate	Value
Field days	87%	1.6
Workshops	73%	1.6
Cornerpost newsletter	88%	2.0

Project co-sponsor support (reported as percent of 173 respondents of this section)

Organization	Percent respondents supporting co-sponsorship
UMN Research and Outreach	55%
UMN Extension	54%
MISA	51%
ESAP	50%
Soil/Water District	48%
NRCS	36%
Grazing Land Initiative	34%
Ag Lenders	28%
MN DNR	26%
FSA	18%
Corn Growers	14%
Soybean Growers	14%
MN Pork Producers	13%
Other	18%

“Other” reported as:

Land Stewardship Project	Political parties	Environmental groups
MN Fruit and Vegetable Growers	Dairy Marketing	Churches
South Dakota State University	Local schools	Youth Groups
Michael Fields Inst., East Troy, WI	FFA students	Local tribes
Health conferences	MPCA	Chambers of Commerce
Blandin & McKnight Foundations	Milk plants	As many as are willing
H.H.Humphrey Institute	Seed dealers	NFFI
Marketing associations	Farmers Union	Retail marketers
Sustainable development partnerships		
Chemical dealers-educate staff		

**Marketing** *This information will help increase our knowledge of marketing techniques of SFA farmers, and the success of those techniques.*

Total respondents = 147

Direct marketing

Direct market	76%
Do not direct market	23%
No response	1%

Direct marketing customers

Neighbors	48%
Community Supported Agriculture	3%
Farmers Market	28%
Other	35%

“Other” reported as:

Advanced orders	Twin cities	Whole Farm Coop
Wholesale	Restaurants	Retailers
Harvest Fest	Passersby	Growers
Festivals	Friends	Co-workers
World-wide customers	Tourists	Duluth
Auction	Relatives	PTO
Anyone interested		

Products direct marketed (reported as percent of 112 responding yes to direct marketing)

Vegetables 27%	Fruit 4%	Pork 11%	Winter rye 1%
Produce 2%	Apples 3%	Chicken 30%	Hairy vetch 1%
Potato 1%	Blueberries 1%	Lamb 8%	Oats 2%
Onion 1%	Berries 1%	Veal 1%	Wheat 1%
Shallots 1%	Fruit trees 1%	Turkey 2%	Barley 1%
Garlic 1%	Raspberries 1%	Goat meat 1%	Grain 4%
Leeks 1%	Ornamentals 1%	Ground beef 2%	Soybeans 5%
Squash 2%	Cut flowers 3%	Beef 37%	Straw 2%
Pumpkins 2%	Flax 2%	Meat 5%	Hay 7%
Corn 3%	Herbs 3%	Dairy 2%	Honey 4%
Sweet corn 3%	Bees wax 1%	Milk 4%	Lumber 1%
Popcorn 2%	Maple syrup 4%	Cheese 2%	Potted trees 1%
Decorative corn 1%	Eggs 15%	Butter 1%	Clothing 1%
Christmas trees 1%	Manure 2%	Horses 2%	Stud 1%
Cattle 4%	Heifers 1%		

Processing infrastructure rating

Adequate	48%
Inadequate	39%
No response	13%

Direct marketing advertisement

Word of mouth	88%
Mail	29%
Flyers	29%
Signs	26%
Internet	18%
Other	23%

“Other” was reported as:

Customer visits	Regular media	Newspapers	Brochure
Personal contact	School tours	Calendars	None
Memberships	MN Grown	Salesman	Co-op
Family	Television	Industry magazines	

Cooperative marketing (reported as percent of 147 responding to this section)

Yes, market cooperatively	37%
No, do not market cooperatively	42%
No response	21%

Marketing at retail outlets

Yes, market at retail outlets	27%
No, do not market at retail outlets	50%
No response	23%

Retail outlets reported:

Co-op	Coffee house	Own store	Neighborhood grocery
Gift shops	Restaurants	Grocery store chains	Nursery
Inn	Health food stores	Twin cities	Cafe

Prices received

Yes, receive premium prices	63%
No, do not receive premium prices	23%
No response	14%

**Dairy** *This information will be used to help improve SFA programs for dairy farmers.*  
Total responding = 30 (of 31 reporting “dairy” as product)

Herd size

Response rate	77%
Average	100 head
Median	85
Low	5
High	270

Milking herd size

Response rate	77%
Average	57 head
Median	45
Low	0
High	150

Number of youngstock

Response rate	73%
Average	49 head
Median	40
Low	0
High	160

Acres available for pasture

Response rate	70%
Average	94 acres
Median	86
Low	2
High	200

Acres available for intensive grazing

Response rate	67%
Average	99
Median	88
Low	0
High	328

### Butterfat

Response rate	50%
Average	4.16
Median	4.1
Low	3.6
High	5.8

### Protein

Response rate	50%
Average	3.42
Median	3.3
Low	3.1
High	5.2

### Production

	Lbs/cow/day	Lbs shipped/year
Average	52	854,189
Median	50	721,000
Low	20	16,000
High	80	2 million
Response rate	53%	53%

### Milking system

Pipeline	27%
Parlor	20%
New Zealand parlor	7%
Stall barn	7%
By hand (goats)	3%
Stanchion barn	3%
No response	33%

#### Processor

AMPI	7%
CROPP	7%
FDA	7%
Kraft	7%
DFA	3%
LeSueur cheese	3%
LOL	3%
NFO	3%
Osaki's creamery	3%
Perham co-op creamery	3%
Plainview co-op	3%
Pro-Ag	3%
Stacyville co-op	3%
Sunrise Ag, Buckman	3%
No response	42%

#### Price (reported as price per hundred weight)

Response rate	47%
Average	\$13.35
Median	\$12.45
Low	\$11.00
High	\$20.00

#### Dairy Diagnostic Team

Yes, participated in DDT	60%
No, have not participated in DDT	37%
No response	3%

Of those who have not participated in a DDT, 45% are interested in more information on the program.

#### Years of participation in a Dairy Diagnostic Team

0-1 year	28%
1-2 years	11%
2+ years	11%
No response	50%

#### Importance of DDT in maintaining business ("Would you still be in business today without...DDT?")

Yes, still in business	56%
No, would have lost business	0%
No response	44%

#### Areas of improvement on farm because of DDT

Improvements in physical dairy facility	17%
Herd health improvements	6%

Implementation of accounting programs	6%
Attitude toward dairy business and industry	6%
Environmental issues addressed and corrected	6%
Increased milk production	0%
Increased milk quality	0%
Nutrition changes	0%
Feed cost savings	0%
More personal time	0%
Other	17%

“Other” was reported as:

- None
- No improvements yet
- Worked as a team member

Effectiveness of Dairy Diagnostic Team Program (reported as percent of 18 responding yes to participating in DDT)

Very effective	6%
Effective	22%
Slightly effective	22%
Not effective	6%
No response	44%

Respondents would have liked having more time together in the team, and follow-up visits.

Recommendation to other farmers to participate in DDT

Yes, recommend	33%
No, would not recommend	1%
No response	66%

**Grazing** *This information will be used to help improve SFA programs for livestock graziers.*

Total respondents = 84

Management Intensive Grazing

Yes, practice MIG	73%
No, do not practice MIG	20%
No response	7%

Respondents started MIG as a result of SFA programs: 33%

Respondents were already practicing MIG, but SFA programs helped improve system: 72%

Acreage in MIG

Response rate	56%
---------------	-----

Average	107 acres
Median	80
Low	6
High	775

Number of animals on pasture

Response rate	56%
Average	113
Median	70
Low	5
High	915

Number of months on pasture

Response rate	56%
Average	6.5 months
Median	7
Low	4
High	12

Number of years practicing MIG

Response rate	56%
Average	8.7 years
Median	8
Low	2
High	29

Types of livestock on pasture

Youngstock	79%
Dairy cows	38%
Dry cows	38%
Steer	52%
Other	70%

“Other” was reported as:

Geese 1%	Hogs 8%	Goats 5%
Horses 7%	Poultry 13%	Beef cow/calf 23%
Sheep 15%	Beef 16%	

Grazing group

Yes, I belong to a grazing group	24%
No, I do not belong to a grazing group	56%

No response	20%
-------------	-----

Of those who do not belong to a grazing group, 55% are interested in information on joining.

Grazing plan, technical or financial assistance interest

Yes, I need help	32%
No, I do not need help	42%
No response	26%

**Crop Production** *This information will be used to help improve SFA programs for crop producers.*

Total respondents = 108

Crop rotation (number of years in rotation)

Average	4 years
Median	4
Low	1
High	12

Cover crops

Yes, I use cover crops	64%
No, do not use cover crops	21%
No response	15%

Species used as cover crop:

Rye 49%	Soybeans 6%	Sorghum 1%
Oats 36%	Grass 4%	Sudan grass 1%
Hairy vetch 26%	Rapeseed 4%	Winter wheat 1%
Clover 25%	Peas 4%	Turnip 1%
Alfalfa 17%	Wheat 3%	Triticale 1%
Buckwheat 14%	Barley 3%	

Reasons farmers do not use cover crops:

Pasture is used as cover crop	Return on investment	Use hay, alfalfa plow-under
Not needed on grass management	Time	Short growing season
Too late if harvest in September	Still learning	Cool soil temperatures
Wet spring ground	Weather	Knowledge
None work in my rotation	Cost	Machinery

Conservation Reserve Program

Yes, I have CRP land	28%
No, do not have CRP land	62%
No response	10%

Drainage use to control soil moisture

Yes, I use drainage techniques	49%
--------------------------------	-----

No, do not use drainage techniques	29%
No response	22%

Technique used:

Tile 36%

Ditches 22%

Other 7% :      Raised beds      Trenches      Mulch  
    Contouring      Subsoiler      Alfalfa

## Closing

Total respondents = 178

Question	Yes	No	No response
Member of LSP	40%	41%	19%
Include in SFA Marketing Directory	56%	24%	21%
Include in other marketing opportunities	55%	21%	24%
Pass name along to buyer	68%	14%	18%
Pass name along to seller	54%	20%	26%
Interested in being included in research proposals	39%	33%	28%
Interested in a list of research proposal participants	39%	33%	28%
Contact by phone at a later date	80%	9%	11%
Contact in person at a later date	73%	13%	14%

## Comments

The following comments were written by various respondents:

*Farmer communication:*

“Can/does the SFA receive questions like ‘how do hoop houses hold up in Minnesota’, and then create an active dialog among members for learning?”

*Research ideas:*

“...alternative energy, horse farming, cover cropping and tillage with low horsepower.”

*Focus of SFA programs:*

“I am a small market gardener, less than 1 acre. Most [programs] and field days focus on large production. There needs to be some emphasis on small farmers.”

“LSP has changed its focus from sustainable farming to sustainable food production, should SFA consider this? Field days for consumers?”

“During the last twenty years, the biggest obstacle to small organic family farms is big government bureaucracy that favors agri-business, and punishes the small operator. The SFA’s main mission should be to influence farm policy to level the playing field.”

“To improve SFA, add chapters. I’ve had a hard time finding a chapter in my area.”

“SFA and LSP need to reach out to more traditional farmers. SFA needs to work more closely with LSP, rather than compete with them...”

“Education is the key to point out the problem that’s happened the past 40 years, most farmers don’t see a problem. We should show them how to fix it and get a better profit in the process.”

#### *The direction of agriculture:*

“I think the University of Minnesota has done more harm to farming than help. Where do they get their funding? Why did the University push bigger and bigger farms? Who has it helped, small farmers, small towns, animals, or big business?”

“SFA can do more than any other entity in promoting sustainable agriculture. It accepts farmers large and small, organic, and chemical users. Members often do their own research and pass it on farmer to farmer. Often University and agri-business research stress production, not the environment.”

#### *SFA leadership:*

“SFA involvement often consumes too much time, energy, and expense in simply dealing with organizing events and tending to business and publicity to leave much leadership energy for discussing worthwhile research ideas.”

“Each chapter should have multiple applications annually.”

“Need staff person assigned to work with each local chapter.”

#### *Field days:*

“The SFA should provide written handouts with facts and figures of cost analysis, etc.”

“To improve field days, package them and the discussions [that arise] for those who can’t attend.”

“Field days are ineffective because conventional farmers don’t attend.”

## **Recommendations**

The results of this survey show the interest that SFA members have in the beneficial effects of the organization. Over a third of those who received the survey chose to have their opinions included by responding, which I believe demonstrates the interest that members have in making the SFA successful. Looking through the results, we see that the average number of years that people have been farming is 22, with 89% of farmers being 40 years of age or older. This reflects the ideas of some that we need to make farming more viable so that future generations will have the opportunity to make a living through farming. There are many facets to this idea, all which are complex and will take time. By using the information this survey has gathered, we will be able to make a positive start toward reaching that goal.

Farmer to farmer communication is one of the most important tools used by the SFA, and 87% of field day attendees reported it as the number one reason why field days are effective. The SFA mission itself shows how important communication is in creating a “spirit of cooperation” to offer mutual support, share resources, ideas and approaches to farming, in order to strengthen our families and communities. Therefore, most recommendations focus on ways to increase and enhance communication between SFA members.

### *Field days:*

I believe the results show that field days have been very successful at providing farmers with useful information. Eighty-one percent of respondents have attended field days, and 37% have been field day hosts. Thirty-three percent of attendees have changed their practices as a result of information learned at field days, and another 26% are considering change. Ninety percent of attendees reported that field days are effective, with ways to improve reported as getting more farmers to share experiences with practices (49%) and provide cost analyses (35%). Therefore, I recommend:

- 1) Enhance existing field days by a) providing cost analyses of the use of alternative practices, b) “package” field day topics in handouts for people who are interested but unable to attend field days, c) encourage more farmers to share their experiences, and c) provide outreach to conventional farmers.

- 2) Extend field day topics to cover new areas of interest proposed by respondents (page 15), and include topics for smaller-scale producers.
- 3) Hold field days on Saturday afternoons, the preferred day and time of the majority of respondents.

*Adoption of sustainable practices:*

The top five reported reasons for adopting sustainable practices were: to farm in a way that is better for the environment, produce a higher quality product, pass on productive land to future generations, contribute to changes in the direction of agriculture in the U.S., and to reduce input costs. The five greatest barriers to adopting sustainable practices were: greater time requirements, availability of market outlets, greater management complexity, lack of necessary skills, and concerns about weed pressure.

Again, I believe that communication is necessary to help promote these incentives and alleviate these barriers. By working together and learning from one another's experiences, we can find ways to promote environmental quality, create schedules to reduce time requirements and make managing production less complicated. Therefore, I recommend:

- 1) Create an active dialogue between farmers interested in adopting new practices with those using those practices, possibly through a column in the Cornerpost newsletter, or through web-based media.
- 2) Promote research on alternative practices by co-sponsoring projects with groups who are knowledgeable about specific topics (page 20).

*Marketing:*

Again, availability of market outlets was one of the top five reported barriers to adopting sustainable practices. Also, 76% of farmers are direct marketing products, 63% of which are receiving premium prices. Only 48% of direct marketers reported having adequate processing infrastructure. Therefore, I recommend:

- 1) Increasing marketing opportunities available to SFA members.
- 2) Providing information about marketing methods, and sharing marketing experiences through SFA programs.
- 3) Providing help to direct marketers with their processing infrastructure.

*SFA Leadership:*

Based on comments (page 32) and response rates from individual chapters (page 10), it appears that some chapters are more active than others. A comment that organizing events can take the vast majority of available time, energy and resources implies that to make the SFA sustainable itself, there needs to be either a larger staff, or some way to reduce these pressures. Therefore, I recommend:

- 1) Encouraging involvement in chapter coordination and event planning from multiple SFA members.
- 2) Increasing the number of SFA staff members so that individual chapters can have greater support from a central body.

I hope these recommendations will prove useful to the organization. I realize that these final ideas will be the most difficult to accomplish because of budgetary restrictions and variable interest levels between chapters, but I feel that such changes would make the SFA more effective. Overall, I believe the survey results show that current programs (field days, workshops, and the Cornerpost) are well received by members, and that they provide useful information and networking opportunities. Again, I believe that any increase in communication between members will be very beneficial for helping move agriculture in a more sustainable direction in the United States.

Dear <Title><Last name>,

The Sustainable Farming Association is conducting a survey of its membership. We are interested in your thoughts on how to improve our services to you in order to increase the sustainability of farming practices in Minnesota. Survey responses will be compiled to determine areas in which SFA can better serve its members.

You are invited to be included in a survey of the Sustainable Farming Association (SFA). You were selected from the current SFA database. We encourage you to read this form and ask any questions you may have before completing the survey.

The survey is being conducted by Christine Vatovec (graduate student at the University of Minnesota and SFA Community Assistantship Program intern) on behalf of the SFA. Because Christine is technically a U of M employee, the University requires that this introduction/consent form be included with the survey.

The purpose of this survey is to get the opinions of past and present members on how to improve SFA services in order to increase the sustainability of farming practices in Minnesota. Mary Hanks, Robert King and Nick Jordan have provided input included in the survey. A preliminary group of farmers took the survey and on average it required 45 minutes to complete. If you would like your thoughts and opinions of SFA programs to be included in this survey, please fill out the enclosed survey booklet and return it in the postage-paid envelope by March 16, 2001.

The benefit of completing the survey is having your ideas represented on how to improve the quality of SFA programs. We do not see any risks involved in completing the survey.

Both a report of how to improve SFA programs, and a database of information to increase networking opportunities between sustainable farmers in Minnesota will result from this survey. However, only those people wishing to be included in the database will have their name made available for networking. All other information from this survey will be kept private. In any report, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify individual participants.

Your decision of whether or not to respond to the survey will not affect your current or future relations with the Sustainable Farming Association. If you have any questions or concern regarding this survey, you may contact Christine Vatovec or Carmen Fernholz at the numbers listed below. If you would like to speak with someone other than the researchers, contact the Research Subjects' Advocate line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware Street S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455, telephone 612-625-1650.

Sincerely,  
Christine Vatovec  
SFA Research Intern  
411 Borlaug Hall  
University of Minnesota  
St. Paul, MN 55108  
651-603-0702  
vato0001@tc.umn.edu

Carmen Fernholz  
SFA State Board Chair  
RR 2 Box 9A  
Madison, MN 56256  
320-598-3010  
fernholz@tc.umn.edu

## **Appendix 2** Survey instrument

Survey number:

### **Sustainable Farming Association Membership Survey 2001**

**Our mission is to promote the use of environmentally and economically sound agricultural practices and to ensure a healthy future for family farms and all of the people of central Minnesota.**



This survey was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of previous SFA sponsored programs and to increase awareness of SFA member needs for future programs. Please help us understand your networking and activity needs so we can improve the function of the SFA. By taking the time to fill out this survey, you will help improve the quality and effectiveness of our programs.

Please return the survey in the postage-paid envelope provided by  
March 16, 2001.

**Basic information** *This information will provide us with a demographic look at the members of the Sustainable Farming Association.*

1. Are you currently a farmer?    Yes    No  
     If no, describe your involvement with the SFA: \_\_\_\_\_  
     If no, are you a consumer recruited through direct marketing?    Yes    No
2. If you farm, number of acres: Owned \_\_\_\_\_ Rented \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many years have you farmed? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your age? (circle one) 20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60+
5. Type of business arrangement (check one):  
     Sole proprietorship\_\_\_ Partnership\_\_\_ Corporation\_\_\_
6. What is your business record keeping system?(check) Manual\_\_\_  
     Computer-based\_\_\_ Both manual and computer-based\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_  
     Is it organized?    Yes    No  
     Is it useful?    Yes    No
7. Do you have a whole farm plan? Yes    No  
     If not, are you interested in creating one?    Yes    No  
     Which of the following have you attended? (check all that apply)  
     3-day Holistic Management Workshop\_\_\_ Decision Case Study Workshop\_\_\_  
     Whole Farm Planning Workshop Series\_\_\_ Field day covering elements of WFP\_\_\_
8. How would you describe your practices? (check one): Conventional\_\_\_ Organic\_\_\_ Transitional\_\_\_  
     Sustainable\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_  
     If organic, are you certified? Yes No  
     If certified, by which agency? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What products come from your farm? Please rank the products in order of production focus (ex. Place a "1" on the line for dairy if your primary production is dairy, a "2" for the second ranked product from your farm, a "3" for the third, etc.)  

Livestock	Crops	Fruits&Nuts	Miscellaneous
__Beef	__Grain crops	__Tree fruits	__Ornamentals and turf
__Dairy	__Hay crops	__Small fruits	__Trees (forest and Christmas)
__Swine	__Silage crops	__Nuts	
__Sheep	__Vegetable crops		
__Goats		__Other _____	
__Poultry		__Not applicable	
10. Are you a current member of the Sustainable Farming Association? (circle one)    Yes    No  
     If yes, which chapter? Coteau Ridge\_\_\_ Cannon River\_\_\_ Central\_\_\_ Northeast\_\_\_ Southeast\_\_\_  
     Princeton\_\_\_ Lake Agassiz\_\_\_ Hiawatha\_\_\_ South Central\_\_\_ Western\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_  
     How long have you been a member? \_\_\_\_\_  
     Why did you join the SFA? \_\_Support sustainable farming practices  
     (check all that apply)    \_\_Meet people with similar interests  
     \_\_Utilize SFA programs to improve my practices  
     \_\_Direct contact with farmers as source of food  
     \_\_Other \_\_\_\_\_  
     What has been your participation in SFA? \_\_Board member \_\_Field day host  
     \_\_Chapter officer \_\_Event sponsor \_\_Other \_\_\_\_\_  
     Are your expectations of membership in SFA being met?  
     Yes Generally Partly Not really Not at all  
     Have you suggested a friend or neighbor to join SFA?    Yes    No  
     As a result of membership in SFA has quality of life improved on your farm?  
     Yes No Not sure Not applicable  
     How often do you attend SFA programs? (check one)  
     \_\_more than once/month \_\_once/month \_\_six/year \_\_twice/year \_\_once/year \_\_other \_\_\_\_\_
11. As a result of SFA information, have you diversified your farm production?    Yes    No

**Field days** *This information will be used to determine the effectiveness of SFA sponsored field days and ways we can improve them.*

12. Have you attended a field day sponsored by SFA? (circle one) Yes No

*If no, answer question 13 then skip to sustainable practices section.*

13. What is your preferred time off day for a field day program? (check all that apply)

Morning\_\_ Afternoon\_\_ Evening\_\_

What is your preferred day for a field day program? (check all that apply)

Monday\_\_ Tuesday\_\_ Wednesday\_\_ Thursday\_\_ Friday\_\_ Saturday\_\_ Sunday\_\_

14. What practices did you observe and find most useful?(circle for each item)

	Observed			Usefulness				
	Yes	No	Unsure	Very useful		Not useful		
Reduced herbicide application	Y	N	?	1	2	3	4	5
No herbicide application	Y	N	?	1	2	3	4	5
Alternative weed control	Y	N	?	1	2	3	4	5
Flame weeding	Y	N	?	1	2	3	4	5
Other_____	Y	N	?	1	2	3	4	5
Alternative tillage practice	Y	N	?	1	2	3	4	5
Cover crops	Y	N	?	1	2	3	4	5
Alternative crops	Y	N	?	1	2	3	4	5
Intensive grazing management	Y	N	?	1	2	3	4	5
Alternative forages for pastures	Y	N	?	1	2	3	4	5
Other_____	Y	N	?	1	2	3	4	5

15. As a result of the field day(s) did you or are you considering changing your practices in any way? (circle one)

Changed Considering change Did not change

If changed, which practices? \_\_\_\_\_

If changed, why? \_\_\_\_\_

If no change, why? \_\_\_\_\_

16. Overall, are SFA field days effective in communicating information to farmers? Yes No

- If effective, why? (circle all that apply)
- 1 See and compare practices first hand
  - 2 Farmer to farmer communication
  - 3 Information is good and well-presented
  - 4 Other \_\_\_\_\_

- How could we improve?
- 1 Need more discussion time/more time for each location
  - 2 Need yield results/observations sent after harvest
  - 3 Need cost analysis
  - 4 Need more farmers to share experiences with practice
  - 5 Display and describe farm equipment
  - 6 Need more information on why to try alternative practices

17. Overall, how did attending a field day meet your expectations? (circle one) Exceeded Met Fell short

18. What field day topics should we continue? \_\_\_\_\_

19. Suggest a topic for a program: \_\_\_\_\_

**Sustainable practices** *This information will help us understand how SFA programs can be directed to alleviate barriers to sustainable practices and help farmers achieve their desired lifestyle.*

20. Have you made any changes in the last 3 to 5 years to make your operation more sustainable? (circle number)

- 1 I have not tried any changes in the last 3-5 years
- 2 I have tried one or more changes, but abandoned them because they were not working
- 3 I have tried changes and continue to use one or more

21. If you have tried changes that you believe make your farm more sustainable, which practices have you changed? (circle one number for each item)

	No Changes	Some changes	Major changes	Tried but dropped	Does not apply
Grazing management.....	1	2	3	4	5
Manure management.....	1	2	3	4	5
Livestock health/facilities.....	1	2	3	4	5
Fertility management.....	1	2	3	4	5
Weed and/or insect management.....	1	2	3	4	5
Tillage.....	1	2	3	4	5
Types/mix of crops/livestock.....	1	2	3	4	5
Decision-making approach.....	1	2	3	4	5
Alternative marketing methods.....	1	2	3	4	5
Agroforestry.....	1	2	3	4	5
Marketing.....	1	2	3	4	5
Other (specify)_____	1	2	3	4	5

22. Why did you decide to try to adopt sustainable agriculture practices? Please indicate how important the following reasons were to you (circle one number for each item)

	Importance				
	Very				None
To farm in a way that is better for the environment....	1	2	3	4	5
To pass on productive land to future generations .....	1	2	3	4	5
To contribute to changes in the direction of agriculture in this country.....	1	2	3	4	5
To produce a higher quality product.....	1	2	3	4	5
To consume less energy.....	1	2	3	4	5
To improve the health of my livestock.....	1	2	3	4	5
To have fewer insects and/or weeds.....	1	2	3	4	5
To be less dependent on outside suppliers.....	1	2	3	4	5
To be less dependent on government subsidies.....	1	2	3	4	5
To achieve a higher net income.....	1	2	3	4	5
To reduce input costs.....	1	2	3	4	5
To improve the viability of my community.....	1	2	3	4	5
To improve my family life.....	1	2	3	4	5
To decrease dependence on outside income.....	1	2	3	4	5
Other (specify)_____	1	2	3	4	5

23. To what extent do the following barriers keep you from adopting more sustainable practices on your farm? (circle one for each item)

	No barrier					strong barrier				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Greater time requirements.....	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Greater management complexity.....	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of necessary knowledge/information/skills.....	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Fear of lower yields.....	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Concerns about weed pressure.....	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Possibility of lower profit.....	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Government program(crop insurance requirement, need to maintain acreage, etc.).....	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Requirement of credit institutions.....	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Peer pressure.....	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Pressure from agribusiness.....	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Availability of market outlets.....	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Other (specify)_____	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

24. How valuable have each of the following SFA projects been in helping to alleviate these barriers so it is easier to adopt sustainable practices?

	Very valuable	Somewhat valuable	Not valuable	Not applicable
Field days.....	1	2	3	4
Cornerpost newsletter.....	1	2	3	4
Workshops.....	1	2	3	4

25. Check each of the following you would like to see the SFA co-sponsor projects with:

MISA\_\_ MN Dept of Ag ESAP\_\_ Soil/Water District\_\_ NRCS\_\_  
 UofM Research and Outreach\_\_ Ag Lenders\_\_ Grazing Land Initiative\_\_  
 MN DNR\_\_ MN Pork Producers\_\_ Corn Growers\_\_ Soybean Growers\_\_  
 FSA\_\_ UofM Extension\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_\_

**Marketing** *This information will help increase our knowledge of marketing techniques of SFA farmers, and the success of those techniques.*

26. Do you direct market your farm products? Yes No

To whom? Neighbors\_\_ CSA\_\_ Farmers Market\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_\_

What products do you market?\_\_\_\_\_

How would you rate your processing infrastructure? \_\_Adequate \_\_Inadequate

27. How do you advertise? Internet\_\_ Mail\_\_ Flyers\_\_ Signs\_\_ Word of mouth\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_\_

28. Do you market cooperatively with other farmers? Yes No

29. Do you market your products in any retail outlets? Yes No

If yes, which ones?\_\_\_\_\_

30. Do you receive a premium price for your products? Yes No

**Dairy** *This information will be used to help improve SFA programs for dairy farmers. If it does not apply to you, skip ahead to the grazing section.*

31. Size of herd\_\_\_\_\_

32. Size of milking herd\_\_\_\_\_ Number of youngstock\_\_\_\_\_

33. Acres available for pasture\_\_\_\_\_ Acres available for Intensive grazing\_\_\_\_\_

34. Butterfat\_\_\_\_\_ Protein\_\_\_\_\_

35. Lbs/cow/day\_\_\_\_\_ Milking system\_\_\_\_\_

36. Lbs milk shipped\_\_\_\_\_ Shipped to\_\_\_\_\_ Price\_\_\_/cwt

37. Have you participated in a MN Department of Ag funded SFA Dairy Diagnostic Team (DDT) project? Yes No

If no, would you like more information about joining a DDT? Yes No

If yes, how long have you been participating in a DDT?

0-1year\_\_ 1-2years\_\_ 2+years\_\_

Would you still be in business today without the implementation of suggestions from your DDT? Yes No

What areas did you see improvement in after having a DDT on your farm? (check all that apply) Increased milk

production\_\_ (How many pounds per cow? 0-5\_\_ 5-10\_\_ 10+\_\_)

Increased milk quality\_\_

Herd health improvements\_\_ Nutrition changes\_\_ Feed cost savings\_\_

More personal time\_\_ Improvements in physical dairy facility\_\_

Implementation of accounting programs\_\_ Attitude toward dairy business and industry\_\_

Environmental issues addressed and corrected\_\_ Other(specify)\_\_\_\_\_

How would you rate the effectiveness of the DDT program for a dairy farmer?

Very effective\_\_ Effective\_\_ Slightly effective\_\_ Not effective\_\_

Is there anything you would have liked your DDT to have done differently?\_\_\_\_\_

Would you recommend this program to a fellow dairy producer? Yes No

**Grazing** *This information will be used to help improve SFA programs for livestock graziers. If it does not apply to you, skip ahead to the crop production section.*

38. Do you currently practice Management Intensive Grazing (MIG)? Yes No

If yes, did you start as a result of SFA educational programs? Yes No

If you were already practicing MIG, did SFA programs help improve your system or skills? Yes No

Number of acres in MIG:\_\_\_\_\_ Number of animals on pasture:\_\_\_\_\_

Number of months on pasture:\_\_\_\_\_ How long have you been in MIG?\_\_\_\_\_

Type of livestock on pasture? (check all that apply) \_\_Young stock \_\_Dairy cows \_\_Dry cows

\_\_Steer \_\_Other\_\_\_\_\_

Do you belong to a grazing group? Yes No

Are you interested in joining a grazing group? Yes No

Do you need help with creating a grazing plan/technical assistance/financial assistance? Yes No

**Crop Production** *This information will be used to help improve SFA programs for crop producers. If it does not apply to you, skip ahead to the soil quality section.*

39. How many years is your crop sequence?\_\_

What is a typical crop rotation for your farm?\_\_\_\_\_

40. Do you use cover crops? Yes No

If yes, which ones?\_\_\_\_\_

where do they fit in your rotation?\_\_\_\_\_

If no, why not?\_\_\_\_\_

41. Do you have any land in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)? Yes No

*The following information will be used for a research project being conducted at the University of Minnesota. Christine would like to know about how the management practices you use influence the weeds on your farm.*

42a. Which of the following crop management practices have you used? (check each that applies)

Practice	Past year	Past 5 years	Past 10 years	Never
Synthetic fertilizer				
Animal Manure				
Green manure				
Herbicide				
Fungicide				
Compost				
Moldboard plow				
Ridge-tillage				
Chisel plow				
Conservation till				
No-till				
Other (specify)				

42b. What time of year and how often do you currently use the following practices?(We realize the fields you use each practice on will change with rotations, but would like to know how often you use each practice.)

Practice	Every Spring	Every Fall	Every other Spring	Every other fall	Other (specify)
Moldboard plow					
Ridge-tillage					
Chisel plow					
Conservation till					
No-till					
Other (specify)					

43. What is your opinion on weeds? I prefer: (check) Clean field\_\_

Select for certain weeds\_\_ Tolerate a few weeds\_\_ Tolerate certain weeds\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_\_

44. Please refer to the enclosed weed pictures: What weed species do you have? (circle all that apply)  
Picture# 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23

45. Have you noticed a change in your weed community since you began using more sustainable methods?  
(circle one) Yes No Does not apply  
What methods have you changed?(check) Tillage\_\_ Became organic\_\_ Cover crops\_\_ Rotation\_\_  
Other\_\_\_\_\_

46. If you have noticed a change in weeds, which weeds do you have **less** of now? (refer to enclosed pictures)  
Picture# 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23

47. If you have noticed a change in weeds, which weeds do you have **more** of now? (refer to enclosed pictures)  
Picture# 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23  
What do you think caused the change in your weed community?\_\_\_\_\_

48. Which weeds do you consider most troublesome now?(Rank in order, place picture number of worst weed in #1  
space) #1\_\_ #2\_\_ #3\_\_ #4\_\_ #5\_\_

49. Do you target any specific troublesome weeds in your control methods? Yes No  
If yes, which species (use numbers from pictures provided) \_\_\_\_\_  
Control method(check all that apply): Cultivation\_\_ Tillage\_\_ Herbicide\_\_(Brand\_\_\_\_\_)  
Other\_\_\_\_\_

50. Do you find any benefits from certain weeds? Yes No  
If yes, which species (use number from pictures provided) \_\_\_\_\_  
What benefits?\_\_\_\_\_

*In order for Christine to expand her research on ecologically-based weed control, would you be willing to be  
contacted by phone at a later date? Yes No*

#### **Soil quality**

51. What is your dominant soil type? Silt\_\_ Silt loam\_\_ Loam\_\_ Clay loam\_\_ Clay\_\_ Sand\_\_  
Other\_\_\_\_\_

52. Do you control soil moisture with drainage techniques? Yes No  
If yes, what method? (check) Tiling\_\_ Ditches\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_\_

#### **Closing**

53. Are you a current member of the Land Stewardship Project? Yes No

54. Can we include you in an SFA Marketing Directory? Yes No

55. Would you like to be included in other marketing opportunities (coops,etc)? Yes No

56. If the SFA receives a request from a buyer looking for goods that you produce, may we pass your name along  
to that buyer? Yes No

57. If the SFA receives information from a producer selling goods that you may be interested in based on your  
production, may we pass on your name to that seller? Yes No

58. Would you be interested in being included in SFA research proposals depending on the specific project, time  
requirements, etc.? Yes No

59. Would you like to receive a list of people completing this survey who are interested in being included in research  
proposals? Yes No

60. In order for us to expand this survey to get more specific information:  
Would you be willing to be contacted by phone on a later date? Yes No  
Would you be willing to be visited in person on a later date? Yes No

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey of the Sustainable Farming Association!  
We appreciate your comments