

Endowed Chairs in Agricultural Systems

The College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS) at the University of Minnesota offers the Endowed Chair position as a unique opportunity for leaders in the academic, business, farming, government, and non-profit sectors of agriculture, rural development, and related fields. Individuals or project teams rotate through the position, serving flexible, varying-length terms as appropriate for their proposed activities. For the 2010-2011 academic year, the Endowed Chair is shared by:

David Abazs, a teacher at Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center and Scattergood Friends School, a historical interpreter at Split Rock Lighthouse and the owner of Round River Farm CSA. A lifelong teacher and local food systems expert, he plans to use his appointment as endowed chair to expand on the foodshed modeling research that he has been working on as part of a Healthy Food, Healthy Lives grant. David plans to share his research with the Regional Partnerships and help make it applicable to their community needs as well as helping to connect statewide foodshed projects. 218-353-7736, abazs@round-river.com

Lee DeHaan, a plant geneticist at The Land Institute in Salina, Kan., who is a U of M

Organic Risk Management

The Risk Management Guide for Organic Producers is a free online manual and website that will help farmers understand the risks in organic production and make choices that minimize those risks. The fourteen chapters of this manual cover a wide range of production topics that are relevant to organic farmers while integrating recent organic research and tips from local experienced organic farmers. Subjects covered include: Rotation; Soil Health and Fertility; Weed Biology and Management; Weed Profiles; Transitioning; Corn, Soybean, Small Grains and Forage

alumnus. During his appointment, he'll continue his research on perennial grains, partnering with university faculty, students, farmers and professionals in order to advance the perennial grain he studies—intermediate wheatgrass—toward commercial production. Experimental plots of this grain were planted at the U of MN St. Paul campus in September 2010, with plans to plant university research plots in Roseau and at two on-farm sites in 2011. 785-823-5376, dehaan@landinstitute.org

Bernhard Freyer, professor of organic agriculture at the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences (BOKU) in Vienna. He intends to use his knowledge of the European/Austrian organic experience and adapt those practices to U.S. and Minnesota organic agriculture. He'll work with the Institute for Global Studies, the Center for Austrian Studies and the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences on a series of academic and public discussions aimed at building understanding of the organic agriculture movement. 612-625-5796, 651-724-7169, bfreyer@umn.edu

Jan Ioannides, co-founder and executive director of Renewing the Countryside, a

Soybean, Small Grains and Forage Production; Winter Cover Crops; and Alternative Crops. The website also includes a link to interactive quizzes that producers can take to gauge their risk level in various areas of organic production.

Whether you are an experienced producer, one who is transitioning, or someone considering organic farming, this guide will have something to offer! Even if you are not an organic farmer and not pursuing organic certification, this manual still has a lot of useful information about

national non-profit that works to strengthen rural communities by building awareness and support for endeavors in sustainable agriculture, tourism and the arts. She plans to use her appointment to address barriers and opportunities in developing value-added products in our local food system. 612-251-7304, joann001@umn.edu

Kris Johnson, Research Associate at the Institute on the Environment. He has been doing research on land conservation since 1998 during which time he also worked for the University of Minnesota as both a Graduate Instructor and Coordinator of the Ecosystem Science and Sustainability Initiative. During his time as Endowed Chair, Kris plans to partner with the Land Stewardship Project to study the potential for perennial cropping systems to enhance water quality, climate change mitigation and other ecosystem services in the Minnesota River basin. 612-626-2167; krisj@umn.edu.

Please contact the MISA office if you have questions about the Endowed Chair program, or are interested in applying for it in the future. All Endowed Chairs may also be contacted through the MISA office: email: misamail@umn.edu; telephone: 612-625-8235 or 800-909-MISA (6472.)

management of common crops in Minnesota. To learn more about this publication, please visit the website at www.organicriskmanagement.umn.edu/

Risk Management Guide for Organic Producers is a publication developed by the University of Minnesota with funding from the USDA's Risk Management Agency and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. If you have questions about this project, please contact Kristine Moncada at monc0003@umn.edu or at 612-626-4906.

New Edition of High Tunnels Manual

The Minnesota High Tunnel Production Manual for Commercial Growers was first released in 2004, and was vastly popular with fruit and vegetable growers in Minnesota. The Manual, and its authors, deserve a great deal of credit for that fact that Minnesota-grown tomatoes can now be found at farmers' markets in May and June, and for the addition of high tunnels to the list of common sights in the rural landscape.

Farm-to-school Farmer Lists Move to Minnesota Grown

The Minnesota Farm-to-School Toolkit, www.mn-farmtoschool.umn.edu, that was launched in 2007 helped school cafeterias across the state to find, procure, and serve locally grown foods to K-12 students. Many farmers helped to grow this program by listing their farms on the Farm to School toolkit website.

Now ~ due to increased demand and interest for local foods by schools, hospitals, restaurants, grocers and others ~ Minnesota Grown has developed a new online wholesale database. The Minnesota Grown Program is the logical organization to offer this service with more than 1,100 producer members statewide, ongoing staff support to

Beginning Farmer Case Studies

The Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) recently launched an online series of case studies that provide beginning and transitioning farmers with a unique virtual resource. The "Profiles in Sustainable Agriculture" project uses photos, videos, and narratives to integrate personal stories of profiled farmers with detailed information on their practices. The case studies also include technical assistance via extensive tips and links to finance, production, and marketing resources.

The first case study features Laura Frerichs and Adam Cullip of Loon Organics, based in Hutchinson, Minnesota. They produce organic vegetables sold through farmers markets, Community Supported Agriculture, and wholesale clients.

A second case study is underway, featuring Cindy Hale and Jeff Hall of Clover Valley Farms in Duluth, Minnesota. They raise

New knowledge and experience gained over the past several years led to the release of a newly revised and updated edition of the Manual late in 2010. The comprehensive Manual includes sections on risk management, structures, the high tunnel environment, cultural practices, and crop production; as well as specific information on tomatoes, garlic, crop mixtures, and bramble fruits.

create and maintain databases, and a very popular and recognized website. To maximize limited resources and promote long term sustainability, farmers interested in supplying product to schools are encouraged to participate in the new online wholesale database at Minnesota Grown.

It does not matter how big a farm is, as wholesale accounts come in all sizes. Some are small accounts that prefer deliveries from farmers through the back door; others are much larger and only work through distributors. The important thing is that the wholesale database offers the opportunity to describe your business and products in enough detail so that schools and other

pastured poultry and hogs, produce herbs in a passive greenhouse, and use integrated pest management to grow apples in new and restored heritage orchards.

Case study users have had the following comments:

I will save this, share it and refer to it often.

It's everything I ever wanted to know!

Makes me want to do it, but also has me thinking more realistically.

No one can tackle everything at one time, so it's nice to be able to review and concentrate on different parts when needed.

The many links and resource tips really help to equip the reader with tools to take the information a step further. It helps to inspire when you can use the information to help yourself.

"I approached MISA with this project idea because I am a beginning farmer myself," says Sarah Stai of EcoSmith Consulting.

Find the complete Manual online: <http://hightunnels.cfans.umn.edu/2010Manual/2010manual.htm>. A print version of the 2010 revised manual is not available at this time. Print copies of the older edition are still available from the Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association; contact Marilyn Nysetvold Johnson at 763-434-0400.

buyers can identify which farms are appropriate for them to contact. The official launch of the Minnesota Grown wholesale database will happen on March 31. The Farm to School toolkit will continue to list farms through June 2011, in order to allow time for the transition. Listing on the Minnesota Grown wholesale database is a free additional benefit of the \$20/year Minnesota Grown membership. Farmers can submit their farm listing online by visiting the MEMBERS page of minnesotagrown.com. To request a printed form to fill out and mail back, contact Casey DeRosier at 651-201-6469 or e-mail her at casey.derosier@state.mn.us.

"There are lots of sustainable agriculture resources online, but I still felt like I was reinventing the wheel." Stai manages the project in collaboration with MISA and with support of advisors from University of Minnesota Extension, Renewing the Countryside, the Land Stewardship Project, and the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota. "Internet technology allows us to offer 'virtual tours' of real farms that new producers may not be able to visit in person, while also providing efficient access to essential resources that might otherwise be overlooked," says Stai.

The "Profiles in Sustainable Agriculture" project is located at <http://sustagprofiles.info>. Site visitors are encouraged to provide feedback on the project by taking a 5-minute survey that provides data for fundraising efforts and gives case study users a say in what topics get covered next.

Upcoming Conferences and Workshops

This is a sampling of upcoming educational events. Please check the MISA Calendar for more event information; www.misa.umn.edu.

Minnesota Farmers Market Association Spring Conference, American Legion, Waite Park, March 24. Registration begins at 8:30 am. Event is open to the public; cost is \$65 for non-members. Register online at www.mfma.org. If you are considering starting a farmers' market or selling at a farmers' market, take advantage of this day of networking, mentoring, and connecting with the resources you will need to be successful.

Small Farm University, St. Paul Campus, University of Minnesota, March 26. Workshops begin at 10:00 am. There will be three tracks that people can choose to attend: Getting Started with Poultry, Designing Market Gardens, and Farm Business Skills. Cost is \$40. Contact Betsy Wieland at 612-596-1175 or eliza003@umn.edu.

Re-Launch of Northlands Winter Greenhouse Manual, Fargo Civic Center (as part of the Green Living Health Expo), April 2-3. Open to the public; admission \$3 per adult or free with donation of food shelf item. Information online: www.greenlivinghealthexpo.com/Fargo~ND~April-2~3.html

Iron Range Earth Fest, Mountain Iron, MN, April 9. Open to the public, 9 am to 5 pm. Admission \$2 per adult or free with donation of qualified recyclable item. Information online: <http://ironrangeearthfest.org/>

Living Green Expo, Minnesota State Fair Grounds, St. Paul, MN, May 7-8. 9 am to 6 pm on Saturday; 9 am to 4 pm on Sunday. Open to the public, \$2 suggested donation for admission. More than 300 exhibitors, workshops, and demos will showcase the latest in green and sustainable living. www.livinggreenexpo.mn/the-expo/

Value Added Producer Grant Program Increases Opportunities for Beginning Farmers, Regional Food

Changes to the Value Added Producer Grant Program take effect on March 25, 2011. The new regulations address program changes included in the 2008 Farm Bill.

These revisions:

- Direct up to 10 percent of total program funds to beginner farmers and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers;
- Direct up to 10 percent of total program funds to local and/or regional supply networks that link producers with companies marketing their products;
- Give priority for grants to beginner farmers, socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, and operators of small and medium-sized family farms;

- Extend grant eligibility to producers who market their products within their state or within a 400-mile radius.

In addition to the rule changes, USDA Rural Development is soliciting comments on the interim rule and the best way to facilitate the participation of tribal entities and tribal governments in the Value Added Producer Grant program. For information on how to submit comments, see page 10090 of the February 23, 2011 Federal

Register:

<http://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2011/02/23/2011-3036/value-added-producer-grant-program>

USDA Rural Development anticipates a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for Value Added Producer Grants will be published soon, so farmers and their organizations interested in applying are encouraged to begin gathering information and drafting application materials. Applications for VAPGs in Minnesota are made through a Rural Development area specialist. Find the Rural Development office for your area on this map: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mn/RBS/New%20RBS%20Page/rbs2010.pdf>

Rising Tide of Farm to School Programs in Minnesota

According to the third annual Farm to School survey, released in March 2011, the number of Minnesota school districts engaged in Farm to School rose from 10 districts in 2006 to 123 in 2010. The survey was conducted by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy in partnership with the Minnesota School Nutrition Association.

The survey found that apples, cucumbers, tomatoes, potatoes, winter squash, peppers, watermelon and carrots are among schools' locally grown favorites. Among school districts engaged in Farm to School, 70 percent purchased directly from a farmer- or producer-owned business, while 78 percent purchased Farm to School foods via a distribution company.

Full results of the Farm to School survey are available at www.iatp.org. More Farm to School information for Minnesota can be found at www.farm2schoolmn.org, and at www.mn-farmtoschool.umn.edu.

Do you have a story you would like featured in the Sustainable Agriculture newsletter? Send your submissions to misamail@umn.edu and we'll consider adding it to an upcoming newsletter.

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