

The Land Stewardship



Keeping the Land and People Together

Letter

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The Farm as Natural Habitat

Can a bridge of understanding be erected between agriculturalists and environmentalists? Yes, but the underlying framework must be that farms are much more than sources of raw commodities.

Must we sacrifice our farmland's environmental health in order to produce food and a good living? During a long weekend five years ago this June, the Land Stewardship Project convened a group of farmers, environmentalists, academics and government agency staffers at the Aldo Leopold Shack along the banks of the Wisconsin River. That group grappled with the question of how farmland has come to be seen as an ecological sacrifice zone. Out of that discussion came the idea of producing a book that would lay out the concept of farms that were economically and socially sustainable, as well as ecological gems. The result was *The Farm as Natural Habitat: Reconnecting Food Systems with Ecosystems*, which was published a year ago by Island Press.

During the past 12 months, the book has helped inoculate the public with the germ of an idea: farming and environmental sustainability are not mutually exclusive. Publications as diverse as *Sierra* magazine and the journal *Science* have reviewed it. It is now being used as a textbook in college courses and is influencing agricultural policy.

In this issue of the *Land Stewardship Letter*, we are providing an excerpt from each of the book's four parts: 1) Agriculture as Ecological Sacrifice; 2) Restoring Nature on Farms; 3) Ecosystem Management and Farmlands; 4) Steps Toward Agroecological Restoration. These excerpts aren't an exhaustive summary of



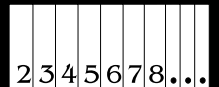
The Farm as Natural Habitat. But they do provide insights into a book that shows "ecological sacrifice" in farm country is neither positive, nor inevitable.

Part I: Agriculture as Ecological Sacrifice

Although [Aldo] Leopold knew that agriculture was becoming more industrialized and wrote about the dangers of a farm becoming a factory, he could not have imagined the enormous livestock factories in production today. The transformation of so many meadows, prairies, and wetlands into corn, beans, and hogs in Iowa, the state of his birth, and conversion of family-sized dairy farms into milk factories and cornfields in his adopted state of Wisconsin would astonish and grieve him. However, if someone told him about the zone of hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico, seven thousand square miles depleted of marine

Natural, see page 14...

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Commentary !?!?!?

Giving credit where credit is due

By Richard Levins & Brian DeVore

During the 1990s, it became clear to farmers in the Red River Valley that this agricultural powerhouse was facing some serious problems associated with its traditional small grains production system. Disease and weather disasters had combined with low prices to make crop farming even more financially risky than usual. But through it all some farmers were able to survive and even thrive, thanks to price premiums for crops raised without chemicals—price premiums that can run two to three times over the price paid for their conventionally raised counterparts. This caught the attention of local lenders, who in the past had dismissed organic production as an untested system practiced by tree-hugging eco-freaks. Hans Kandel, a University of Minnesota Extension educator in Red Lake County, says it was during the late 1990s that lenders started encouraging farmers to approach experts like him about alternative cropping methods.

“It was the banker who told some growers, ‘You’ve been raising wheat and barley and you haven’t made money the past few years, so why don’t you look at these organic soybeans,’” Kandel recalls.

Many factors influence what kinds of farming systems are adopted and utilized in this country: government policy, the availability of technical information, peer pressure, to name just a few. But as Kandel learned, another major decision-making factor for farmers is the opinions of their lenders. And those lenders are increasingly finding it hard to ignore the economic clout organic and sustainable agriculture brings to the table.

The implementation of the Federal “USDA Certified Organic” label on Oct. 21, 2002, is no doubt fueling the already growing demand for everything organic, from lettuce and bread to pork chops and cheese. During the past 10 years, the market for organic food has grown 15 percent to 20 percent annually. That’s five times faster than food sales in general. The growth in organic foods is paralleled by a growth in organic farmers: as of 2001, there were 7,800 certified organic

farmers in the U.S., up from 6,600 in 1999, according to the Organic Farming Research Foundation. U.S. organic crop acreage doubled during the 1990s, and production of organic eggs, milk and meat is rising significantly. Increasingly in the Midwest there are farmers like Pam and Jeff Riesgraf, who are producing organic milk near Jordan, just south of Minnesota’s Twin Cities, or Dan Specht, who has an organic livestock and soybean farming operation near the tiny Mississippi River community of McGregor, Iowa. Charles and Bette Johnson are producing small grains, row crops and livestock using organic methods in southeast South Dakota. These aren’t subsistence farmers who produce a few garden items for their own kitchens. Land grant studies show that farmers such as these are able to consistently produce good yields without chemicals for markets both here and abroad. It’s getting more difficult to ignore this agricultural production and food-marketing trend.

But farmers that raise organic and sustainable products are often still regarded as hobbyists at best. Here in the U.S., Hans Kandel’s experience of having local bankers send him farmers looking for an organic alternative is still the exception, rather than the rule. This is hardly the case in Europe, where organic farming and sustainable agriculture are well accepted—not just by farmers, but also by the banks that work with them.

Europe’s sustainable leader

Rabo Bank in the Netherlands is leading the European charge toward financing alternative farming. B.J. Krouwel of Rabo Bank’s Sustainability & Social Innovation division has learned that a firm commitment to social responsibility can be part of a profitable program for the bank. “Organically raised produce and agriculture benefits farmers, processors, retailers and consumers,” notes Krouwel. “If you don’t have complaints from the end-user or consumer, you avoid litigation. If you’re empowering a more positive climate, you naturally have fewer employee problems and enhanced efficiency.”

Credit see page 3...

Krouwel also points out that it is not enough to passively wait for organic and sustainable opportunities to present themselves. Market leadership requires more aggressive action. To that end, the bank has developed a number of “green” financing ventures in the last 10 years. The bank supports sustainable forestry, farming, and energy initiatives—all of which are duly reported in the bank’s annual sustainability report. The bank takes sustainability so seriously that in 2000 it launched the Rabo Green Bank, dedicated to supporting sustainable initiatives, including agriculture. The successful marriage of social responsibility and financial success is driving European competitor banks to follow Rabo Bank’s efforts.

Agriculture is a tremendous industry in the Netherlands, where there are more pigs than people. However, until recently the majority of agricultural commodities were produced on large mainstream farms. The outbreak of swine fever several years ago in Europe prompted a transfer from mass-farming methodology to sustainable hog production. As the crisis swept through the Netherlands, agricultural experts advised that converting to sustainable farms would greatly reduce the future risk of contaminating large portions of the meat supply. Farmers initially balked at the cost of transitioning from mainstream to alternative farming.

To aid farmers in the conversion to sustainable agriculture, the Dutch minister of agriculture developed a three-year retail partnership agreement with the government’s financial department. Under the agreement, the government guarantees farmers that they will be able to sell their products at a fair market price. The arrangement is possible via government-backed, low-cost green financing. The financing allows farmers to borrow at low interest rates. The low-rate loans are financed through a unique investment program that allows depositors to invest their savings in tax-free green bonds. Depositors pay no tax on green bond investment earnings.

Back in the Midwest

Richard DeWilde of Harmony Farms in Viroqua, Wis., began an organic farming initiative in the mid-70s, financing some small operating loans through Fortress Bank. His farm has since grown to 63 acres and DeWilde has developed a CSA—Community Supported Agricul-

ture—farm. This is a program in which 500 area families sign up to purchase a box of fresh, organically grown vegetables on a weekly basis over a 30-week season. DeWilde has an arrangement with Fortress Bank for CSA members to pay half of the cost up front and have the funds automatically deposited into his account at the start of each season.

Dale Pertzborn of Fortress Bank says that the bank loans to a number of organic operations. “We recently worked with a customer to get an FSA guarantee allowing him to establish an organic farm. Like any loan, we look to the business skills of the customer, their organization plan and their production

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“As financial managers, bankers have the power of money, so we can change the world.”

—B.J. Krouwel,
Rabobank

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skills. We are in a very agricultural area and over the years we’ve seen organic farms move from small undertakings to organizations with national distribution.”

One of the bank’s largest agricultural customers is LaFarge, Wis.-based CROPP—the Coulee Region Organic Produce Pool. The cooperative markets milk products, meat, eggs and produce under the Organic Valley label. With 460 producers in 17 states, CROPP is the largest farmer-owned organic cooperative in North America.

Pertzborn says his bank believes organic lending is the right thing to do from a social responsibility perspective—and it makes business sense as well.

Craig Dobbins teaches agricultural economics at Purdue University. He predicts that more banks will become interested in organic farming as financial institutions like Fortress Bank experience success. “Agriculture is a very efficient, commodity-based business that relies on large volumes of undifferentiated products to obtain narrow margins. Organic farmers will need to provide evidence of an established track record and increased consumer demand before banks are likely to be competing heavily in this industry,” Dobbins says.

Whether it’s socially driven or viewed as a way to strengthen loan portfolios, organic and sustainable farming will present interesting opportunities for the banking industry. And the banking industry, for better or worse, plays a major role in the future direction of

agriculture. At a recent meeting on concentration in agriculture, an aide to a U.S. Senator said that without a contract from a large-scale pork company, young farmers can’t even get a lender to give them the time of day. That’s troubling, because those contracts almost always require farmers to produce hogs in a way that leaves them little flexibility economically or environmentally. Researchers in Mexico who are trying to get farmers to adopt production methods that reduce nitrogen pollution are realizing that carrot and stick methods may not be enough: the real power of change lies with lenders and what practices they will finance.

The enlightened Rabo Bank, for one, could have major positive influences on agriculture. Apparently unsatisfied with its 87 percent agricultural market share in Europe, the venerable institution plans to launch an organic farming initiative in California later this year. In doing so, Krouwel reminds us, “As financial managers, bankers have the power of money, so we can change the world.” □

Brian DeVore is the editor of the Land Stewardship Letter. Richard Levins is a professor and extension agricultural economist at the University of Minnesota. In 2001, Levins was appointed a Food and Society Policy Fellow, a national fellowship program designed to promote a more sustainable food system. Portions of this article appeared in Hoosier Banker.

Opportunities



Resources

Grazing & profit\$

Dairy graziers in Wisconsin and New York are more profitable than their confinement counterparts, according to research from the University of Wisconsin’s Center for Dairy Profitability.

Because of their lower operating expenses, these grazing operations are financially outperforming the large-scale confinements, although the graziers generally produce less milk per cow and have smaller herds. For example, in 2000 the average Wisconsin grazing herd consisted of 65 cows, while the average confinement herd was 109 cows. But the grazing operations’ average net farm income was double that of the average confinement farm, reports the center in recently published fact sheets.

To get a copy of the center’s reports, go to <http://cdp.wisc.edu/>, or contact: Center for Dairy Profitability, University of Wisconsin-Madison/Extension, 1675 Observatory Drive Madison, WI 53706; phone: 608-263-5665; e-mail: Dairyprofit@calshp.cals.wisc.edu. □

A tale of two farms

How can two neighbors be treated so differently?

By Dave Serfling

It was the best of times and the worst of times. Our main characters are neighboring farmers in southeast Minnesota. Both farm 1,000 acres. For years, each had a 500-acre corn base with a government-recognized yield of 130 bushels per acre. In 1996 the farmers were told that would change: they could plant whatever they wanted except fruits or vegetables and their payments would not be affected—it was time to be “Free to Farm!” From 1998 to 2001, Farmer A developed a crop rotation of two years of corn and three years of hay on his 1,000 acres. Farmer B planted all his land to a corn-soybean rotation.

In 2002 each farm got identical direct commodity government payments of \$14,365. That figure comes from the USDA formula of taking 85 percent of the 500 acres of base, multiplying that by 130 bushels, and multiplying that figure by the 26 cents per bushel

payment rate (for more information on how I calculated the payments for Farmer A and Farmer B, go to www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/CSP03.pdf).

Now comes the 2002 Farm Bill and the farmers must decide whether they will change the acreage base that determines their payment. Farmer A keeps his 500-acre corn base because he only planted, on average, 400 acres of corn from 1998 to 2001. But that meant he had to keep his old 130 bushels per acre yield. No updated base, no updated yield. Since Farmer B planted his whole farm to corn and soybeans, he got to update his corn base and corn yield, as well as add a new soybean base.

Farmer B now has a 500-acre corn base with a 170 bushels per acre updated yield. He also has a 500-acre soybean base with a 50 bushels per acre yield.

These two equal farms in 2002 are far from equal in payments in 2003. If we assume the national average market prices for the year equal the government’s loan

rates—so all loan deficiency payments are left out of our comparison—then Farmer A receives \$15,470 ($500 \times .85 \times 130 \times .28$) in direct commodity payments. He also gets \$18,785 in counter-cyclical payments for a total of \$34,255. Farmer B receives the same direct payment of \$15,470. But because he was able to update the farm’s yield, and raises soybeans instead of forage, Farmer B gets nearly \$23,000 more than Farmer A per year. That’s a \$138,000 bonus during the life of this six-year farm bill.

This is where our tale takes a troubling turn. The Land Stewardship Project asked University of Minnesota soil scientist Gyles Randall to make an informal comparison of Farmer A and Farmer B’s erosion rates. Based on his experience with these kinds of rotations, Randall rated the erosion (a score of “one” being the lowest erosion rate) on each of the two farms for each of 10

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Farmer A’s use of forage made the farm half as erosive as Farmer B’s. But according to the government, Farmer A deserves less money—a lot less.
•••

years. Under the common chisel plow tillage system, Farmer B’s corn-soybean rotation produced a total erosion score over the 10 years of 70. Under the same tillage system, Farmer A’s complex rotation scored a 34. In other words, Farmer A’s use of forage made the farm half as erosive as Farmer B’s. But according to the government, Farmer A deserves less money—a lot less.

Is there a happy ending to this story? It depends on the fate of the Conservation Security Program (CSP). This program, which is a part of the 2002 Farm Bill, promises to begin to correct the inequalities that penalize conservation-minded producers like Farmer A. USDA is currently writing rules that will determine how CSP operates.

For CSP to be effective, core principles that were written into the law by Congress need to apply (see page 10). At the least CSP needs to enforce strong limitations on the amount of tax money a producer gets and reward actual conservation results. And CSP needs to require farmers to reduce erosion to at least “T”—a level where soil isn’t being lost faster than it can re-build itself—to qualify for minimal payments.

A program that rewards real conservation and benefits society is an end to this story that family farmers and taxpayers can both enjoy. □

Dave Serfling farms near Preston, Minn., and is a member of the Land Stewardship Project Federal Farm Policy Committee.

Letters

A place for people

The Jan./Feb./March 2003 *Land Stewardship Letter* was excellent. We think you address very significant issues and appreciate very much your voice and work. The article on “Livestock Friendly” counties is frightening. Maybe “People Friendly” counties should be promoted instead.

—Steffen & Janet Helgaas
Sioux Falls, S. Dak.

Truth in advertising

I have some thoughts for how Land Stewardship could approach this “Livestock Friendly” issue. Come back with a more “positive approach.” We want to be “People Friendly” counties. When we care for animals in the way nature has already established—grazing, solid (not liquefied) manure, etc., we become *people friendly* and we don’t have to designate counties in any manner.

—Arlene Nelson
Altura, Minn.

What’s on your mind?

Got an opinion? Comments? Criticisms? We like to print letters, commentaries, essays, poems, photos and illustrations related to issues we cover.

We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Contact:
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musical entertainment, canoeing, fishing, and a farm-produced meal.

For more information, contact Tim Reese at 952-472-9203, or log onto www.threeriversparkdistrict.org. □

Educational farm opening Aug. 9

A working educational farm that utilizes sustainable production techniques will have its grand opening Saturday, Aug. 9, from 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., 25 miles west of Minnesota's Twin Cities.

Gale Woods Farm is a new park operated by Three Rivers Park District in Minnetrista. Land Stewardship Project member Tim Reese is supervisor of the farm, which incorporates a diversity of production systems. The farm will help children and adults engage in experiences that enhance their understanding of food production and land stewardship.

The grand opening will feature a tour of the farm, wool spinning and shearing, sheepherding dogs working on pastures,

Sust. farms research report published

Sustainable Farming Systems: Demonstrating Environmental and Economic Performance is a summary of water quality research and economic monitoring conducted on three Minnesota livestock farms participating in the Sustainable Farming Systems Project. This project is a collaboration of the Land Stewardship Project, the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture, the University of Minnesota, the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota and the Minnesota Project.

The report shows that grass-based management systems, when compared with more traditional management systems, can protect against soil erosion and improve water quality while returning

competitive profits in the long run. This 34-page report is free if you pick it up at one of LSP's offices. If you need it mailed, the cost is \$4. Call LSP at 651-653-0618 for shipping information. □

Ball serves LSP internship

Alecia Ball has been working with the Land Stewardship Project since January as an intern. During her internship, Ball has been helping organize round-table discussions between farmers and lenders (see page 6). Her internship was funded through the Macalester College (St. Paul, Minn.) Off-Campus Student Employment Program. Ball, who is from Maine, graduated from Macalester in May with a degree in religious studies. □



Alecia Ball

Food & Farm Fest brings farmers, consumers together

Twenty-six farms participated in the 2003 Community Food and Farm Festival, held April 12 and 13 at the Minnesota State Fair Grounds in St. Paul. The Festival was held in conjunction with the Living Green Expo.

During the past six years, the Community Food and Farm Festival has evolved into one of the region's most popular venues for meeting farmers who are direct marketing various kinds of food. Farmers were on hand this year to answer questions about the sustainable production methods they use to raise food that is safe and good for the environment. Consumers sampled various items and signed up to purchase sustainably raised food right on the spot.

The annual Food and Farm Festival is co-sponsored by the Land Stewardship Project and the Minnesota Food Association (MFA). For a listing of the farms that participated in the event, log onto www.landstewardshipproject.org/cfff/exhibitors.html.

For information on the Living Green Expo, log onto www.livinggreenexpo.org.



During the Food and Farm Festival, Tzeitel Kersey of Natural Harvest CSA explained what her Community Supported Agriculture operation has to offer. Natural Harvest is located near Lake Elmo, Minn. (LSP photo)



Larry Olson described the system he uses to produce grass-based livestock on his Granite Falls, Minn., operation—Morning Has Broken Farm. Looking on is Mark Lange, who produces livestock and organic crops near Milan, Minn. (LSP photo)

Getting to know you

Farmers, lenders & educators start talking sustainable credit

By Caroline van Schaik

With more than 80 percent of surveyed lenders and agriculture educators in Minnesota and Wisconsin putting their money on biotechnology as the wave of the future, where does that leave sustainable farmers, two-thirds of whom said they feel bright about *their* future?

Not getting loans at the bank, unless some practical education takes place on all fronts. Both lenders and farmers need to be more well-informed if sustainable agriculture enterprises are to be successfully financed. But where does anecdotal evidence part ways with reality in understanding how best to get there? The Land Stewardship Project and a handful of partners recently decided to go beyond the anecdotes and utilize a series of three surveys to learn more.

What we found is that indeed some education is needed on the part of farmers, lenders and agricultural educators.

Some 1,600 sustainable farmers, agriculture educators (Extension and Farm Business Management/Production instructors), and agriculture lenders have been surveyed since April 2002. (Note: The “sustainable” farmers surveyed were picked because of their membership in various sustainable agriculture organizations.)

The goal of this question-asking was to unveil and substantiate some of the ideas that these groups have about alternative farming practices and related lending issues. The long-term goal is a more enlightened approach to credit—both on the part of farmers who live by more than one bottom line, and their would-be lenders. Joining LSP as partners in the “Farmer-Lender-Educator Project” are Extension Services in Wisconsin and Minnesota, Farm Business Management/Production instructors, lenders, and farmers in both states, as well as a consulting economist, the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture, and several students.

The answers given by the survey’s 567 respondents (see sidebar on page 7)

showed, in general, a need for:

- ◆ exposure to sustainable farmers and enterprises;
- ◆ record-keeping and written business plans;
- ◆ data bases of sustainable farming/marketing financial numbers;
- ◆ common ground on the topic of profitability.



Western Minnesota organic crop farmer Joe Fitzgerald talked about the working relationship he has with his banker during a round-table discussion in Montevideo. The Land Stewardship Project brought together farmers, lenders and agricultural educators for a series of discussions this spring. Similar sessions were held in southeast Minnesota and southwest Wisconsin. (LSP photo)

Let’s take the key questions of profitability, record-keeping, relationships, and the future to illustrate some of the findings in the three surveys.

Different takes on sustainable ag

Nearly 90 percent of responding farmers were enthusiastic about their profit-making capabilities relative to conventional operations. Just half the educators shared this conviction. Lenders were even less sure: one in three deemed sustainable methods to be equally as competitive and another third said they were less so. The remaining third felt they didn’t know enough to judge. A quarter of the educators took this stance.

Farmers, we learned, include the concept of profit in their self-described definitions of sustainable farming, but always with such caveats as, “making money with only the necessary inputs,”

“adequate,” and as part of “a perpetual gain of soil and production.” Further, they aren’t necessarily keeping the records to substantiate their convictions—one in three farmer respondents keeps records just for tax purposes and two in 100 keep enterprise budgets.

In contrast, most lenders said they want to see at least three years of financial statements beyond what is needed for tax purposes. They aren’t getting what they want from most farmers—lenders said that an average of just four in 10 of all farm loan applicants prepare financial statements and fewer than two in 10

prepare a business plan. Sustainable farmers might be the exception: eight in 10 surveyed farmers who had applied for a loan to an independent local bank, for example, included financial statements in their application.

Cash flow, equity and credit concerns have to be satisfied by all applicants, lenders said. But marketing/business plans, markets, and management skills were also required by more than half the lenders in their consideration of sustainable farming or marketing applicants. These are unfamiliar enterprises and therefore a risk, lenders explained at the round-tables.

“Lenders don’t discriminate against sustainable farmers,” said one banker. “But if it’s new, we need to know a little more.” Interestingly, a Farm Service Agency loan officer said the failure rate among her sustainable ag clients was no different from conventional enterprises.

Lenders and farmers alike spoke to the importance of relationships, though only about half of each group said they had positive relationships with the other. The majority of lenders said they were open to financing sustainable farming enterprises, but fewer than four in 10 farmers said they got that impression from their lender. Educators made a more positive assessment of their relationships with sustainable farmers and lenders. In contrast, few farmers said they turn to educators for information about finances, but more than half the lenders said they rely on educators for information on sustainable ag.

The knowledge gap

Even the most experienced sustainable

Survey, see page 7...

farmer seeking credit is likely to deal with a banker whose knowledge of farming alternatives is sorely lacking, according to our survey. And a major source of information for that lender will be an Extension educator who may be the one in two with no recent training in sustainable agriculture issues.

But we also learned that lenders and educators are enthusiastic about in-service training on sustainable practices, even as one educator wrote on his/her survey, "so few requests, no need for information." In fact, one Extension agent recently described her agency as simply "the transfer vehicle" for research generated by the university. Yet two-thirds of the educators who responded to the survey said they feel they have a role in shaping that research agenda.

More than half of responding educators said they felt that federal farm policy is either neutral or favorable towards sustainable agriculture. But farmers ranked current farm policy ahead of knowledge as a major impediment to their farming efforts.

Maybe it's not surprising, then, that very few surveyed farmers turn to Extension for information related to finances, "or anything," according to one of the round-table farmer participants. And the high risk that bankers assign to the unfamiliar practices of sustainable farmers is perpetuated by an educator force that does not see the issues in the same light as the farmers it serves.

The future

Then there is the future. Two in three farmers have a bright outlook for their methods of farming but only one in five lenders shared that conviction. Asked a different way, lenders showed some confusion about the future of sustainable agriculture: most indicated it was here to stay and grow, on a par with organic farming, women-directed enterprises, and greater ethnic diversity on the farming landscape. But three-quarters of responding lenders felt there would be fewer new farmers. Most said biotechnology is the big growth wave of the future.

One round-table participant noted that it would be difficult to feel confident in lenders when lenders have a dim or conflicted view of their future and little faith in the profitability of their choices. One Extension educator said during a round-table gathering that the emphasis on biotechnology bodes well for sustainable farmers who could offer a clear

choice for non-bioengineered food. Several bankers expressed concern over who would be their borrowers in the next five years. When a farmer asked where farmers will be if and when the government no longer supports agriculture as it does now, one banker joked: "In Brazil."

As the commentary on page 2 points out, lenders can have tremendous influence on the direction agriculture takes. And unless those lenders are willing to move to South America, they need to become more familiar with how

to support farming systems that are rooted in local economies and local communities. We hope this survey, and the accompanying round-table discussions, will serve as a starting point. □

Caroline van Schaik coordinates the Farmer-Lender-Educator Project. She will be based in LSP's southeast Minnesota office as of July 1 and can be reached at 507-523-3366 or caroline@landstewardshipproject.org.

A glance at the survey results

In 2002, targeted surveys were sent to 1,600 agricultural educators, lenders and sustainable farmers in Minnesota and Wisconsin. The surveys focused on perception and knowledge about sustainable agriculture and credit-related issues. There were 567 respondents.

Sustainable ag's reputation

✓ When asked whether "Sustainable farming is equally or more profitable than conventional farming," 89 percent of farmers, 35 percent of lenders and 51 percent of educators said yes.

✓ 35 percent of lenders and 25 percent of educators said they did not have "enough experience or knowledge to answer" that question.

✓ Most lenders (82 percent) say they are open to financing sustainable farming/marketing enterprises.

✓ 39 percent of farmers say their loan officer was open to their ideas.

✓ With "1" being bright and "5" being dim, 63 percent of farmers chose 1 or 2 when rating the future of sustainable agriculture. That same question prompted 22 percent of lenders to answer one or two, and 40 percent of educators.

✓ 96 percent of lenders and 95 percent of educators thought sustainable agriculture will stay the same or grow. Organic agriculture's future was rated about the same by the two groups. They also felt strongly (85 percent lenders and 94 percent educators) that women-directed farming enterprises will stay the same or grow. And they expect to see farming become more ethnically and racially diverse (88 percent lenders and 94 percent educators).

What do lenders want?

✓ Most lenders want three-plus years of financial records.

What do farmers have?

✓ One-third of farmers keep records only as needed for tax purposes, 43 percent use whole farm record keeping and 2 percent do enterprise budgeting.

✓ An average of 40 percent of all farm loan applicants prepare financial statements and 16 percent prepare business plans, say the lenders.

Where do farmers get loans?

✓ Half of responding farmers finance their farms through institutional loans, especially independent local banks.

Why are loans turned down?

✓ 54 percent of lenders distinguished between sustainable and other agricultural loans. Main reasons for denying a sustainable agriculture loan were uncertain markets, lack of business/marketing plans and poor management skills.

How important is credit?

✓ Twenty-five percent of farmers named the lack of external funding as a major impediment to sustainable farming. The bigger issues were lack of experience (49 percent), current farm policy (43 percent), and lack of knowledge (35 percent).

Who are the farmers?

- ✓ 16 percent are older than 60
- ✓ 61 percent are 50 years or younger
- ✓ 84 percent are 60 years or younger
- ✓ 83 percent have been farming longer than 10 years
- ✓ 56 percent report off-farm income
- ✓ 67 percent grow crops, vegetables, berries; 74 percent raise livestock; 13 percent are involved in other enterprises

To view all the survey questions, as well as the complete results, log onto www.landstewardshipproject.org

Minnesota Legislature

Citizen-initiated environmental review gutted, but family farms win against foreign investment

Minnesota citizens have all but lost their rights to petition for environmental review of feedlots.

A law passed during the waning days of the regular session of the Minnesota Legislature exempts feedlots of less than 1,000 animal units from environmental review, unless they are located in an "environmentally sensitive area." About 2.8 percent of Minnesota feedlots are above 1,000 animal units in size, according to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). In other words, more than 97 percent of all livestock operations in the state will be almost completely exempt from environmental review.

That will put the state's environmental and human health at risk, according to an analysis of the citizen-initiated environmental review process done for the Land Stewardship Project (see page 9).

The chief authors of the measure to weaken the citizen petition process were Senator Dallas Sams (DFL-Staples) and Representative Dennis Ozment (R-Rosemount). Pushing hard for the bill were Ag Star Financial Services and commodity groups like the Minnesota Pork Producers Association and the Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association.

The weakening of the law was highly controversial during the legislative session. An Earth Day press conference organized by LSP and allies attracted wide attention, and both urban and rural newspapers editorialized against weakening the law. On Earth Day, Senate Majority Leader John Hottinger (DFL-St. Peter) met with LSP and other groups opposed to weakening the law and promised to fight for environmental review. He said he would appoint a strong conference committee that would uphold the law. Eventually, Sen. Hottinger appointed Senators Sams, Steve Dille (R-Dassel), Linda Scheid (DFL-Brooklyn Park), John Marty (DFL-Roseville) and Dennis Frederickson (R-New Ulm). Senators Scheid, Frederickson and Marty committed on May 16 to uphold environmental review. But at the conference committee meeting on May 18, Scheid, after intense lobbying from Sams, the Minnesota Pork Producers Association and the Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association, offered the amendment to strip environmental review. Frederickson

spoke up several times in opposition to the Scheid amendment, indicating that this kind of major environmental policy change should have come before the Environment Committee for debate during the session, not just in conference committee.

"We knew early on that all of the House conferees were in favor of weakening environmental review," says Paul Sobocinski, a southwest Minnesota hog farmer and LSP organizer. "But we're deeply disappointed that the Senate allowed for a stripping of the citizens' right to petition for environmental review, and closed the door on a citizen's ability to raise important site-specific environmental concerns that MPCA 7020 Rules currently do not address."

Besides LSP, other groups who worked to prevent the law from being weakened were Minnesota Farmers Union, Minnesota Environmental Partnership, Minnesota Citizens for Environmental Advocacy and Clean Water Action.

There was some good news, as the legislation significantly increased the neighbor notification period from 10 regular days to 20 working days for a proposed operation of 500 animal units or larger. Also under the new law, feedlot permits cannot be issued until 10 days after a public meeting is held. In addition, now if an operation wants to expand beyond 1,000 animal units, an environmental review is mandated.

These measures, substituted by Scheid in place of citizen-initiated environmental review, strengthen the permitting process, but the gutting of the review law itself overshadows everything, says LSP member Deb Peterson of Lac qui Parle County. Peterson and her neighbors used the right to file a petition for environmental review when a large feedlot was proposed near their farms. The environmental review process allowed significant improvements to be made to the feedlot before it was built.

"An important right was taken from rural people by the Minnesota Legislature," she says. "I feel betrayed by legislators who placed large corporate ag interests above those of Minnesota rural residents and family farmers."

Bobby King, an organizer in LSP's southeast Minnesota office, says the

weakening of the environmental review process means local control of feedlots is more critical than ever.

"If citizens want to have a say in the future of their communities, they need to work to put in place and maintain good ordinances at the county and township level."

Alien ownership

Proposed legislation to allow foreign investors to own and operate Minnesota farms was defeated. The bill was backed by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, the Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation, AgStar Financial Services and the Minnesota Association of Cooperatives.

"LSP supports opportunities for immigrants to own and operate farms here, while becoming citizens. That's a good thing," says Sobocinski. "However, these proposed changes in the Alien Ownership law had nothing to do with immigrants—they were designed to favor foreign investors."

Changing the Alien Ownership law to allow people from other countries to buy farmland without at least being permanent residents or U.S. citizens opens up the possibility of foreign investor control of Minnesota farms. LSP, Minnesota Farmers Union, Minnesota COACT, Minnesota Dairy Producers Board and Milk Power opposed changing the law because of concerns it would make it possible for investors to finance large-scale operations. In Ohio, Holland-based investment in large-scale dairies has resulted in major environmental problems, according to the Dec. 6, 2002, edition of the *Dayton (Ohio) Daily News*.

There are also concerns that such investors will drive up the price of farmland, making it even harder for beginning farmers and existing farmers who need access to land. The proposed law change became so contentious that the original Senate author, Steve Murphy (DFL-Red Wing) dropped it. Sen. Dille later became the lead Senate author. Rep. Greg Blaine (R-Little Falls) was the House author.

After learning of the bill from LSP, farmers from across the state wrote and contacted their legislators protesting the law change. Dille alone received more than 200 calls, letters and e-mails, according to the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* newspaper. One concern expressed by the farmers is that the Minnesota Department of Agriculture was

Legislature, see page 9...

pushing for the law change, meanwhile ignoring the needs of dairy producers already existing in the state.

Making "it easier for foreign investors to buy farmland does nothing to help existing dairy farmers. It does not increase our profitability. It will not increase the price we get," said New Prague, Minn., dairy farmer and LSP member Dave Minar during testimony at the capitol. Dodge Center, Minn., dairy farmer and LSP member Dan French also testified in opposition to the legislation.

As a compromise, the legislature approved a measure that gives a five-year grace period for five Dutch farmers who have already bought Minnesota farmland, but left the current law otherwise intact. During the next five years, those farmers must become U.S. citizens or permanent

residents (with a green card), or they will be required to sell their farmland.

Livestock friendly county status

LSP backed proposed legislation that would have repealed the Livestock Friendly County Designation. This program, administered by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, requires counties to have no animal unit caps—which means no limits on the size of livestock operations—among other things, in order to be designated "livestock friendly" (see Jan./Feb./March *LSL*, page 12). County commissioners and local residents have raised concerns that the program is an attempt to wrest local control away from communities. Sen. Gary Kubly (DFL-Granite Falls) and Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba (DFL-Long Prairie) carried the repeal bill in the Senate and the House. The bill did not

advance, but several legislators, including Senator Murphy, who carried the original Livestock Friendly bill last year, expressed disappointment in how the law was being used by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

Thanks

LSP would like to extend a special "thank you" to all the LSP members who worked so hard on the above issues during the 2003 session of the Minnesota Legislature. The telephone calls, e-mails and letters, as well as visits to the capitol to meet with legislators or testify, showed lawmakers and government officials the wide support that exists for family farm and sustainable agriculture issues. □

For more information on state policy issues, call Bobby King at 507-523-3366 or Paul Sobocinski at 507-342-2323.

Analysis: Citizen review of feedlots is helpful, not abused

Citizen-initiated environmental reviews of animal feedlots have played a key role in protecting Minnesota's air, water and land, according to a study released by the Land Stewardship Project on April 22, Earth Day.

"The Benefits to Minnesota of Citizen-Initiated Environmental Review of Feedlots & the Consequences of Removing that Right"

(www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/feedlot_review.pdf) was based on an analysis of state Environmental Quality Board records and citizen petitions, as well as interviews, and was compiled at the request of LSP by Sara Bertelsen, a graduate student at the University of Minnesota's Hubert H. Humphrey Institute. The study looked at 41 citizen petitions for environmental review of feedlots filed between 1998 and 2002. It found that:

1) The majority of petitions were filed by local residents who used their right to petition for environmental review as a means to have significant environmental concerns addressed. In many cases, it was the only means available to them.

2) The right to petition for review has resulted in the concerns of neighbors to proposed projects being brought to the attention of the appropriate government agency, resulting in protection of the environment.

3) The permitting process for animal feedlots cannot effectively be used as a substitute for the current right to petition for environmental review.

The results of this study came at a time when proposals were moving through the Minnesota Legislature that eventually eliminated the right of citizens to petition for environmental review in most cases (see page 8).

The opponents of citizen participation claimed the environmental review process, which was put in place by the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act over 30 years ago, is systematically abused by groups who are opposed to large-scale factory farming. However, the "Benefits to Minnesota of Citizen-Initiated Environmental Review" analysis found that the petitions all listed authentic environmental concerns that were site and project specific, and that the overwhelming majority of the signers were local residents.

Environmental issues cited in the



During an Earth Day press conference at the Minnesota Capitol, LSP member and Waseca County resident Richard Draper discussed how citizen-initiated review helped move a proposed feedlot from land prone to flooding to a more suitable location—further from most neighbors and closer to the operator's residence. (LSP photo)

petitions included concerns that sensitive geology in the area would make sources of drinking water particularly vulnerable to manure contamination, or that the close proximity of houses to a manure facility would make homeowners vulnerable to emissions of hazardous gases such as hydrogen sulfide.

The report concludes: "Eliminating the right of citizens to petition for environmental review and exempting all feedlots less than 1,000 animal units removes tools that have been critical in protecting the environment in a significant number of cases." □

Comments support strong CSP; packer ban campaign launched; checkoff decision expected

CSP

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) became law in May of 2002. This innovative program promises to reward stewardship farmers for producing real conservation benefits on working lands, a dramatic departure from past policy. But more than a year after it was made into law, farmers are still unable to sign up for the CSP. The longer the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service delays implementation of this program, the likelier it will become a target for severe budget cuts, says Land Stewardship Project Policy Director Mark Schultz.

Earlier this year, more than 700 groups (including LSP), farmers and other individuals representing 45 states submitted comments to the USDA describing what the CSP should look like once it is implemented. The Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, to which LSP belongs, recently did an analysis of those comments. The Coalition's study shows a strong demand for a CSP program that stays true to the law that created it and that is made available to a wide diversity of farmers, not just a handful of large operations.

Other findings of the analysis:

→ Although the USDA is suggesting that the program could be dramatically scaled back, drastically limiting how many farmers could benefit from it, 94 percent of those who submitted comments called for the CSP to be implemented as an entitlement program with open, continuous enrollment, as the Farm Bill stipulates. In this case, an entitlement program would be one where any farmers who voluntarily apply to the CSP and qualify for the benefits based on their stewardship practices, will receive benefits.

→ Ninety percent of the comments stated that farmers enrolling in CSP must be limited to a single contract, with payments per farmer or rancher enrolling in the program capped at the statutory rates of up to \$20,000, \$35,000 and \$45,000, depending on which conservation tier the farmer is enrolled in.

→ Just 3 percent of comments took the

position that neither the number of contracts nor the size of the total payment per farmer be limited. That 3 percent included the following national commodity organizations: National Pork Producers Council, National Corn Growers Association, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, National Association of Wheat Growers and National Cotton Council.

This last point is significant, because there is serious concern among sustainable agriculture and family farm groups

New CSP Web page

You can learn about the Conservation Security Program at a new Web page recently launched by the Land Stewardship Project.

The Web page (www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_csp.html) features fact sheets on the basics of the program, as well as the latest news, commentaries, and links related to CSP. The Web page also provides information on how farmers and other citizens can influence USDA implementation of the program.

that if the CSP does not operate as an entitlement program and have tight caps in place, the majority of money will be soaked up by a few large operations, similar to what's happening under commodity programs (see "A tale of two farms" on page 4).

"We must not allow CSP to become a handout of hundreds of thousands of dollars to individual producers," says Schultz.

LSP's comments

In its own comments, LSP urged the USDA to, among other things:

→ Accelerate the rule making process and launch the CSP in time to allow for significant enrollment opportunities in 2003.

→ Ensure immediate implementation on a comprehensive, nationwide basis.

→ Uphold and defend CSP's status as a conservation entitlement program, as

the law requires.

→ Require strong conservation and environmental standards, and reward strong environmental performance.

→ Retain the real payment limitations required by the law.

→ Support restoration of full funding.

→ Compliance should be to a level at or below the soil loss tolerance level. Compliance should be applied to all land eroding at greater than the tolerance level, not just so-called highly erodible land.

For a full copy of LSP's CSP comments, log onto www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_csp.html. The CSP comments of the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, as well as the Coalition's analysis of all the comments, are also located on LSP's Web site. □

Packer ban campaign

Minnesota farmers joined with producers from Iowa, Illinois, Missouri and South Dakota in Ames, Iowa, on March 22 to launch the 2003 push for banning meat processors (packers) from owning livestock.

During the "Taking Action on Corporate Power in Agriculture" meeting, sponsored by the Campaign for Family Farms, more than 175 farmers and other rural residents made it clear to Congressional aides who attended that passing a ban on packer ownership of hogs and other livestock is the single most important thing Congress can do this year to help independent producers.

"In terms of the packing industry, what it's doing through packer ownership is making the farmer a serf on the land," said Paul Sobocinski, a farrow-to-finish pork producer from Wabasso, in southwest Minnesota, and a Land Stewardship Project staff member. LSP is a member-organization of the Campaign for Family Farms.

Mark Reisinger, an agricultural policy aide to Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA), told members of the Campaign that the packer ban has a lot of support in rural areas. "I'm constantly surprised that there is no dissent among groups in Iowa over the packer ban," he said.

During debate on the 2002 Farm Bill, efforts by the Campaign and other farm groups helped convince the U.S. Senate to pass a ban on packer ownership of livestock twice. However, intense corporate lobbying caused the U.S. House leadership to strip the packer ban from

Packer, see page 11...



Participants in the “Taking Action on Corporate Power in Agriculture” meeting delivered a letter to the home of Smithfield official Randy Stoecker. (LSP photo)

...Packer, from page 10

the final Farm Bill.

After meeting with the Campaign for Family Farms, Sen. Grassley recently introduced a new bill that would ban packer ownership of livestock (S. 27). Representative Leonard Boswell (D-IA) has introduced a House version of the bill (H.R. 719). Passing a packer ban would amend the Packers and Stockyards Act to make it unlawful for a packer to own, feed or control livestock for more than seven days before slaughter. Once the ban is passed, packers such as Cargill and Smithfield would be given up to 18 months to get out of the livestock production business.

Stiff opposition to packer ban

As was made clear in 2002, some powerful forces are against passing the packer ban, including Smithfield Foods, Cargill, the American Meat Institute and the National Pork Producers Council. In a recent annual report, Smithfield highlighted the ban as a threat to the company’s ability to remain the world’s largest pork producer and processor.

“The Company [Smithfield Foods] has and will continue to aggressively challenge any such legislation,” said the report.

Smithfield recently sued Iowa and got a District Court ruling declaring that state’s ban on packer ownership unconstitutional (that case is on appeal). As a result, the Campaign for Family Farms drafted a letter to Randy Stoecker, a representative of Smithfield’s Midwest Hog Division, protesting his company’s ownership of live-

stock farms and its opposition to a ban on packer ownership. Stoecker refused to meet with representatives of the Campaign, so farmers and other rural residents participating in the “Taking Action on Corporate Power in Agriculture” meeting marched on his house in Ames to deliver the letter.

Co-sponsors needed for packer ban to pass

Jay Byers, district director for Rep. Boswell, told members of the Campaign that it is important for other members of Congress to sign on as co-sponsors of legislation banning packer ownership of livestock. More co-sponsors will give Senators and House members the support they need to withstand pressure from pro-packer lawmakers, some of whom hold key committee positions. The push for more co-sponsorship must come from groups like the Campaign, as well as individual citizens, said Byers.

“Other representatives listen to grassroots groups more than they listen to us,” he said.

Sobocinski says in Minnesota farmers and others need to contact their Senators and Representatives, especially Rep. Collin Peterson, Rep. Gil Gutknecht, and Sen. Norm Coleman, who are members of the House and Senate agriculture committees. Sen. Mark Dayton is the first member of the Minnesota Congressional delegation to sign on as a co-sponsor to the packer ban.

“The fact that we passed the packer ban twice in the United States Senate even though we were up against some of the most powerful people in the world in terms of financial

interests shows there’s a lot of support for this ban out there,” says Sobocinski.

Besides LSP, other members of the Campaign for Family Farms are Missouri Rural Crisis Center, Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement, Illinois Stewardship Alliance and Citizen Action Coalition of Indiana. □

Pork checkoff case

Oral arguments on the constitutionality of the mandatory pork checkoff were heard March 14 in the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit in Cincinnati, Ohio.

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman and the National Pork Producers Council are appealing a decision from U.S. District Court Judge Richard Enslen, who ruled in favor of the Campaign for Family Farms and individual hog farmers that the mandatory pork checkoff infringes on hog farmers’ right to free speech. (Judge Enslen’s ruling can be found at www.miwd.uscourts.gov/profile/Pork_judgment.pdf).

“This appeal is just one of many hurdles that these hog farmers have had to overcome in order to terminate the checkoff, and they’ve been vindicated every step of the way,” says Susan Stokes, legal director for Farmers’ Legal Action Group (FLAG) and attorney for the Campaign for Family Farms. The Land Stewardship Project is a member-organization of the Campaign for Family Farms.

At this writing, the Sixth Circuit had not handed down its decision on the appeal, but one was expected by summer.

“I’m looking to the courts to do justice for hog farmers, because there is no justice in the pork checkoff,” says southwest Minnesota hog farmer Jim Joens, an LSP member. “As far as I am concerned, the mandatory pork checkoff has put independent hog farmers in harm’s way and created a misperception of who hog farmers are and what we stand for.” □



Participants in the pork checkoff appeal stood for a photo in front of a Bill of Rights plaque at the U. S. Court of Appeals building in Cincinnati. Pictured are (left to right): Jim Joens, Minnesota farmer; Rich Smith, Minnesota farmer; Rhonda Perry, Missouri farmer; Susan Stokes, FLAG attorney; Larry Ginter, Iowa farmer; and David Moeller, FLAG attorney. In front is Mark Schultz of the Land Stewardship Project. (photo by Corinne Rafferty)



Chewing the fat over farmer-chef relations

"I propose that if farmers are stewards of the land, chefs become stewards of the table, providing food that is purchased and prepared consciously."

—Lucia Watson, writing in the essay, "Stewards of the Table," from the 2002 Greenbook

By Dana Jackson

Most restaurants buy the ingredients for meals they serve from wholesale food distributors, and the food can be grown hundreds or thousands of miles away from the restaurants. It is very efficient to have one truck pull up to the back door and deliver almost all the products they need.

Another model is the one Lucia Watson follows at her acclaimed restaurant in Minneapolis, Minn. During the summer and fall, almost all vegetables served at Lucia's Restaurant and Wine Bar are purchased from farms in the Twin Cities region. Throughout the year, Lucia serves lamb, pork and chicken purchased directly from the farmers who raise the animals.

Other chefs in the Twin Cities also purchase locally grown vegetables in season and a growing number of restaurateurs are interested in buying more products from farmers in the area. Farmers are beginning to view restaurants as a growing market and an opportunity to earn more for what they produce than they can by selling to large wholesalers. In addition to individual direct sales, groups of farmers (not just in Minnesota, but across the nation) have organized cooperatives or networks to coordinate orders and sales.

Sitting down to talk

The Land Stewardship Project decided to hold a facilitated conversation between chefs and farmers for the purpose of strengthening and increasing direct market relationships, and asked Watson, who is a member of LSP, if she would host the meeting. Jay Lyons, who also coordinated this year's Food and Farm Festival (see page 5), organized the meeting. He sent invitations to farmers listed in LSP's Stewardship Food

Network and the CSA Directory, as well as to Twin Cities restaurateurs who were known to have purchased locally grown food or had shown some interest in doing so. Positive response to the invitation resulted in 45 people crowding into Watson's restaurant on March 15.

Farmers, some carrying brochures or coolers holding samples of meats, began to seat themselves among late lunchers around 2 p.m. for this meeting. Chefs in white coats with their names or restaurant names sewn on them arrived a half hour later. Lucia's staff set out coffee and Melinda Van Eeckhout, a co-proprietor of Arriga restaurant, provided cookies.

Cathy Eberhart, LSP's membership



Chef Jessica Becker talked about working with local food producers as farmer Lynn Anderson looked on. (LSP photo)

coordinator, facilitated the discussion. She began by asking participants to describe farmer-restaurant relationships that work.

Greg Reynolds of River Bend Farm, who sells vegetables regularly to Lucia's, said, "It's imperative to have an account that's dependable." A good working relationship means that when things don't work out (crops fail, for example), the producer isn't thrown out.

Lynn Anderson of Anderson Farms appreciates that Lucia's buys 10 lambs at a time and takes a whole pig, instead of asking for 100 pounds of pork chops, which a small farmer can't provide at one time. Anderson Farm has sold to Lucia's for seven years.

"We have such good rapport," and "never a conflict," she said.

It works well for Sapor Café to buy whole chickens and whole hogs all winter

from the Southeast Minnesota Food Network (see page 16), Tanya Siebenhaler reported. She finds it convenient to work with the coordinator of the Network to get the meat she needs.

"We have pork on the menu now in three places," she said.

The conversation turned to problems chefs have in buying directly from farmers.

"I took pork chops off the menu because I didn't want to buy commodity pork," Ken Goff of the Dakota Bar and Grill said. "Now I buy pork shoulder, but that takes a lot of work."

The time and cost to break down a whole hog or lamb is a problem for restaurants, Goff explained. "It takes too much labor, which is our biggest cost, plus it's a lost skill that not enough people know."

One obstacle to restaurants buying whole hogs or lambs is the shortage of freezer space. Buying an entire beef is almost impossible because it is so large. Paul Wiens, who produces beef, said that he had freezer space on the farm and perhaps chefs could work out storage with the farmers.

"It's such a plus for farmers to be able to sell the whole animal," he said.

This problem is solved for Mike Phillips of Chet's Taverna, who contracts with the Whole Farm Cooperative for 10 lambs at a time. "Whole Farm Cooperative has freezer space, and storage is built into the price. We pay as we use it out of the freezer."

Herman Henderson delivers Whole Farm Cooperative products in the Twin Cities every Wednesday, which is also convenient.

"But that's still passing on a cost to restaurants," Melinda Van Eeckhout pointed out. "We don't have freezers, and if storage costs are pushed on to restaurants, then the restaurant must pass the cost on to customers."

Fresh vs. frozen

Some chefs insist on fresh rather than frozen meat, especially if grilled steaks and chops are on the menu every day, because frozen meat loses liquid. But small farmers can't process enough animals every day or even every week to provide fresh steaks and chops. However, restaurants like Lucia's, with a lot of flexibility in the menu, can buy frozen meat from farmers and use skill to prepare delicious meals.

Conversation, see page 13...

The chefs agreed that changing menus frequently—every day in some restaurants—makes it easier to use frozen meat and whole animals. Small restaurants can do this more easily than larger ones.

Having a flexible menu also works better when buying produce. Usually farmers deliver produce once or twice a week, as Michael Rostance from Broders Pasta Bar explained. “With produce we can’t get enough. We’d like six deliveries a week of fresh produce. The problem with twice a week is keeping it fresh.”

However, Greg Reynolds explained, “I couldn’t go to the cities every day with \$200 of produce. I don’t know how I could do more than two deliveries a week. I’d be spending time driving a van instead of working on the farm.”

Pat Weber from Bobino Café and Wine Bar described one delivery arrangement that works better than having the chef call around to find out what’s available. The farmer faxes a list of available vegetables to a restaurant. Then the chef plans the menu for the next couple of days and faxes an order to the farmer, who then delivers the next day.

When a farm and a restaurant have a firm, long-standing relationship, the chef can work with the vegetable farmer during the winter to plan what’s to be grown and the amounts needed.

What’s next?

The discussion ranged far beyond the topics covered here (see sidebar below). Cathy Eberhart closed the conversation in time for personal conversations between farmers and chefs before the group needed to clear out so dinner customers could be seated. It was a chance to become better acquainted and talk about specific products and needs.

Ken Goff offered to host a similar meeting between farmers and chefs next fall at the Dakota Bar and Grill to talk over how the growing season went and what was learned. □

Dana Jackson is LSP’s Associate Director. She can be reached at 651-653-0618 or danaj@landstewardshipproject.org.

Case made for local food

The Land Stewardship Project and Worldwatch Institute presented “A Case for Local Food in a Global Market” May 17 in Mahtomedi, Minn.

Brian Halweil, author of *Home Grown: The Case for Local Food in a Global Market* (Worldwatch, 2002), and LSP Associate Director Dana Jackson discussed how people can create and support a local food and farming system.

In the United States, food typically

travels between 1,500 and 2,500 miles from farm to plate, as much as 25 percent farther than in 1980. Unfortunately, the long-distance food system runs roughshod over local cuisines, varieties and agriculture, while consuming staggering amounts of fuel, generating greenhouse gases, and compromising food security.

But as Halweil documents in *Home Grown*, a growing local foods movement is beginning to weaken this reliance on long-distance food. In the U.S. and around the world, entrepreneurial farmers, restaurants, supermarkets and concerned citizens are propelling a revolution that can help restore rural areas, and return fresh, delicious and wholesome foods to our communities. As Jackson, who co-edited *The Farm as Natural Habitat: Reconnecting Food Systems with Ecosystems* (see page 1) pointed out, there are farmers who are taking part in this local foods movement by offering sustainably raised products for sale straight to consumers, as well as through retailers, food co-ops and restaurants.

Halweil is a senior researcher at the Worldwatch Institute in Washington, D.C. The Worldwatch Institute is an independent, non-governmental environmental and social policy research organization. For more information, call Worldwatch at 1-888-544-2303 or log onto www.worldwatch.org. □



Major points made at farmer-chef meeting



- Restaurants can’t buy from everyone when everyone has an abundance of one crop, such as basil or red potatoes.
- Restaurants need fruit and there are few fruit growers in the region.
- Storage for fresh vegetables is limited at most restaurants.
- Restaurants can’t afford to buy at farmers’ market prices. Example: asparagus at \$3 per pound. If a farmer would agree to plant 100 pounds extra at \$1.60 per pound, restaurant would buy all farmer had.
- It is difficult for farmers to recover the cost of producing vegetables because of all the labor.
- Single farms might benefit by producing some specialty crops such as rhubarb and asparagus as an alternative to high volumes of common vegetables.
- Heirloom varieties are growing in appeal, but producers can only get paid a fraction of what it costs to produce them.
- Capital investment in trucking and refrigeration requires good and dependable markets to make it pay.
- The farmer needs to find out what the customer wants.
- The farmer needs to seek those customers who want what the farmer has.
- The farmer and the restaurant are both part of the local economy. The farmer needs to earn enough to contribute to the local economy and so must the restaurant.
- Farmers can educate restaurateurs and foster good relationships by inviting them to the farms to learn about the production process.
- Restaurants could develop storage facilities and buy cooperatively (brought up after the discussion about farmers possibly marketing cooperatively to restaurants).
- Restaurants may want convenience and low prices of the conventional, cheap food system, but these are hard for small farmers to provide. Quality and freshness is what they can provide.
- Education of customers is important. When a restaurant substitutes one vegetable for another that was rained out on the farm, it’s an opportunity to educate the customer about the risks of farming and introduce them to different or unique vegetables.

life because of excess nutrients flowing down the Mississippi River from the Corn Belt, I doubt if he would be surprised.

It is understandable that people accept these trends as the destiny of agriculture if they cannot clearly see alternatives, but there is an alternative—another trend—that could produce a landscape of farms which are natural habitats rather than ecological sacrifice areas.

A strong minority of modern farmers, like Dan and Muriel French, have not turned their farms into factories nor abandoned their chosen profession but are instead leading agriculture in an entirely different direction. Their creative initiatives to making farming more economically sound and environmentally friendly are producing benefits for them, for society at large, and for the land. The trends of these models are toward independent farms supporting families and communities while restoring biological diversity and health of the land.

— from “The Farm as Natural Habitat,” by Dana Jackson

The task before us then is to integrate, in our minds and in our farming landscapes, the wild and the willed. We need to help devise ways of reconciling the needs of wild animals and plants with a working landscape full of human cultivars, boundaries, and institutions. We need to interact directly with farmers, searching for common ground as Aldo Leopold did before us. This will mean being willing to learn how farmers’ decisions are constrained by markets, agricultural policy, history, labor, and capital as well as by natural resources.

— from “The Farm, the Nature Preserve, and the Conservation Biologist,” by Laura Jackson

Part II: Restoring Nature on Farms

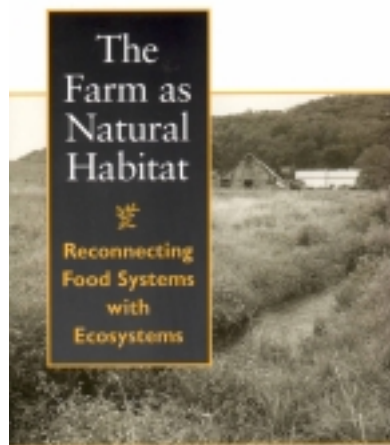
Clearly, grass holds the key to grassroots watershed protection. As long as farms are diversified enough to have livestock needing pasture and hay, and as long as grain crops are raised in suitable



proportion, on suitable lands, using suitable conservation tillage practices, there will be better retention of runoff and topsoil. Also, with comprehensive farm planning and improved management of crops and pastures, fewer nutrients and contaminants will enter streams and there will be less adverse impact to the receiving waters.

Aldo Leopold asserted that “a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community.” Leopold was never one to divorce aesthetics or ethics from the obvious need for more rigorous observation, recording, testing, and management. He believed in holistic integration and synthesis of knowledge, encompassing many disciplines and perspectives.

The small reservoirs of wildness and



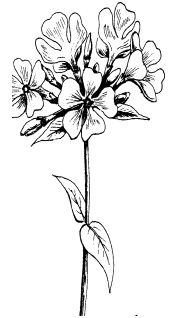
Edited by Dana L. Jackson and Laura L. Jackson

Foreword by
Miss Leopold Bradley

traditional life that remain on farms, the natural nooks and crannies that still survive in some of the world’s more rugged and lovely landscapes, need to be protected now because their days are numbered. This is not just a matter of aesthetic preference, or even of ethical responsibility; it’s an evolutionary necessity. Without reservoirs of biodiversity, how can ecosystems recover from overexploitation, cleanse themselves of contaminants, or adapt to future changes? The accelerating losses of biodiversity and family farms are the strongest indicators yet of declining land health. Maybe it will take another dust bowl to bring sustainable farming into the mainstream of agriculture. What a shame that would be.

— from “Return to Coon Valley,”
by Arthur (Tex) Hawkins

But aesthetics don’t pay the mortgage or put food on the table. That’s why what farmers like [Dennis and Jean Fagerland] have managed to pull off is so exciting. The agreement the South Dakota family signed with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Ducks Unlimited required them to maintain the catch basin gates for ten years. After that, the government’s goal of cleaning up water or a conservation group’s desire for wildlife habitat may pale in comparison to a farm family’s need to turn a profit. The ten-year agreement period on the newest water catchment basin has passed. In early 2001, I asked Dennis, somewhat hesitantly, whether they still left the gates closed during the spring. I shouldn’t have been surprised at the answer.



“Yeah, we usually keep them closed until sometime in June. But it gets later every year because you get that water and you hate to see it go,” he said somewhat sheepishly.

When the gates are closed, the catch basins will flood anywhere from half an acre (sometimes half an acre is all you need for prime waterfowl nesting) to 23 acres of land. Ten or twenty acres of land under water can be a major sacrifice on a farm. But when the gates are opened, the water leaves behind a rich stand of slough grass. “It’s almost like irrigated hay,” quipped Dennis. That produces an economic benefit in the form of feed for their one-hundred head brood cow herd.

“... Years down the road, I hope we can look back and say it was the right thing to do,” said Dennis Fagerland after describing all that his family had done to improve the ecological health of the land. “I think it was.”

That’s a positive, uplifting statement, but it lacks the hard-as-a-rock confidence of a 1,000-acre corn farmer who’s convinced he’s feeding the world. The ducks, geese, and even the fish have no such misgivings. As their populations rebound in the Fagerland’s neighborhood, it’s become clear that the right thing was done ecologically. Now society needs to figure out how to recognize, support, and reward farmers who live such environmental success stories.

— from “Stewards of the Wild,”
by Brian DeVore

Part III: Ecosystem Management and Farmlands

Conservation has everything to gain by changing agriculture, but agriculture has little, if anything, to gain directly from the preservation of the conservation targets. The one-sided benefits in this sort of relationship make it especially tough to establish common ground between farmers and conservationists...

[Bob Barger] sees the different learning styles employed by farmers and conservationists, in general, as barriers to communication. While conservationists tend to start from the abstract, to think of long-term consequences, and to use logic and scientific facts to learn and solve problems, farmers tend to start from their own concrete observations and experience, to think in a year-to-year time frame, and to rely on storytelling and anecdotes to learn and solve problems. Neither group has learned to speak or fully listen to the other's language.

Bob Budd's observations from Red Canyon Ranch reinforce Barger's. Budd has noticed that "ranchers talk in questions." Conversations start with, "So, how much snow did you get?" "Did you read that thing in the paper about grazing...?" Ranchers are careful to solicit your opinion before saying much about what they think.

It is a nonconfrontational style, adaptive in a community where you may

need help from your neighbor tomorrow. In contrast, conservationists tend to take the direct approach. They are more likely to tell you what you should do rather

than ask you what you think, likely to look at what is wrong and ignore what is going right, be critical instead of appreciative, and impatient to get to a solution. The rancher may take longer to get around to the problem areas, but the conservationist's impatience may deny the discovery that the rancher recognizes the problems too and has some good ideas for solutions. A demonstration that a rancher can explore, contribute to, discover for him or herself is more likely to bring about change in thinking than a string of facts and figures and a logical argument why the new

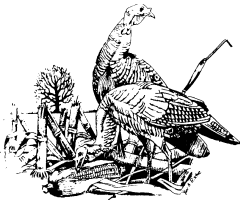


method is better than the old.

— from "Conservation and Agriculture as Neighbors," by Judith Soule

Part IV: Steps toward Agroecological Restoration

All of the ills of agriculture are not found on any given farm. Yes, one may have a leaky septic system or a stack of unlined pesticide containers in the corner of the machine shed, but is this particular farm really responsible for the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico or for



increasing antibiotic resistance worldwide? Instead of tearing their practices down, whole farm planning builds people up by helping them become better informed about best management practices, their financial situation, and their options for the future. These qualities, in turn, can lead to environmental protection and restoration.

— from "Composing a Landscape," by Rhonda Janke

One rainy June day, I traveled into southwest Minnesota to visit a farmer who is clearly modifying the social current and practicing farming on some of his land to restore prairie and increase biodiversity. I asked Tony Thompson of Bingham Lake, Minnesota, why he cared to do such things. Tony, who grew up on that acreage, could immediately name for me the moment his thinking had changed direction. He tells of the afternoon he was sitting in a roadside ditch, waiting to fill the corn planter. Tony, then out of high school but not yet focused on such things as ecological diversity, was sitting in a bed of blue-eyed grass. This tiny iris-like flower caught his attention and his admiration. By the time of our interview, Tony had also connected this epiphany experience to Aldo Leopold, quoting from Leopold's essay, "Marshland Elegy": "Our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the pretty. It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values as yet uncaptured by language."

— from "A Refined Taste in Natural Objects," by Beth Waterhouse

There is only so much tweaking that can be done to make an inherently flawed policy more sustainable. U.S. farm policy has its foundation in a narrowly focused philosophy that sees



commodities as the overriding benefit to come from farming. Such thinking produces policy that, no matter how much it is modified, will still produce more cheap grain at the expense of the agroecosystems. Best management practices, and land retirement to a certain extent, provide a handy crutch for row crop production to continue. Farmers and others interested in creating agroecosystems that are more resilient say policy must be developed that recognizes the multiple benefits or public "goods" farms can provide beyond bulging grain bins. Public goods are those benefits society deems it needs but does not directly pay for by the exchange of goods and money through the marketplace.

There are plenty of goods that don't appear on any label but that people value all the same: aesthetic landscapes, songbird and waterfowl habitat, carbon capture, and community jobs. A public good can also take the form of removing or avoiding the public "bads" currently created by industrialized agriculture: contaminated drinking water, polluted streams, reduced wildlife populations, and increased lung disease problems produced by working conditions in livestock confinement. But how do we create incentives to provide these goods?

— from "Agriculture as a Public Good," by George Boody

Who was involved?

The Farm as Natural Habitat: Reconnecting Food Systems with Ecosystems was edited by Dana Jackson and Laura Jackson. Contributors were: Collin Bode, George Boody, Nina Leopold Bradley, Brian DeVore, Arthur (Tex) Hawkins, Wellington (Buddy) Huffaker, Rhonda Janke, Robert Jefferson, Nicholas Jordan, Cheryl Miller, Heather Robertson, Carol Shennan, Judith Soule and Beth Waterhouse.

For a copy

Paperback and hardback editions of the book are available from Island Press. To order a copy, log onto www.islandpress.org or call 1-800-828-1302.

Food Network finds food in farm country

By Dana Jackson

Finding Food in Farm Country: The economics of food and farming in Southeast Minnesota, a study published by the Community Design Center in 2001, revealed that farmers in southeast Minnesota had sales of \$866 million in 1997, but spent \$947 million to produce those commodities. The 303,256 residents of the region spent \$506 million annually buying food, most of which came from outside Minnesota, according to the analysis.

The Southeast Minnesota Food Network has set out to change that situation. Under the auspices of the Southeast Minnesota Experiment in Cooperative Development, the Network was organized in the fall of 2001 to sell more locally produced food to residents in the area and increase farm income.

Its formation was preceded by several years of discussion and meetings about cooperative marketing, some of which were led by a former Land Stewardship Project program director, Marsha Neff.

The Southeast Minnesota Food Network involves 40-some farmers cooperating to sell produce, meats, dairy products, flowers and honey to restaurants and retail stores. Buyers call the coordinator, Liz Haywood, and she contacts the farmers to fill the orders.

Start-up and staffing costs for the first year of the Food Network were provided by the Experiment in Rural cooperation, a sustainable development partnership with the University of Minnesota, and the Community Design Center, a nonprofit organization in St. Paul interested in local food distribution for community development.

Most of the staffing costs will be borne by the Experiment in Rural Cooperation for the second and third year, but remaining expenses must be covered through usage fees collected on products sold through the network. To pay operating costs, Haywood must collect usage fees based on sales, and that means finding markets and increasing sales. This job requires more than standing by the phone and taking orders. Liz has been the coordinator for just a little over a year, and she's developed

considerable entrepreneurial skills.

The Southeast Minnesota Food Network has accounts at several restaurants in Rochester and the Twin Cities, as well as the food co-op in Winona. This past winter, Haywood experimented with a food-buying club in Rochester, and is currently developing a local food distribution system with Great Ciao, a Minneapolis purveyor of high quality ingredients, to distribute Network products to additional restaurants.

Producers appreciate her skills and successes in finding markets for them. Sandy Dietz, who produces vegetables, chicken and pork with her husband

Lonny at Whitewater Gardens in Altura, Minn., says, "Liz works so terribly hard to get our products sold. And she makes sure it's equitable, that everyone gets a chance to sell something. She also has a passion for food, which really helps when she talks to restaurants."

Last summer there was more demand for vegetables than the cooperative was able to supply. However, Haywood has recruited six more growers to produce vegetables for the summer of 2003.

Achieving the right balance between supply and demand is a challenge.

Right now, the Network can't accept more beef producers because the demand for beef isn't high enough. However, producers are exploring the possibility of processing beef into hamburger patties and selling them at a price that would attract more mainstream markets; choice

Network see page 17...

Community Foods Day

Locally produced food, area farmers who sell directly to consumers and a panel discussion on agriculture were featured at the Pride of the Prairie Community Foods Day on April 23 at the University of Minnesota-Morris campus.

The special Earth Week event kicked off with a brown bag lunch discussion of the University's "food roots." During the Community Food Expo, consumers had an opportunity to meet area farmers who are selling meat, fruit and other products direct.

The day concluded with the UMM's Spring Local Foods Meal, where food produced by local farmers was served by Sodexo Campus Services. The meal was made possible by the University of Minnesota-Morris Foodies, MPIRG, Pomme de Terre Foods, Renaissance Cultural Alliance, Campus Activities Council, West Central Research and Outreach Center, area farmers and Pride of the Prairie.



Beef producer and nutritionist Mary Jo Forbord of Benson, Minn., talked to a college radio reporter during the Pride of the Prairie Community Foods Day in Morris. (LSP photo)



Montevideo, Minn., farmer Richard Handeen served up local chow at the University of Minnesota-Morris cafeteria during the Local Foods Meal. (LSP photo)

Pride of the Prairie breaks down barriers

By Lynn Mader

Pride of the Prairie is working to increase the variety and amount of locally produced foods in restaurants, grocery stores and institutions in western Minnesota. It is a coalition of local foods enthusiasts, including the West Central Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, the University of Minnesota-Morris, West Central Research and Outreach Center and Prairie Renaissance. This initiative is led by the Land Stewardship Project and farmers in the Upper Minnesota River Valley.

A major part of Pride of the Prairie's mission is to break down the barriers between food producers and food buyers. Sometimes those barriers surprise us. For example, in 2002 I surveyed 25 food service operations and found that purchasers sometimes did not buy locally produced foods because they believed that local farmers did not qualify as an "approved source." It appeared that

clarification of food safety and regulatory requirements was necessary before more local foods could find their way to food service menus.

Three fact sheets were developed by a task force consisting of LSP staffers, University of Minnesota Extension Service educators, officials from the Minnesota Departments of Agriculture and Health, farmers and restaurateurs. This work was funded by a grant from the USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Professional Development Program.

The fact sheets describe how to purchase meat and poultry, eggs, and produce safely and legally from local farmers. They are on the Minnesota Department of Agriculture Web site at www.mda.state.mn.us/foodsafety.htm under the "Industry Food Safety Information" heading.

Now we're getting the word out. Task force members Roselyn Biermeier of Minnesota Extension and Kevin Elfering of the Minnesota Department of Agricul-

ture presented information on the fact sheets at the Minnesota Organic and Grazing Conference in January. In March, I talked with students in Southwest State University's Hotel, Restaurant and Institution Management program. Biermeier, along with Paul Hugunin of the Agriculture Department's Minnesota Grown program, also provided a breakout session at the Minnesota Environmental Health Association meeting in May. We plan on talking about the fact sheets at other venues over the next year. □

Lynn Mader is a nutritionist who works as a consultant with the Pride of the Prairie program in LSP's western Minnesota office.

'Soil to Table' June 26

The Pride of the Prairie program will sponsor "Local Foods: From Soil to Table" on June 26 from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the West Central Research & Outreach Center in Morris, Minn.

The program will explore some of the connections between soil, food and community, and is targeted at food service providers, farmers and local foods enthusiasts. It will be keynoted by Lucia Watson, owner of Lucia's Restaurant and Wine Bar in Minneapolis, Minn., and Greg Reynolds of River Bend Farm in Delano, Minn. (see page 12). The day will feature a meal from locally produced food, as well as presentations by farmers, researchers, Extension educators, marketing experts and processors. For more information, contact the Land Stewardship Project's western Minnesota office at 320-269-2105 or lsptest@landstewardshipproject.org. □

...Network, from page 16

cuts could be sold to restaurants.

Farmers in the Southeast Minnesota Food Network do not have a certification process, but they have agreed to abide by a set of guiding principles, one of which states that, "...consumers should be assured that the food they purchase and consume is wholesome, nutritious and safe, and that it has been produced in a manner that contributes to clean water and healthy soil and the well-being of

farmers who produce it."

These principles and a directory of the farmers that includes what they produce and where they are located can be viewed on their Web site at www.localfoodnetwork.org. Liz Haywood can be contacted at 507-474-1465. □

Dana Jackson is LSP's Associate Director. See page 12 for her story on a conversation between farmers and chefs that LSP recently sponsored.

Stewardship Food Network

The *Stewardship Food Network* is a list of Land Stewardship Project members who produce meat, dairy products, eggs, vegetables, fruit, flowers, grain and other goods in a sustainable manner. The Network also lists LSP member-businesses selling or processing food produced by other LSP members.

Some of the production methods used by the Network farmers include certified organic, antibiotic and hormone-free, free of genetically modified organisms, pasture-based, integrated pest management to reduce pesticide use, deep-bedded straw livestock housing and conservation tillage.

The listing provides contact

information for the farmers so consumers can call or e-mail them personally to learn more about production methods, availability of products and prices. For a complete listing, contact our Twin Cities office at 651-653-0618, or go to www.landstewardshipproject.org and click on **Food & Farm Connection**.

LSP periodically updates and makes corrections to its Food Network list. If you are an LSP member who would like to be listed, please contact us at 651-653-0618. Here are the latest additions:

Southeast Wis.

- **Amazing Grace Family F.A.R.M.***
*fertility and resource management

Janet Kassel
1438 N. County Road H
Janesville, WI 53545-9448
Phone: 608-876-6311

→ Products: *Beef & vegetables*

Southwest Minn.

□ **Prairies Past**
Al & Lisa Smith
406 U.S. Highway 75
Pipestone, MN 56164-1372
Phone: 507-825-3845

→ Products: *Vegetables, melons, herbs, dried flowers & pork*

✕ Also services: *Pipestone Farmers' Market*

MWFA partners with distributor, food service firm

By Jim Ennis

With another growing season finally here, there is much to look forward to and much to get done. We at Midwest Food Alliance (MWFA) continue to focus our efforts toward creating and building value into the certification program. MWFA, a collaboration of the Land Stewardship Project and Cooperative Development Services, certifies producers for sustainably raised foods.

Now entering our fourth year, we are working harder than ever to increase awareness of and demand for Food Alliance certified products. Those efforts got a major push in recent months when we launched a partnership with the region's oldest distributor of natural food products, Roots & Fruits Cooperative Produce in Minneapolis, to connect consumers with certified farmers.

Everett Myers, the Roots & Fruits organic produce buyer, says that his company prides itself on supporting local producers.

"In 2002, we had over 100 locally produced organic items during the growing season. Through our partnership with Midwest Food Alliance we will be able to expand our local, sustainable farming program so that our customers and producers both benefit. This will have a positive impact on the health and economy of our rural and urban communities."

Roots & Fruits has been an innovative leader in the distribution of food and food related products for over 25 years. A worker-owned and operated wholesale distributor originally formed in 1978 to service the retail food co-op network, Roots & Fruits' customer base now includes hotels, restaurants of all types, coffee houses, delis, and both natural

foods and mainstream grocery stores across the Upper Midwest. Besides fresh produce, Roots & Fruits stocks a variety of other goods including cheese, eggs, dried fruits and nuts, rice, pasta, flour and other baking supplies, juices, dry herbs and spices, and ethnic specialty items.

Food service entrée

MWFA is also expanding its program into the food service market. Increasingly, college and university students and



Mark Lieberherr of Nuto Farm Supply talked during the MWFA annual meeting about having his potatoes certified. (LSP photo)

faculty, as well as executives on corporate campuses, are looking for foods that are raised in an environmentally and socially responsible manner. We recently signed an agreement with Sodexo, one of the nation's biggest food service management companies, with venues throughout the Midwest. Sodexo will now buy MWFA certified products.

"We pay close attention to our customers' preferences," says Kirt Ingram, Regional Vice President for Sodexo. "Increasingly we're hearing that they want us to offer healthy food grown locally with respect for the environment and farm workers. We're very happy about our new partnership with MWFA. Working together, we'll be able to satisfy our customers and do the right thing."

We are also in discussions with Bon Appétit, a food service company that has already signed an agreement with the

Food Alliance in the Pacific Northwest.



New Look

We are changing our seal ever so slightly to improve its communication value. The seal will now say "Food Alliance Certified" in the circle, and "Midwest Grown" underneath the seal.

Products currently offered as Midwest Food Alliance certified include sustainably grown apples, apple cider, beef, beets, berries, butter, cabbage, cucumbers, dairy products, green beans, melons, pork, potatoes, pumpkins, radishes, squash, sweet corn, tomatoes, and specialty cheeses. A listing of Midwestern retailers that carry these products is available at www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_mwfa.html.

See you at the State Fair

Midwest Food Alliance is partnering with Minnesota Farmers Union and Minnesota chefs to present an exciting new event this year at the Minnesota State Fair: "Taste of Tuesday."

This event will highlight and raise public awareness about all the local, sustainably grown foods in Minnesota, and is scheduled for Tuesday, Aug. 23, in front of the Grandstand. Look for more information in the next *Land Stewardship Letter* and please plan to join us.

Join the MWFA team of volunteers

The success of MWFA would not be possible, in part, without the support of people who volunteer their time and energy to support sustainable agriculture. We are currently recruiting volunteers to take part in food demos and events in several venues this year, including conventional retailers and co-ops, food service partners and the Minnesota State Fair. It is your knowledge, talents and enthusiasm that keep our program going. If you are interested in assisting us this year, please contact Jean Andreasen at 651-265-3682 or jean@foodalliance.org.

Jim Ennis is the Program Director for the Midwest Food Alliance. He can be reached at 651-265-3684 or jim@foodalliance.org. For more information on MWFA, log onto www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_mwfa.html.

Keynote speaker: Don't let MWFA become commodified

Farmers are very smart, but also very weak when it comes to marketing power—a perfect combination for making them commodity producers that compete against each other, says Richard Levins, professor and extension agricultural economist at the University of Minnesota. He gave the keynote address at the Midwest Food Alliance's (MWFA) second annual meeting on Feb. 13.

Levins said that agriculture is very good at finding niche markets that produce good income initially. But as farmers start competing with each other to become the low cost producers, those

cheap commodity produced by large industrialized operations.

Based on that model, MWFA products are in danger of becoming low value commodities as well, said Levins. To avoid that, he suggested standards be set which limit how much of a premium each MWFA farmer receives. That will keep buyers from shopping around amongst MWFA farmers, looking for someone willing to undercut his or her neighbor on price. One organic farm cooperative based in southwest Minnesota already operates under such a stipulation.

Possible allies for family farmers are independent retailers and bankers, who are facing similar pressure because of concentration in the industry, said Levins (see his related commentary on page 2).

"Farmers have more in common with independent retailers and bankers than they do with Tyson Foods."

Discussion panels

This year's annual meeting, which was attended by 58 MWFA growers and supporters, also featured panel discussions. Farmers, retailers, environmentalists and

members of the media discussed how to use the MWFA certification to produce more profitable sales, as well as what consumers are looking for in a sustainable seal.

Rick Dale, who owns Highland ValleyFarm near Bayfield, Wis., said he has his berries MWFA certified so he can show customers in Wisconsin and Minnesota he is a local producer who cares about the environment.

Seward Community Co-op and Deli in Minneapolis recently agreed to carry MWFA products. Jim Walsh, the co-op's membership and marketing director, said having a product that is certified as being produced by local, sustainable farmers was a natural fit for Seward.

Surveys of Seward customers show that the number one reason people shop there is because the co-op emphasizes locally produced food. Customers who only care about getting certified organic products can get their needs met at a supermarket that has an organic foods section. There's no guarantee those supermarkets are going to buy that food from local farmers, said Walsh.

"Yes, organic is important, it's about taking care of the soil. But we have to look at the whole picture." □



MWFA farmers (left to right) Rick Dale (berries), Roger Benrud (dairy), Florence Minar (dairy), Dave Minar (dairy) and Gary Pahl (vegetables) participated in a panel discussion during the annual meeting. (LSP photo)

niche products become commodities and premium prices disappear.

"You see this struggle to find what's profitable without hardly any forethought as to how to keep profitable," he said.

The buyers of farm commodities—whether they are sustainably or conventionally produced—are becoming so concentrated that farmers are constantly pressured to sell their products at an increasingly cheaper price, Levins said. The economist said a valuable product becomes a commodity as soon as farmers start competing with each other to raise it cheaper. That "commodity mentality" is starting to emerge in organic agriculture, which up until now has produced significant premiums for smaller, family-sized farms. Now the organic processing and retailing sector is starting to become highly concentrated, meaning there are fewer buyers out there to provide competitive bids for farm production. Lack of competition means the low-cost producer has the advantage. But in order to be the low-cost producer, a farmer must get bigger, more industrialized, and, in general, be more of a "commodity producer," said Levins. When it comes to that point, organics will be just another

More MWFA farms needed

By Ray Kirsch

When you're planting the family garden, it's easy to understand who wants to eat those tomatoes and who wants that sweet corn. But when you're farming for others, it's not as obvious who wants to buy your products. Or who prefers your products and why.

Midwest Food Alliance (MWFA) farms have it better than most farms. They know that consumers are looking for local, environmentally friendly foods, and that they'll find them by looking for the MWFA certification seal. Midwest Food Alliance farmers haven't left the business of marketing their products to chance. They've invested in a group effort to educate the public and make consumers aware of their great products. They've invested in certification. They've invested in labeling and packaging that displays the MWFA seal and directs customers to local, healthy foods.

MWFA ended 2002 with 64 certified farms. We anticipate that to supply all of our current retail partners, direct marketing customers, distributors and food service partners, we'll need over 100 certified farms in 2003. We believe that for many products we're going to have more demand than supply, and that marketing opportunities for MWFA certified farms are going to be greater than ever.

If you would like to have your farm MWFA certified, or if you'd like to learn more about the certification process, contact me at 651-653-0618 or rkirsch@landstewardshipproject.org. You can also learn more about certification at www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_mwfa.html or www.thefoodalliance.org/midwest.

Ray Kirsch is the MWFA Certification Coordinator and is based in the Land Stewardship Project's Twin Cities office.

Navigating the GEIS: Manure spills vs. manure applications—which affects water quality more?

An ongoing series on the Animal Agriculture GEIS

Large-scale, catastrophic manure spills are environmental tragedies on a local basis. But when one considers the overall, long-term threat that manure poses to water quality, a bigger concern is the routine application of animal waste on crop fields, according to an analysis done for Minnesota's Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) on Animal Agriculture.

"Impacts of Animal Agriculture on Water Quality" was written by scientists from the University of Minnesota's Department of Soil, Water and Climate. They studied 11,468 feedlots in 18 counties located in southern, central, southeastern and southwestern Minnesota. The feedlots ranged in size from "tiny" (under 49 animal units) to large (more than 1,000 animal units). Half of the feedlots housed hogs, 19 percent dairy cows, 17 percent beef cattle, and 9 percent chickens or turkeys.

Manure is full of nitrogen and phosphorus, both extremely valuable as plant nutrients. But when too much of these nutrients are present in the environment, they can cause water quality problems.

By examining feedlots and taking into consideration how much cropland was available for manure to be spread, as well as how much commercial fertilizer was already being applied, the researchers came up with estimates of how much nitrogen and phosphorus were being applied to the soil. They then looked at what the University of Minnesota recommends for nutrient application rates—this is based on a plant's ability to take up and utilize the nutrients efficiently, among other things.

What they found was that on average in 17 of the counties nutrients applied to the land from both fertilizer and manure are 18 percent greater than the University's nitrogen recommendations and 74 percent greater than the phosphorus recommendations. Manure contributes about 14 percent of the excess nitrogen applied to cropland and 53 percent of the excess phosphorus applied.

Now let's put all this in perspective. Twenty manure spills may discharge a total of 29 tons of nitrogen and 20 tons of phosphorus, say the researchers. And non-compliant feedlots—operations that violate state regulations by allowing routine runoff of manure, etc.—produced 265 tons of nitrogen and 573 tons of

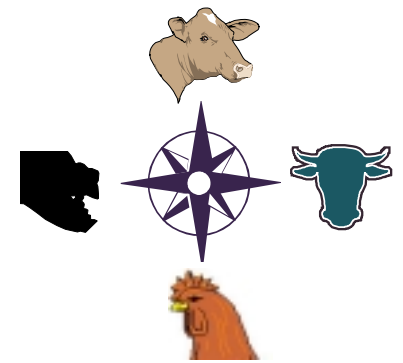
phosphorus annually, according to the study. But now consider that in one year the cropland studied received approximately 27,000 tons of nitrogen and 62,000 tons of phosphorus via manure.

While catastrophic spills and pollution caused by feedlots that are not in compliance are of concern, they shouldn't be allowed to draw attention away from the chronic pollution caused by applying manure (and commercial fertilizer) to farm fields, say the researchers.

"Thus, from a policy perspective, the primary water quality impact of animal manure is from land applied manure," wrote the researchers, adding that "...there is the real potential that the federal, state, and local governments will spend millions of dollars fixing noncompliant feedlots, without the prospect of making much difference in regional water quality problems."

This is an important point. Often when local citizens raise concerns about the construction of a large livestock confinement operation in their community, promoters of the project issue reassurances about how the latest technology will be used to store and handle the manure. However, there is often little discussion over whether enough land is available locally to take up all those extra nutrients (it is economically prohibitive to transport liquid manure much beyond a mile, according to the GEIS).

Obviously, steps need to be taken to prevent catastrophic spills and to bring farms into compliance. However, as this study shows, focusing too much on such



sources of manure contamination distracts from the bigger picture: the danger posed by land-applied manure once it safely leaves a storage facility. Some farmers are reducing nutrient loss by knifing the manure into the soil so it doesn't sit on the surface and become vulnerable to runoff. This is effective, but even knifed-in manure can be a problem if too much of it is applied near a drainage tile inlet.

One quandary farmers and agronomists find themselves in is that nitrogen is less stable than phosphorus, and more needs to be applied to get the same fertility boost. When a fertility plan is weighted in favor of a plant's nitrogen needs, as it often is, then too much phosphorus is likely to be applied.

Obviously, a hard look at how manure management plans are developed is in order. Plans that reduce animal densities are one way to protect water quality. Also needed is a serious examination of livestock production alternatives. Management intensive rotational grazing and deep straw swine production are a few of the systems being utilized by Midwestern farmers to reduce the amount of excess nutrients they produce.

But then, the GEIS all but ignored such alternatives. □

For more information

To get a copy of the Generic Environmental Impact Statement on Animal Agriculture, you can log onto www.mnplan.state.mn.us/eqb/geis. A CD-ROM version of the report is also available for \$5 (that covers shipping and handling). If you have a computer, the CD-ROM is a good investment: all 7,000 pages are cross-referenced, making for easier researching. For information on ordering the CD-ROM, call the Environmental Quality Board (EQB) at **651-296-2888**. Some regional **Minnesota libraries** also have the report available. If your local library doesn't have it, call the EQB to find the closest library that carries it.

To find the study discussed here

→ First, go to the "Technical Working Papers" section.

→ Find "Technical Working Paper: Impacts of Animal Agriculture on Water Quality."

→ Go to the "Executive Summary" on page i.

If you're on the Internet, the direct address for this technical working paper is www.mnplan.state.mn.us/eqb/geis/TWP_Water.pdf.

On CD-ROM, you can find the paper by clicking on the file **TWP_WA~1.PDF** (it is the last file listed).

Farm Beginnings

Innovative program begins 7th year

The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings program is beginning its seventh year of helping people get established on the land. To date, more than 100 beginning farmers have graduated from the program. Over half of those graduates are actively farming.

Farm Beginnings participants take part in a 10-month course that teaches goal setting, financial planning, business plan creation, alternative marketing, and low-cost and sustainable farming techniques. Established farmers and other professionals present the seminars, providing a strong foundation and community resources, networks and contacts for those interested in farming. Following the seminars, the participants receive hands-on training, a chance to apply knowledge from the seminars and an opportunity to connect with established farmers through a series of farm visits and one-on-one mentorships.

As another group of participants make the transition from classroom work to taking part in educational farm tours, here's an update of what's going on with the program this summer.

Livestock loans

The Farm Beginnings Livestock Loan program recently awarded three new loans to beginning farmers. Gary Wingert of Dover, Minn., received a dairy loan, while Shaun Murphy of Albert City, Iowa, and Marc and Heidi Ochtrup-Dekeyrel of Harmony, Minn., received poultry loans. They join six other southeast Minnesota families who have received livestock loans since the loan program's inception three years ago. To date, Farm Beginnings has provided four dairy loans, two beef loans, two poultry loans and one sheep loan.

To qualify for a revolving livestock loan, the farmers must successfully complete the Farm Beginnings course. In addition to completing the training, the livestock loan recipients must demonstrate experience, establish a relationship with an experienced adviser, show financial need and provide adequate housing for the animals. These are revolving no-interest livestock loans. This is the first year recipients will be paying back the loans so that other beginning farmers can utilize the program.

The value of the loan is not only in

the profit earned from the animals themselves, but also in the community connections and farmer-to-farmer relationships that develop, says Karen Stettler, coordinator of the southeast Minnesota Farm Beginnings program. For example, during the first year of the loan, established farmers, professionals and Land Stewardship Project staff visit the recipient farms quarterly to ask and answer questions, as well as check records, she says.

"The livestock loan is more than loaning animals," says Stettler. "The idea is to build individual and community capacity that will help each beginning farmer succeed with his or her goals."

The Livestock Loan program is made possible by Heifer International, a nonprofit organization that helps farmers around the world through innovative programs. Because of the success of the Livestock Loan program here in Minnesota, Heifer International is helping start similar programs in Pennsylvania, Vermont and Nebraska.

Summer field days

Grass-based livestock, vegetable production, organic cropping, Community Supported Agriculture and on-farm processing/marketing are some of the enterprises that are being featured during a series of Farm Beginnings field days being held on western and southeastern Minnesota farms this summer.

At this writing, some field days have already taken place, but a few still remain, including:

- **June 22**—Hidden Stream Farm—Elgin, Minn.; chicken, pork and beef production
- **June 28**—A-Frame Farm—Madison, Minn.; pork, chicken and organic crop production

There is no charge for these field days, but participants must pre-register. For the Elgin field day, call 507-523-3366. For the Madison event, call 320-269-2105.

In addition, on **Aug. 9**, Pastureland Cheese will hold a tour at the Roger and Michelle Benrud farm near Goodhue, Minn. Grazing and cheese marketing will be featured at this tour. For more information, call 651-923-5274. Also on Aug. 9 will be "chore time tours" of Big Woods Dairy, a grass-based farm at Big Woods State Park near Nerstrand, Minn. Call 507-333-4840 for more information.

For the latest information on sustainable agriculture events, log onto www.landstewardshipproject.org and click on the **Calendar** or go to the **Press Releases** section in the **Newsroom**.

WELCA pitches in for Farm Beginnings

The Lac qui Parle Conference of the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (WELCA) recently raised \$946.95 in the form of baby food jars full of quarters for the Farm Beginnings program.

The WELCA group hosted Amy Bacigalupo and Laura Borgendale of the Land Stewardship Project at their spring conference on April 15 at the Clarkfield (Minn.) Lutheran Church. Bacigalupo, coordinator of the Farm Beginnings western Minnesota program, was invited to speak about Farm Beginnings and the Heifer International livestock loan program (WELCA has chosen Heifer International as one of its mission projects). Borgendale, a Farm Beginnings participant, discussed her experiences with the program.

If you are connected to a community group that would like to help support Farm Beginnings, call 320-269-2105 in western Minnesota, 507-523-3366 in southeast Minnesota, or 651-653-0618 in the Twin Cities region. □

The next Farm Beginnings class

The next Farm Beginnings training will begin at the end of October 2003. To register for the southeast Minnesota program, contact Karen Stettler at 507-523-3366. In western Minnesota, contact Amy Bacigalupo at 320-269-2105.

LSP in the news

The Farm Beginnings program has received a lot of regional and national media coverage. Most recently, the program was featured in *Independent Banker* magazine and *Agri News*. In addition, the Land Stewardship Project's work with farmers was featured in the Spring 2003 issue of *Conservation In Practice* (www.conservationbiology.org/InPractice), a publication of the Society for Conservation Biology.

For details on media coverage of LSP initiatives, go to www.landstewardshipproject.org/news-itn.html. □

Alternative swine

"Exploring Sustainable Hog Production Methods for Missouri" is a new publication describing a trip 10 Missouri hog farmers took to Minnesota last August at the invitation of the Land Stewardship Project.

The farmers belong to Patchwork Family Farms, a pork-marketing cooperative specializing in pork that's raised using sustainable and humane methods. Patchwork is a project of the Missouri Rural Crisis Center, which, along with LSP, is a member-organization of the Campaign for Family Farms. While in Minnesota, the farmers visited LSP members who are using sustainable pork production systems such as pasture farrowing and deep-straw bedded housing. They also spent time at the Alternative Swine Research Center at the University of Minnesota-Morris.

"Exploring Sustainable Hog Production Methods for Missouri" describes what the farmers learned on the trip and how sustainable swine production fits with Patchwork's goals. For a copy of the report, log onto

www.inmotionmagazine.com/ra03/minn.html, or contact the Missouri Rural Crisis Center at 1108 Rangeline, Columbia, MO 65201; phone: 573-449-1336; e-mail: Info@morural.org. □

New farmers' market

A new farmers' market is opening this summer in the Twin Cities. The Midtown Public Market will be located at 2225 E. Lake Street in Minneapolis. Plans call for this market to be open on Tuesday afternoons (3:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.) and Saturday mornings (8 a.m.-12 p.m.) starting July 12, and running through Oct. 28.

Interested vendors should contact Larry Cermak at 612-333-1737. Additional market information is available at www.midtownpublicmarket.org.

The presence of farmers' markets is on the increase regionally and nationally. For general information on farmers' markets in the Twin Cities area, log onto www.landstewardshipproject.org and click on **Food & Farm Connection**. □

Minn. homegrown

The *2003 Minnesota Grown Directory* lists more than 500 farmers' markets, berry patches, apple orchards, nurseries, specialty meat providers and more. It's available at www.minnesotagrown.com. Free paper copies are available by calling 1-888-TOURISM. □

Mexico travel seminar Jan. 2004

"People, Plants, and Profits: The Culture and Political Economy of Corn in Mexico" is a travel seminar sponsored by the Land Stewardship Project and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy Jan. 2-12, 2004.

During the seminar, participants will gain firsthand knowledge of the issues surrounding the cultivation and economics of corn in Mexico, both past and present. The seminar will explore agricultural and environmental issues and the idea of sustainability in a Latin American context. It will also cover regulation of agricultural biotechnology, NAFTA and the agricultural economy of free trade, as well as the broader cultural, economic and political history of Mexico. The travel seminar will be based in Cuernavaca, about an hour south of Mexico City. Each day will include field trips and opportunities for interaction with people who represent a diverse cross-section of Mexican society.

The trip leader, Karin Matchett, is an historian of science who has lived and traveled extensively throughout Mexico and

South America. She researches and writes on the history of agriculture and science with a focus on corn in Mexico. The trip is being done in collaboration with the Center for Global Education at Augsburg College in Minneapolis. The center provides cross-cultural educational opportunities in order to foster critical analysis of local and global conditions.

The cost of the seminar is \$1,205, which covers all expenses in Mexico. Participants are responsible for their own airfare. The registration deadline is Oct. 15, 2003. A \$200 deposit payable to the Center for Global Education is due upon registration.

For an application form or more information, contact: Karin Matchett, Department of History, Yale University, P.O. Box 208324, New Haven, CT 06520-8324; phone: 203-436-2623; e-mail: karin.matchett@yale.edu. You can also contact the Center for Global Education at 612-330-1159 or 1-800-299-8889. The Center's e-mail address is globaled@augsborg.edu.



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Support LSP in your workplace

The Land Stewardship Project is a proud member of the Minnesota Environmental Fund, which is a coalition of 18 environmental organizations in Minnesota that offer workplace giving as an option in making our communities better places to live. Together member organizations of the Minnesota Environmental Fund work to

A P R O U D M E M B E R O F

- promote the sustainability of our rural communities and family farms;
- protect Minnesotans from health hazards;
- educate citizens and our youth on conservation efforts;
- preserve wilderness areas, parks, wetlands and wildlife habitat.



You can support LSP in your workplace by giving through the Minnesota Environmental Fund. Options include giving a designated amount through payroll deduction, or a single gift. You may also choose to give to the entire coalition or specify the organization of your choice within the coalition, such as the Land Stewardship Project. If your employer does not provide this opportunity, ask the person in charge of workplace giving to include it. For more information, call 651-653-0618 or e-mail lsqwbl@landstewardshipproject.org.

Did you miss a *Land Stewardship Letter* (or 2...or 10)?

Here's another chance to catch up on your stewardship reading

In the last issue of the *Land Stewardship Letter*, we asked your help in reducing our backlog of newsletter back issues. We got great response to this request. So here's another chance to help us lighten our load even more while adding some enlightening material to your bookshelf. Find out why *Whole Earth* magazine calls the *LSL* one of its "favorite newsletters...Grounded, intimate, striving, practical." And the price of these back issues won't weigh heavy on your bank account either—the Land Stewardship Project is offering the first 10 back issues of the newsletter for free (if you order more than that, call us for information on paying shipping and handling charges).

Listed on this page are the subject areas of back issues we have left. To order these back issues, just contact Louise Arbuckle, LSP's Twin Cities Office Manager, and let her know which subjects you are interested in. Louise will then put together a packet of *LSLs* and ship them to you. Did we mention she will do this for free? A more detailed description of each back issue is available at www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/LSLbackissues.pdf in pdf format. Happy gleaning!



Land Stewardship Letter back issues subject list 1986-2002

- ◆ **Animal welfare & sustainable agriculture** (May/June 1995)
- ◆ **Antibiotic resistance & agriculture** (May/June 2002; March/April 2002)
- ◆ **Beginning farmers** (July/Aug./Sept. 2002; Jan./Feb. 2002; Sept./Oct. 2001; Dec. 1998; Spring 1994)
- ◆ **Biodiversity & agriculture** (Sept./Oct. 2001; Dec. 1998; Nov. 1998)
- ◆ **Birds & grass farmers** (Dec. 1997)
- ◆ **Clean Up our River Environment-CURE** (Summer 1992)
- ◆ **Community Supported Agriculture-CSA** (Jan./Feb. 1995; Spring 1992)
- ◆ **Conservation Reserve Program-CRP** (Nov./Dec. 1994)
- ◆ **Corporate consolidation & agriculture** (Jan./Feb. 2002)
- ◆ **County soil protection ordinances** (Summer 1987; Winter 1986; Summer 1986)
- ◆ **Direct marketing of local food** (Jan./Feb. 2002)
- ◆ **Factory hog farming** (Aug./Sept. 1994)
- ◆ **Farm as Natural Habitat** (July/Aug./Sept. 2002; March/April 2002; July/Aug. 1998)
- ◆ **Federal farm policy** (March/April 2002; Jan./Feb. 2002; Sept./Oct. 2001; March/April 1995; Summer 1989; Winter 1989; Summer 1988; Winter 1986)
- ◆ **Fighting factory farms** (Jan./Feb. 2002; July/Aug. 1996; Summer 1993; Spring 1993; Winter 1992)
- ◆ **Globalization & sustainable agriculture** (Jan./Feb./March 1997)
- ◆ **Holistic Management & whole farm planning** (May/June 2002; Sept./Oct. 1998; Sept. 1996; May/June 1996; Sept./Oct. 1995; Winter 1991)
- ◆ **Hydrogen sulfide & factory farms** (July/Aug. 1996)

- ◆ **Insurance companies & their treatment of farmland** (Autumn 1992; Autumn 1990; Summer 1990; Winter 1990; Summer 1989; Spring 1989; Summer 1988; Spring 1988; Winter 1987; Fall 1987; Summer 1987; Spring 1987; Summer 1986)
- ◆ **Land grant mission** (July/Aug./Sept. 2002; April/May/June 1998; Dec. 1997)
- ◆ **Land trusts** (May/June 1995; Winter 1992)
- ◆ **Lawns & environmental problems** (April/May 1997; May/June 1996; Summer 1986)
- ◆ **LSP's history** (Oct./Nov./Dec. 2002; Oct./Nov. 1997; Aug./Sept. 1997; June/July 1997; April/May 1997; Jan./Feb./March 1997; Winter 1993)
- ◆ **Manure spills & rural communities** (Aug./Sept. 1997)
- ◆ **Marketing sustainably-produced food** (Jan./Feb. 2002; Nov./Dec. 1995)
- ◆ **Meat irradiation** (May/June 2002)
- ◆ **Midwest Food Alliance** (July/Aug./Sept. 2002; Jan./Feb. 2002)
- ◆ **Minnesota's Corporate Farm Law** (Spring 1993; Winter 1992)
- ◆ **Monitoring on sustainable farms** (Nov. 1998; Sept./Oct. 1998; Oct./Nov. 1996)
- ◆ **Multiple benefits of agriculture** (Jan./Feb. 2002; Sept./Oct. 2001)
- ◆ **On-farm research** (Spring 1992; Summer 1988; Fall 1986; Winter 1986)
- ◆ **Pesticides & children** (July/Aug. 1998)
- ◆ **Planting in the Dust** (Oct./Nov. 1997; Winter 1988; Fall 1986; Winter 1986)
- ◆ **Pork checkoff** (Jan./Feb. 2002; April/May/June 1998)
- ◆ **Precision agriculture & crop farming** (July/Aug. 1996)
- ◆ **Rotational grazing** (Jan./Feb. 2002; Spring 1993; Autumn 1992)
- ◆ **Rural economic development** (July/Aug./Sept. 2002; Dec. 1997)
- ◆ **Soil and Survival: Land Stewardship and the Future of American Agriculture** (Fall 1986)
- ◆ **Soil erosion** (July/Aug. 1995; Summer

1993; Summer 1990; Summer 1987)

- ◆ **Sprawling development & farming** (Aug./Sept. 1997; Dec. 1996; Jan./Feb. 1996; Nov./Dec. 1994; Winter 1994; Summer 1993; Spring 1991; Autumn 1990)
- ◆ **Streamside grazing** (Oct./Nov. 1997)
- ◆ **Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota** (Sept./Oct. 1998; Autumn 1991; Summer 1989; Spring 1989)
- ◆ **Sustainable field days** (Fall 1988)
- ◆ **Sustainable pork production** (May/June 2002)
- ◆ **Watersheds, communities & land use** (Sept./Oct. 1995)
- ◆ **Wildlife habitat & sustainable farming** (Sept. 1996)
- ◆ **Women & sustainable agriculture** (Autumn 1989)

Opportunities

Resources

Antibiotic resistance report

"Antibiotics, Agriculture & Resistance" is a special Land Stewardship Project report that examines how large-scale industrialized livestock production is contributing to the development of bacteria that resist being killed by antibiotics.

This report, which originally appeared as a series of articles in the *Land Stewardship Letter*, describes what livestock farmers are doing to get off the antibiotic treadmill and wrestles with the question of whether new "drug-free" labels give consumers a complete picture.

A free copy of "Antibiotics, Agriculture & Resistance" is available at www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/antibio_reprint.pdf. Paper copies of the 12-page report are \$5.00. For information on purchasing a copy, call 651-653-0618. □

STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

→ **JUNE 22—Farm Beginnings Field Day, featuring chicken, pork & beef production**, Hidden Stream Farm, Elgin, Minn.; Contact: LSP, 507-523-3366;

stettler@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **JUNE 23—Discussion on how to develop sustainable, independent farming and non-farming enterprises**, Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish, Moorland, Iowa; Contact: Fr. Marvin Boes, 712-277-2046

→ **JUNE 24—Minnesota's Waters & the TMDL Challenge: Laying the Foundation for a Water Quality Improvement Partnership**, St. Cloud (Minn.) Civic Center; Contact: 612-334-3388 or www.mn-ei.org/policy.html

→ **Discussion evening** (see June 23), St. Joseph Parish, Sioux Rapids, Iowa; Contact: 712-277-2046

→ **JUNE 25—Discussion evening** (see June 23), Holy Spirit Parish, Carroll, Iowa; Contact: 712-277-2046

→ **JUNE 26—"Local Foods: From Soil to Table" Pride of the Prairie event**, Morris, Minn. (see page 17)

→ **Grazing & haying field day, featuring pasture renovation, fencing & water system design, fly & pink eye control**, 6 p.m., Dan & Cara Miller farm, Spring Valley, Minn.; Contact: 507-346-2261

→ **Discussion evening** (see June 23), St. Michael Parish, Kingsley, Iowa; Contact: 712-277-2046

→ **JUNE 28—Farm Beginnings Field Day, featuring pork, chicken & organic crop production**; A-Frame Farm, Madison, Minn.; Contact: LSP, 320-269-2105; amyb@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **JUNE 30—Discussion evening** (see June 23), St. Joseph Parish, Salix, Iowa; Contact: 712-277-2046

→ **JULY 1—Discussion evening** (see June 23), St. Patrick Parish, Sheldon, Iowa; Contact: 712-277-2046

→ **JULY 11—Grazing program on forage harvesting options & filling the gap with warm season plants**, West Central Research & Outreach Center, Morris, Minn.; Contact: Dennis Johnson, 320-589-1711; dairydgj@mrs.umn.edu

→ **JULY 17—Blueberry Field Night, Central Lakes College Ag Center**, 6 p.m., Staples, Minn.; Contact: Jerry Wright, 320-589-1711 or 1-877-977-7778

→ **JULY 18—Northern Plains Sustainable Ag Society Summer Symposium**, Boehm farm, Richardton, N. Dak., & Dickinson Research Center; Contact: Tonya Haigh, 605-627-5862 or www.npsas.org

→ **JULY 21—Tour of beef grazing pastures, Homeplace Organic Beef**, Clearwater, Minn.; Contact: Connie Lahr, 320-963-3690

→ **JULY 25—Organic Field Day**, Lamberton, Minn.; Contact: 507-752-7372; <http://swroc.coafes.umn.edu>

→ **JULY 25-27—Midwest Sustainable Ag Working Group Summer Meeting**, Delaware, Ohio; Contact: Dana Jackson, LSP, 651-653-0618 or

danaj@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **JULY 29-31—Upper Midwest Grazing Conference**, LaCrosse, Wis.; Contact: Larry Tranel, 563-583-6496, ext. 14; www.wisc.edu/cias/uppermidwest

→ **JULY or AUGUST—5-day CSA farming workshop**, Postville, Iowa; Contact: 563-864-3847;

www.sunflowerfieldsca.com

→ **AUG. 6—Grazing program on**

supplementing diets when grass is short, Morris, Minn. (see July 11)

→ **AUG. 9—Pastureland Cheese Tour**, Roger & Michelle Benrud farm, Goodhue, Minn.; Contact: 651-923-5274

→ **Gale Woods Farm Park Grand Opening**, Minnetrista, Minn. (see page 5)

→ **Tour of grass-based farm**, Big Woods Dairy, Big Woods State Park, Nerstrand, Minn.; Contact: 507-333-4840

→ **Southeast Minn. Farm Beginnings Potluck Picnic**, Benrud farm, Goodhue, Minn.; Contact: LSP, 507-523-3366; stettler@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **AUG. 16-17—Windy River Renewable Energy & Sustainable Ag Fair**, Verndale, Minn.; Contact: 218-568-8624;

www.sustainablefarmingcentralmn.com

→ **SEPT. 10—Grazing program on improving pastures for next year**, Morris, Minn. (see July 11)

→ **SEPT. 26-28—International Holistic Mgt. Rendezvous**, Leo, Texas; Contact: 505-842-5252;

www.holisticmanagement.org

→ **Prairie Festival**, Salina, Kan.;

Contact: www.landinstitute.org

785-823-5376

→ **OCT. 13-15—Wild Farm Alliance meeting & public program** (Twin Cities, Minn., location to be announced); Contact: Dana Jackson, LSP, 651-653-0618;

danaj@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **OCT. 15—Registration deadline for "People, Plants, and Profits: The Culture and Political Economy of Corn in Mexico" travel seminar** (see page 22)

→ **NOV. 12—Grazing program on winter pasture & lot management**, Morris, Minn. (see July 11)

Check www.landstewardshipproject.org for the latest on upcoming events.
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