

Sustainable Agriculture

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*College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences
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**Do you have a story you would like featured in the Sustainable Agriculture newsletter?
Send your submission to misamail@umn.edu and we'll consider adding it to an
upcoming newsletter.**

FOOD FROM FARMS: TOOLKIT FOR DIRECT PURCHASING OF LOCAL FOOD FROM FARMERS

Schools, childcare centers, hospitals, non-profits, corporate cafeterias, and anyone else who serves food to the public: if you want to start sourcing local food from farmers in your area, but you aren't sure how to do it, this new Toolkit for Direct Purchasing of Local Food from Farmers is for you.

The toolkit offers examples and templates for starting up community-based procurement of local food directly from farmers. It was originally developed for use by a small school district in northern Minnesota, and was designed for compliance with United State Department of Agriculture – Food and Nutrition Service (USDA-FNS) guidelines for informal procurement by Child and Adult Nutrition Programs. The toolkit is quite adaptable to other situations, though: versions of it have been used for local food procurement by a hospital and a non-profit organization.

The Toolkit enables an organization or business to craft a transparent process that involves administrators and community members, makes sales opportunities available to the widest variety of local farmers possible, complies with applicable state and federal laws, and builds community support. While the stepwise process and many templates provide a nearly turnkey package, adaptation of the material is highly encouraged. Communities and organizations can take ownership of this process and mold it into a system that works well for their particular situation.

The original development of this Food from Farms Toolkit and the associated protocols and materials was sponsored by Aitkin County Public Health, Healthy Northland, and Minnesota's Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP). Compilation of the toolkit was sponsored by Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA). Valuable insight and feedback came from the Minnesota Farm to School Leadership Team. Exceptional design and layout was provided by Renewing the Countryside.

Download the Toolkit and all templates online:

<https://www.misa.umn.edu/publications/directpurchasingtoolkit>

Contact Jane Jewett of MISA's Information Exchange with any questions: jewet006@umn.edu

OPEN GRANTS FOR FARMER-LED PROJECTS:

NCR-SARE Farmer-Rancher Grants. Application deadline: 12/07/17

<http://www.northcentralsare.org/Grants/Our-Grant-Programs/Farmer-Rancher-Grant-Program>

MDA-AGRI Sustainable Ag Demonstration Grants. Application Deadline: 12/13/17

<http://www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/grants/demogrant.aspx>

MINNESOTA SARE TRAVEL GRANTS & MINI-GRANTS

The Minnesota SARE program is funded by our North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCR-SARE) office via the United States Department of Agriculture. Funds are used for sustainable agriculture education and outreach in Minnesota, with the primary goal of supporting educator activities and professional development through train-the-trainer opportunities. This includes Mini Grant and Travel Scholarship funds for ag professionals (i.e. Extension, NRCS, state and tribal agencies, NGOs, etc.) and farmers to build their awareness, knowledge, and skills related to sustainable agriculture concepts. Minnesota SARE Professional Development Funds are to be used to:

- address the environmental, economic, and social sustainability of Minnesota agriculture and
- provide professional development for agricultural professionals and farmers.

Minnesota SARE awards a limited number each year of mini-grants and Travel Scholarships, with priority given to topics related to the Minnesota SARE Initiatives. These will be disbursed during three open application periods. All applications will be reviewed and scored by members of the Minnesota SARE Advisory Committee (AC).

2017 Minnesota SARE Initiatives

- Sustainable Adaptations for Pollinators, Pests and Climate
- Building Soil Health and Water Quality
- Local Foods Systems
- Sustainable Livestock Systems

Mini Grant and Travel Scholarship Timelines

Open calls for applications:

January 1-31; applicants informed February 15

May 1-31; applicants informed June 15

October 1-31; applicants informed November 15

Learn more about the mini-grants and travel grants online:

www.northcentralsare.org/State-Programs/Minnesota/Minnesota-SARE-Mini-Grants-and-Travel-Scholarships

Contact a Minnesota SARE coordinator: Kate Seager, 612-625-8325, kseager@umn.edu;
Wayne Martin, 612-625-6224, marti067@umn.edu

UPCOMING PRODUCE SAFETY ALLIANCE (PSA) FSMA TRAININGS

What is the course?

You may have heard about the FSMA Produce Safety Rule, new federal food safety legislation for fruit and vegetable farms. As a part of this Rule, some farms (those covered by the Rule) are required to send at least one farm supervisor to a standardized and approved FSMA training to learn about farm food safety.

The Produce Safety Alliance (PSA), a national group based at Cornell University, has developed this course to fulfill that requirement of the Rule (*outlined in §112.22(c) of the Produce Safety Rule*). But all farms, including those that are exempt and qualified exempt from the full Rule, are encouraged to take this course to understand Good Agricultural Practices and the FSMA Produce Safety Rule. University of Minnesota Extension will also continue to host general introduction to GAPs workshops and field days throughout 2018, but the PSA FSMA course is the only course that is currently recognized by the FDA to fulfill the training requirement in the Produce Safety Rule.

When

Minnesota will host our first PSA FSMA Grower Trainings in 2018. These courses will be co-led by PSA staff, MDA Produce Safety Program staff, UMN Extension staff, and trained fruit and vegetable farmers. There will be more PSA FSMA grower trainings in the future in other parts of the state. To see a full list of locations of PSA Grower Trainings around the country [click here](#).

January 17, 2017 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

River's Edge Convention Center St. Cloud, MN

(Day before Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers annual conference)

March 20, 2018 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Monticello Community Center Monticello, MN

(Day before the Minnesota Farmers' Market Association annual conference)

Why attend? After attending the entire day-long course, participants will be eligible to receive a certificate from the Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO) that verifies they have completed the training course. This is a great opportunity to get a valuable credential, as the training credential belongs to the participant who attended and is good for life. Learning about GAPs and food safety is beneficial to all produce farms, no matter what size or type of operation, and can help prepare for a GAP audit if desired.

Registration

To register: www.psp.tix.com. Cost:\$25. (This is a subsidized cost and will likely rise in following years). Registration deadlines: Jan 10, 2018 or until full for St. Cloud Training. March 10, 2018 or until full for Monticello training. Preregistration required for both trainings.

Registration includes the training materials, lunch, refreshments, and a Certificate of Course Attendance issued by AFDO. Participation for the entire training is required for the certificate. Participation is limited to 30 participants on a first-come, first-served basis.

Questions? Contact the Minnesota Department of Agriculture Produce Safety Program at [\(651\) 539-3648](tel:651-539-3648) or email producesafety.mda@state.mn.us.

These events sponsored and planned for you by:

- Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- University of Minnesota Extension
- Minnesota Farmers Union
- Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association
- Minnesota Farmers' Market Association
- Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture

Here are the best FSMA Produce Safety Rule fact sheets and links available right now:

- [FDA Coverage and Exemptions/Exclusions Flow Chart](#) - a basic flowchart to help you understand if the Rule applies to your farm
- [FDA At a Glance Key Requirements](#): 7 page Produce Safety Rule overview. Look here for an easily printed and clear overview of key provisions of the Rule and compliance dates.

- · [FDA FSMA Produce Safety Rule](#): Homepage for the Rule. The side bar on the right hand side has helpful links and documents.
- · [Produce Safety Alliance](#): The PSA is the national organization that leads the Grower Trainings for those who need to be in compliance with the FSMA. Good and accurate information on compliance dates and who is covered. Look at the "training" tab for information about trainings.
- · [FSMA vs GAPs](#): a good overview of the differences/similarities between the USDA GAP audit program and FSMA
- · [MN Dept of Agriculture Produce Safety Program](#) can help you determine how the Rule applies to your farm, what training is available, on-farm readiness reviews, and offer other help with regulations.
- · [University of Minnesota Extension On-Farm GAPs education program](#) provides education on Good Agricultural Practices, and is co-hosting, along with many partners, the upcoming PSA FSMA training courses, and can help you understand the Rule.

GAPS CERTIFICATION COST-SHARE FROM MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Vegetable and fruit growers who want to sell to wholesale markets often need to provide evidence of their on-farm food safety practices. Some buyers will accept a written on-farm food safety plan, but some buyers require GAPs certification. GAPs are Good Agricultural Practices, and becoming certified requires an on-farm audit that the farmer must pay for.

The farmer's cost of a GAPs audit can be partially offset by funds from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) AGRI program. The AGRI GAP Cost Share program will reimburse farmers for 75% of their GAP certification costs from the prior year, up to a limit of \$2,500 per farm.

If you become GAPs certified between May 2017 and May 2018, you are eligible to apply for that 75% reimbursement in May of 2018. The application for reimbursement and other required paperwork must be submitted to the MDA by May 31, 2018.

The items that must be submitted to the MDA by the farmer:

- Application form
- [IRS form W-9](#)
- Proof of certification
- Copies of invoices issued by certifier

More information about the GAPs cost sharing is on the MDA website:

<http://www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/gapcostshare.aspx>

Resources to help you develop an on-farm food safety plan that will pass a GAPs audit are available from the University of Minnesota:

<http://safety.cfans.umn.edu/>

VIDEOS FROM SARE SUMMER FARM TOURS

In summer of 2017, Minnesota SARE conducted tours of four Farmer-Rancher grant recipients in Minnesota. YouTube videos of five grant recipients are now available for viewing:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQLK9r1ZBhhF06pSkulv0SD90B6h_p75Y

Farmers and projects featured in the videos:

Jean Mueller, Developing a Minnesota Wool Fiber Market

Stanley Smith, Open Pollinated Corn

Women's Environmental Institute, North Circle Food Hub

Cherry Flowers, High Tunnel Water Collection

REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM POLICY RESOURCES

Local and regional food systems are gaining national attention from policy analysts and policy makers. New resources from four high-profile sources are available to help local food advocates have conversations with local governments and communities. Topics include local food systems as engines of economic development, contribution of small farms to community food security and nutrient-rich diets, and establishing policies and ordinances at the local level to support local food systems.

Growing Local: A Community Guide to Planning for Agriculture and Food Systems.

American Farmland Trust.

www.farmlandinfo.org/growing-local-community-guide-planning-agriculture-and-food-systems

Local Foods, Local Places Toolkit: A Guide to Help Communities Revitalize Using Local Food Systems. United States Environmental Protection Agency.

www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/local-foods-local-places-toolkit

The Power of Regional Food System Investments to Transform Communities. Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, USDA Rural Development, and USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.

www.stlouisfed.org/community-development/publications/harvesting-opportunity

Small Farms: Stewards of Global Nutrition? Institute on the Environment, University of Minnesota.

www.environmentreports.com/small-farms-stewards-global-nutrition/

UPCOMING CONFERENCES, DECEMBER THROUGH FEBRUARY

Growing for the Future Online Conference for Beginning Farmers. December 4-6. nfu.org/growing-for-the-future/

Conservation Tillage Conference. December 5-6. Willmar, MN. www.ndsu.edu/soilhealth/?page_id=2279

Midwest CSA Conference. December 7-8. Chula Vista Resort, Wisconsin Dells, WI. www.midwestcsa.com/

Minnesota Organic Conference. January 11-12. Rivers Edge Convention Center, St. Cloud, MN. www.mda.state.mn.us/food/organic/conference.aspx

Upper Midwest Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference. January 18-19. Rivers Edge Convention Center, St. Cloud, MN. www.mfvga.org/en/conferences_workshops/

Emerging Farmers Conference. January 26-27. St. Paul Campus, University of Minnesota. www.facebook.com/events/123196901679250/

Sustainable Farming Association Annual Conference. February 10. College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph, MN. www.sfa-mn.org/conference/

Midwest Soil Health Summit. February 14-15. Fergus Falls, MN. www.sfa-mn.org/midwest-soil-health-summit/

MOSES Organic Farming Conference. February 22-24. La Crosse Center, La Crosse, WI. mosesorganic.org/conference/

WHAT WE'RE ABOUT . . .

This newsletter is supported by the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) - a partnership between the Sustainer's Coalition and the University of Minnesota College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS); the University of Minnesota Extension Service; the North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCRSARE) Professional Development Program (PDP); and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA).

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Seager, kseager@umn.edu, MISA, 411 Borlaug Hall, 1991 Buford Circle, St. Paul, MN 55108. You can find more University of Minnesota Extension Service educational information at www.extension.umn.edu. Also check MISA's home page.

Our mission statement: To help bring people together to influence the future of agriculture and rural communities to achieve socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable farms and communities. To stimulate thinking and discussion about sustainability, we try to present items that reflect different points of view. This being the case, we aren't promoting and don't necessarily agree with everything we publish.