

# The Land Stewardship

Keeping the Land and People Together



# Letter

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## From Price Takers to Price Makers

*One value-added marketing co-op is keeping the value where it belongs: on the farm.*

By Brian DeVore

Oh the exciting, by-the-seat-of-your pants life of an organic farming pioneer. For almost

three decades, Carmen Fernholz has guided his chemical-free crops through a gauntlet of weeds, pests, bad weather and sometimes derisive neighbors. It's a management-intensive, sometimes nerve-racking way to go about farming. But after selling the crop for a price that's often two to three times higher than the conventional market, the worrying is over, right? Not exactly.

One day in the late 1970s, the southwest Minnesota farmer called a West Coast grain buyer to find out why he hadn't received a check for a load of organic soybeans. The news wasn't good: the truck hauling the beans had rolled over in the mountains. Back then, organic buyers were often just as shaky financially as the farmers themselves, and Fernholz knew that traffic accident might be enough to keep him from ever getting his money.

He eventually did get paid, but it wasn't the only instance where the farmer dodged a bullet. Another time an organic grain buyer declared bankruptcy a scant two weeks after paying Fernholz. Sitting at his dining room table recently, the farmer makes it clear he's willing to take his chances with the natural and agronomic

vagaries of organic agriculture; but that's where the gambling stops.

"I realized I'm vulnerable when it came to marketing. I started thinking, wow, there's something I need help with."

Fernholz and other organic farmers

eventually sought that help via a new kind of cooperative. They created a unique joint grain marketing initiative that now involves producers in 22 states and the Canadian province of Ontario. The collaboration, called OFARM, may serve as a model for how farmers of all stripes, not just organic grain producers, can come together to protect themselves in an increasingly complicated and daunting

**OFARM** see page 16...



**Farmer Carmen Fernholz holds some of the organic golden flax he raises: "We knew that the organic market was going to be in the same predicament as the conventional market if we didn't do something." (LSP photo)**

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The Land Stewardship Letter is published four times a year by the Land Stewardship Project, a private, nonprofit organization. The mission of the Land Stewardship Project is to foster an ethic of stewardship for farmland, to promote sustainable agriculture and to develop sustainable communities. Members of the Land Stewardship Project receive this newsletter as a benefit. Annual membership dues are \$35.

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**LSL Q & A**

**Organic food's regulatory rock**

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Third-party certification is a keystone of organic agriculture. Without reliable inspecting agencies that can make sure farmers are not using chemicals, feed antibiotics and the other trappings of conventional agriculture, organic labels on foods wouldn't be worth the paper they are printed on. Jim Riddle's leadership in bringing professional training to inspectors helped to earn greater acceptance of organic farming in the U.S. He was the founding chair of the Independent Organic Inspectors Association (IOIA) and in 2004 was elected chairman of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), which advises the USDA on organic agriculture policies and regulations. Riddle, of Winona, Minn., chairs the NOSB at an interesting time in organic agriculture. On Oct. 21, 2002, a national organic standard was created. This was a landmark for the organic industry; prior to that organic food was certified by various private and state agencies. Those certification bodies still exist, but they adhere to a common federal standard that's coordinated by the USDA. The federal agency's relationship with organic farmers and consumers has been rocky in the past, and there have been major concerns over having the USDA involved in organic agriculture. Riddle took time recently to talk to the Land Stewardship Letter about that relationship and other issues related to organic certification.

*LSL: You worked hard to get a national organic standard. Now that it's been a reality for a few years, what is your assessment?*

**Riddle:** I take an evolutionary view of these kinds of changes. I've continually seen progress from a time where we had all these different standards and quite a bit of variation between the standards and tremendous variation between the job the inspector and the certifier did and all the different label claims and people not accepting each other's ingredients from different certifiers. We do have one set of standards and it is a strong standard. I would say it's the strongest organic regulation in the world as far as the production standards go. Certainly on livestock.

*LSL: For the typical organic consumer, when they go into a store, how are things different than they were before?*

**Riddle:** There are just a lot of products with that USDA organic logo now. That means it had to contain at least 95 percent organic ingredients. And I think consumers are responding to that. During the last two years, the selection of fresh and processed products has greatly expanded. Then there's the labeling of organic meat, which was illegal prior to 1999. All of a sudden the consumer has a choice of organic meat and that really benefits the

whole organic farming system. Because then you've got more livestock on the farms, you've got uses for forage crops, rotational crops, alternative feed crops, and seconds, like soybean splits, hulls, things that don't make the food market. That's a significant and under-appreciated change.

*LSL: How are things different for the typical organic farmer compared to before 2002?*

**Riddle:** Well, it's a stronger market. Basically you grow it and someone will buy it. That won't hold out forever but right now it is a grower's market for organics, for people who are certified. And we've seen growth of the farm sector—one figure I've seen is something like 18 percent a year the last five years, based on ERS figures. And we're seeing the market growing at 20 percent a year. So the supply side still isn't keeping up with the market expansion. The U.S. is the world's biggest market for organic products. I remain optimistic it will continue to grow. That 20 percent growth rate may drop to 12 or 15 percent, but that's still stronger than any other sector of the food industry.

*LSL: We still have individual certify-*



**Organic Certification, see page 3...**

ing agencies. You pick up a gallon of milk, for example, and the label says it's certified by Oregon Tilth.

**Riddle:** There's one standard that all certification agencies have to enforce. There are 15 state governments that have state certification programs. Iowa is one in the Midwest. Otherwise, Minnesota, Wisconsin and the Dakotas do not have state run certifying programs. The rest are either nonprofit institutions like the Minnesota Crop Improvement Association or for-profit companies like Quality Assurance International. All of those certifiers, regardless of their business structure or if they're government or nongovernment, all have to be accredited by USDA. They are deputized by USDA to enforce the regulations and they have to prove that they have the competency, the transparency and the freedom from conflict of interest. The USDA sends out an auditor that goes through the inspectors' files and does on-site visits to farms and processing facilities and makes sure that each of the certifiers are enforcing the regulation properly.

**LSL:** There was a lot of concern within some sectors of the organic community about one national standard. It was very controversial.

**Riddle:** I know one of the objections to the USDA regulation is that it would drive up the cost of certification. And that's one thing that we have taken care of at least for the time being with a certification cost share. Minnesota had a state program that we launched in 1998 and then Senator Paul Wellstone got that implemented in the 2002 Farm Bill. Now we have a national organic certification cost share that reimburses any farmer or processor 75 percent of their certification costs up to \$500 per operation per year. If it costs \$600 to get your farm operation certified, you're going to get back \$450. So it's going to cost you \$150 a year to get certified. You certainly should be able to pencil that out.

People also object to the record keeping requirements. They don't like to keep records. I think part of the answer to that is good records pay, they don't cost. You can increase your profits and improve management by keeping good records. And once a farm is certified it can actually qualify to complete a streamlined plan, instead of a 15-page

plan every year. Once they're in the system, the burden on an annual basis is greatly reduced.

But there are people out there, and it's understandable, that reject USDA being involved on the basis of USDA has facilitated the fencerow-to-fencerow, commodity two-crop rotation and consolidation of large farms. So turning organic agriculture over to USDA is a bitter pill. I totally understand that and that's why I'm so totally committed to maintaining the integrity of the standards and the procedures, keeping the small farmer and the consumer's voice active in the process. The National Organic Standards Board was created under the law in 1990 to represent the interests of



**Jim Riddle (right) recently joined Wisconsin Agriculture Secretary Rod Nilsestuen and Faye Jones, Director of Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Services, Inc. (MOSES) to launch an organic farmer recruiting campaign. (LSP photo)**

organic farmers and consumers in the regulatory process. If we turn our backs and say USDA owns organics, we have given up. And I'm not ready to do that.

**LSL:** The NOSB is an advisory body. How much does the USDA have to listen to you?

**Riddle:** One thing that is unique about the powers of this board under the Organic Foods Production Act is we have the statutory authority to review substances to be placed on or to be removed from the national list. And the [USDA] Secretary cannot add or remove a substance without the recommendation of the board. So that's unique for an advisory board to USDA to have real power.

**LSL:** You have a bit of a stick, for

want of a better word, to wield, in that there is a history there of consumer activism. When proposed organic rules were put out there a few years ago, over 275,000 public comments were directed at the USDA. This unprecedented response caused the USDA to back off on efforts to weaken the regulations.

**Riddle:** Don't mess with us. It blows up in the USDA's face every time.

**LSL:** LSP helped develop the Food Alliance Midwest certification program. Is there a concern within the organic community that we're going to confuse or overwhelm consumers with green or sustainable labels such as this?

**Riddle:** That is a possibility. I guess the thing that I see is that organic has a legal definition, it's legally protected now, and it has legs in the marketplace, it stands on its own. These other claims are kind of hit and miss; they don't have a legal definition and they have to explain themselves every time. I really favor the growth of companion claims that build on organic. Things like organic Fair Trade or organic shade grown coffee that's bird friendly or family farmed organic, local organic, things that bring an additional quality but don't feel the need to duplicate a system that's already fully functional and has legal recognition.

It is already happening in this country somewhat but a lot more in Europe where you have two seals that appear on the front panel: one being the organic seal and the other being, for instance, fair trade that is certified as compliant to a set of standards by either a different organization that specializes in Fair Trade certification or an organic certifier that offers that as an additional service. So for local organic certification you would need regional groups that set certain parameters to meet that claim within 50 miles or within 200 miles or somehow defining the region. I know that some organic certifiers are offering some of those additional claims, it's just added on to the paperwork and the inspector verifies compliance and then they are licensed to make those additional claims.

I would really like to see Food Alliance offering organic as one of those options and to get accredited and be a player. Then I think those additional factors that are valid would have more recognition in the marketplace. □

You can read Riddle's "Inspector's Notebook" column on [newfarm.org](http://newfarm.org) at [www.newfarm.org/archive/columns.shtml#riddle](http://www.newfarm.org/archive/columns.shtml#riddle).



# NPA: Connecting streets & farms

By Andria Williams

In late April, Land Stewardship Project members and staff (including myself) traveled to Washington, D.C., to represent LSP at the 34<sup>th</sup> annual National People's Action (NPA) meeting.

NPA is an annual gathering of nearly 100 social justice organizations from around the country, their work ranging from housing advocacy to the improvement of public education. The mission behind NPA is to connect people who are working for positive social change across the country, allowing them to share and understand one another's struggles and triumphs. As one of the LSPers in attendance, I learned that fighting crime in urban neighborhoods and fighting factory farms in rural Minnesota may not be such different struggles after all.

In representing LSP at National People's Action, our members brought attention to the issues facing family farmers and rural citizens here in Minnesota. These issues included a focus on fair payment limitations for federal farm subsidies, the struggle to end the long-battled mandatory pork checkoff tax, and promotion of the Conservation Security Program (CSP).

Soon after arriving in D.C., we participated in NPA's opening plenary session, at which all of the attending groups introduced themselves to one another. The opening plenary felt like part political convention, part revival: it opened with hymns accompanied by piano, as each group waved rectangular signs. But instead of naming a state, each sign designated the group in attendance: "Accion Latina," "Missouri Rural Crisis Center," "Land Stewardship Project." LSP member Theresa Benda of Pine Island introduced our group: "We represent nearly 2,800 individuals—and thousands of hogs, cattle and chickens—from the state of Minnesota!"

The first half of Sunday was filled with workshops on the many issues faced by the attending groups at NPA. Together with other family farm and rural advocacy groups from the Midwest, as well as groups working for food equality for the poor, LSP members participated in a workshop called "Food, Family Farms,

and Environmental Justice." We heard from a single mother from Massachusetts whose food stamps had been cut to levels so low she could not support her children. Even then, this meager allowance opened her eyes to the cozy relationship between factory farms and the USDA; her food stamps dictated that she could buy only factory farmed, industrial agriculture products, which she illustrated by holding

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*"I learned that fighting crime in urban neighborhoods and fighting factory farms in rural Minnesota may not be such different struggles after all."*

• • •

up a giant can of something we could only, after much guessing, identify as chicken.

LSP member Brad Trom, a corn and soybean farmer from Blooming Prairie, Minn., spoke from the rural end of this struggle. He shared his personal experience with a proposed dairy factory farm that threatens his small township in southeastern Minnesota. He described the coercive tactics used by proponents of the factory farm, including flooding one of Ripley Township's meetings with big ag representatives, packing the town hall so tightly that even some township residents were denied a seat to make room for commodity group reps from out of town and out of state. "But after two and a half years of organizing," Trom said, "we scored a major victory with Ripley Township officers voting for the passage of an interim ordinance, which halted the construction of the factory farm for a full year" (see page 13).

The afternoon gathered even more momentum as the nearly 1,000 attendees rode school buses to the home of USDA Deputy Secretary Charles Conners to protest recent USDA actions that have harmed rural citizens and the urban poor while upholding corporate privilege and market domination. Holding signs with slogans such as "People's Need, Not Corporate Greed" and "Stop Factory Farms," these NPA attendants from all over the country gathered to politely—but

firmly—express their resolve that the good of the people trump the demands of a privileged few.

Over the course of our time in the capitol, we attended three other such actions, and then were able to meet at the Russell Senate Office Building with Congressional representatives from Minnesota and other Midwestern states. LSP member Paul Garver, a livestock farmer from Hendricks, Minn., spoke of the injustice of the mandatory pork checkoff, the benefits of which go to promoting big ag and factory farms while harming independent hog farmers (see page 14). Brad Trom asked the agriculture reps to support the Rural America Preservation Act of 2005 (see page 12).

Garver and Trom's messages got to the heart of why we were all at NPA: to see people and their hopeful, innovative solutions win out over corporations and the stale, damaging thinking that comes from corporate-government alliances and privilege. As 1,000 people at the nation's capitol, we represented millions of people nationwide and their struggle for equality, justice and the greater human good. □

*Andria Williams, who worked for LSP's Policy Program during the past year, recently moved to Virginia. For more on National People's Action, call 312-243-3038 or visit [www.npa-us.org](http://www.npa-us.org).*

## Jerry Unger: 1951-2005

Land Stewardship Project member Jerry Unger died suddenly May 27 while attending a conference in St. Paul, Minn. He was 53.

Unger was born in Chula Vista, Calif., and earned a bachelor's degree in economics from Claremont Men's College. He and his wife Patricia lived in Kirkland, Wash., before moving to a farm near the southeast Minnesota community of Mazeppa in 1999.

Soon after moving to Minnesota, the Ungers took LSP's Farm Beginnings™ course, graduating in 2001. They operated an organic vegetable farm near Mazeppa, selling their products at farmers' markets. Jerry was passionate about sustainable agriculture and the future of family farming. He was active in LSP work and was particularly interested in how to connect farmers with faith-based communities. His enthusiasm and commitment to sustainable agriculture and family farming will be missed by all of us. □

# Minnesota Legislature: Harmony means working together

By Paul Sobocinski

**O**n March 16, 2005, the Land Stewardship Project received a handwritten note from Steve Dille, a Republican state Senator from Dassel, Minn. Written on his Minnesota Senate stationery, the note asked that we suspend our grassroots factory farm organizing for two years. In return, Senator Dille claimed he would “help” get legislation passed that the Land Stewardship Project supported during the 2005 legislative session (see page 10).

This was part of a “peace, harmony, love and acceptance of diversity” publicity campaign Senator Dille was carrying out at the time, so we weren’t surprised to receive the letter. What did surprise us was that it was later used as an excuse to stymie good public policy—policy that would help family farmers, sustainable agriculture and Minnesota as a whole.

During the session in early February, the Senator wrote a 13-point letter calling for an end to what he labeled the “feedlot wars.” Unfortunately, it has become increasingly clear that his idea of “peace and harmony” consists of farmers and rural residents sitting passively by while factory farming’s supporters have their way in the community. It appears Sen. Dille wants peace and harmony for industrial agriculture, so it can go about its business undisturbed by calls for open communication, justice and democracy.

Sen. Dille is a long-time supporter of large-scale factory farms and sees expansion of industrialized livestock operations as the only way Minnesota agriculture is going to remain a viable economic engine. He sees township and county government as a major impediment to this expansion and has made repeated attempts to weaken local control. This session was no exception—he proposed language that would make it very difficult to impose a moratorium on large-scale livestock development while a township did the kind of planning and zoning needed to secure a sustainable future.

LSP believes in local democracy and we often work with our members and other rural residents when they are trying to determine what type of development is best for their community and how to ensure that local ordinances are in place

that reflect the values of the community. In Senator Dille’s mind, that apparently makes LSP an enemy, and he has made his dislike for what we do clear. During the 2003 session of the Minnesota Legislature, he proposed a bill that would ban the Minnesota Department of Agriculture from issuing grants or contracts to any person or organization that in the previous three years had taken an active role in preventing the expansion of an agricultural operation. The proposal went nowhere, but Sen. Dille’s message was loud and clear: if you are a member of LSP, or any group that helps people stand up for their rights in farm country, you should be considered a second class citizen and punished for it.

That tactic didn’t work, so now the senator is trying to alienate LSP from some of the organizations that we work with. We spent time this legislative session with the Senator discussing proposals he has agreed are good for Minnesota agriculture and our rural communities. He even appeared at a press conference held by the Citizen Task Force for Livestock Farmers and Rural Communities, a coalition consisting of LSP, Minnesota Farmers Union, Minnesota National Farmers Organization and the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota. At that press conference, Sen. Dille voiced his support for a Citizen Task Force initiative that would have provided financial incentives for beginning dairy farmers.

When Sen. Dille presented his “peace and harmony” letter about ending the feedlot wars, we responded that attaining such a goal requires building trust, and that takes time. We extended our hand to the Senator, and ultimately he responded by telling staff members of LSP that it would “cost” groups like the Farmers Union, National Farmers Organization and the Sustainable Farming Association to be associated with us. It seems he is not only opposed to freedom of speech,

but also freedom of association.

Sen. Dille is claiming that LSP’s belief in local democracy is costing sustainable agriculture and family farming in general. On June 2, *Minnesota Agri News* reported Sen. Dille as saying that because LSP would not bend to his will and give up a core part of our work—grassroots organizing—we were responsible for the failure of legislation that would benefit sustainable agriculture and family farming. Sen. Dille claimed that because of LSP, \$2.5 million was “left on the table” unused. In effect, the Senator conceded that he made efforts to block or not help along positive legislation because of his dislike for LSP.

We find it hard to believe, considering how tight the budget is, that \$2.5 million was “left on the table.” But if it was, that’s a sad statement for a state Senator to make to all Minnesota farmers: it is more important to punish an organization than to fund the needs of family farmers in the state.

He is apparently willing to sacrifice good policy to attain his narrow ends. Is this any way to make laws? As a legislator, Sen. Dille is entrusted to pass policy that is best for the citizens of Minnesota, not to try to silence groups that he doesn’t like. This has implications beyond just LSP and Senator Steve Dille.

What if all policymakers obstructed positive initiatives simply because groups, or individuals, they disliked were associated with them in some way? This is why our nation’s founding fathers made freedom of speech and freedom of association bedrock principles of an open and just society.

To have true peace and harmony, we must have dialogue, debate, and give-and-take as to what is good agricultural policy for our state. We hope that Sen. Dille will reconsider his position and use his strong leadership capabilities to do what is right for Minnesota agriculture and its rural communities. □

*LSP Policy Program organizer Paul Sobocinski raises hogs near Wabasso, in southwest Minnesota.*



## What’s on your mind?

Got an opinion? Comments? Corrections? 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: Brian DeVore, 4917 Nokomis Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55417; phone: 612-729-6294; e-mail: bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org.



## 'Ducks' rally calls for ag conservation support

The Land Stewardship Project joined an unprecedented coalition of hunting, fishing and environmental groups April 2 for the "Ducks, Wetlands and Clean Water" rally at the Minnesota state capitol. More than 4,000 people from across the state gathered to call for policy reforms and initiatives to reverse

entering Sand Creek. The stream, which flows through the Minar farm, is a major contributor of sediment to the Minnesota River. A few years ago, the Minars participated in the Monitoring Project, an LSP-led initiative that brought together farmers, researchers, nonprofit personnel and government conservationists.



Farmer Dave Minar: "Until we put conservation first, we won't make much progress." (LSP photo)

the onslaught of wetland drainage that has plagued the state for the past several decades.

In recent years, hunters and anglers have become aware that agricultural policies that promote the production of corn and soybeans, while penalizing farmers who are more diverse, are having devastating effects on wildlife habitat and water quality. The rally itself was spawned by a series of articles on the demise of wetlands written by Minneapolis *Star Tribune* outdoor columnist Dennis Anderson. Bob Austin, a Land Stewardship Project member and avid duck hunter, helped organize the rally.

LSP member Dave Minar was one of the rally's main speakers. The Scott County dairy farmer talked about how he and his wife Florence have utilized grass-based livestock production to improve wildlife habitat on their farm and to reduce the amount of contaminants

Research done on farms participating in the Monitoring Project showed methods such as managed rotational grazing were good news for the environment because they relied on year-round plant cover such as grasses.

"The water was cleaner when it left our farm than when it came in," Minar said. "We don't just measure success in dollars on our farm. I measure success by how many fledgling bobolinks are sitting on our fence after a successful nesting."

The farmer told the crowd that production systems that help wildlife habitat and water quality won't become more common by accident. For one thing, government policy needs to stop penalizing farmers who break out of the corn-bean duo-cropping system, said Minar, who is on LSP's State Policy Committee. He encouraged rally participants to tell members of the Minnesota Congressional delegation that they need to support the

Conservation Security Program (CSP), a new federal initiative that holds great promises for promoting environmentally sound farming, but which up until now has been woefully underfunded. In addition, Congress needs to cap subsidy payments and close loopholes that allow mega-operations to receive more than their share of subsidies, said the farmer (see pages 12-13).

"Until we put conservation first, we won't make much progress," said Minar.

The Minars process their milk on-farm and sell it as various products under the Cedar Summit label. He said that another way people can support conservation farming is with their "food dollar" by buying products produced by families that adhere to environmental standards. In Minnesota, one way of supporting such methods is by looking for the Food Alliance Midwest seal of approval, said Minar (see page 18).

Rally organizer Dave Zentner said the groups who helped put on the event will continue to push for policy reform.

"We are committed to federal farm policy where subsidies for crops don't overwhelm the conservation features." □

### Agriculture's multiple benefits

◆ For more on the coalition of groups behind the "Ducks, Wetlands and Clean Water" rally, see [www.wetlandrally.org](http://www.wetlandrally.org).

◆ Details on research LSP is involved in that shows the connection between diverse farming systems and environmental quality is at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs\\_mba.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_mba.html).

◆ To read an interview *Star Tribune* outdoor writer Dennis Anderson did with agricultural economist Richard Levins on the relationship between loss of wildlife habitat and farm policy, see [www.mepartnership.org/mep\\_whatsnew.asp?new\\_id=1071](http://www.mepartnership.org/mep_whatsnew.asp?new_id=1071).

◆ Details on the Multiple Benefits of Agriculture initiative are at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs\\_mba.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_mba.html). LSP's CSP web page is at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs\\_csp.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_csp.html).

◆ An article that appeared in the magazine *Conservation In Practice* describes the Monitoring Project research initiative Dave and Florence Minar were involved in. It's at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/pr/04/itn\\_040201.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pr/04/itn_040201.html)

## Art Gallery entries needed

The theme of the next Land Stewardship Project Stewardship Art Gallery is, "The Wild Wonderland of Waterfowl." The deadline for these entries is January 1, 2006. Please submit them to Louise Arbuckle, [lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org). If your entry is chosen to appear on our website you will receive a free LSP membership for you or as a gift for someone.

### The entries should:

Show waterfowl in their natural setting. We will accept any kind of artwork: sculptures, paintings, photos etc. For photos, candid shots work well, black and white or color are fine and tell us when and where you took it.

### Entry guidelines:

- ✓ Please **do not** send originals. Send entries as digitals or scanned files.
- ✓ If you are using pictures from your digital camera, they will work just fine if they are JPEG files.
- ✓ If you are scanning the images yourself from photographs or artwork, it is better to save them in either TIFF or EPS format. When scanning, use a 150 PPI ("pixels per inch") setting.
- ✓ Please title your entry.

Check out the Gallery at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/index-gallery.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/index-gallery.html).

If you have any questions please contact Louise at 651-653-0618 or [lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org). □

## Grazing workshops in SE Minnesota

A series of grazing management workshops will take place in southeastern Minnesota this summer with Howard Moechnig, state grazing specialist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

"Profitable Livestock Production by Better Understanding of Pasture Management" will be covered in three-hour sessions either on a farm or at agriculture service center offices. The fee for each is \$10. Pre-registration two weeks prior to each session is required because space is limited.

For locations and to register, call Diana Strain, Hiawatha Valley Resource Conservation and Development, at 507-

281-1959, ext. 4. For other information, contact Caroline van Schaik at the Land Stewardship Project's Lewiston office by calling 507-523-3366 or e-mailing [caroline@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:caroline@landstewardshipproject.org).

The following workshops have been organized:

- July 11: Livestock Watering Systems, 1 p.m.-4 p.m.
- July 18: Livestock Watering Systems, 6 p.m.-9 p.m.
- July 25: Strategies for Maximizing Forage Production, 6 p.m.-9 p.m.
- Aug. 1: Fencing for Livestock/Sensitive Area Identification and Management, 6 p.m.-9 p.m.
- Aug. 8: Fencing for Livestock/Sensitive Area Identification and Management, 1 p.m.-4 p.m.

Co-sponsors include LSP, the Sustainable Farming Association of Southeast Minnesota, Hiawatha Valley RC&D, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Minnesota Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils, and Area 7 Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Funding is provided by a grant from NRCS and the Minnesota Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils. □

## Farm credit workshop in July

"Building a Wonderful Credit Relationship" is the title of a special Land Stewardship Project workshop being offered in July. The eight-hour training will take place July 8-9 in the western

Minnesota community of Montevideo. It will be repeated in southeast Minnesota July 15-16 at Whitewater State Park near Altura. The fee is \$20 per family for LSP members; nonmembers pay \$25. The fee covers materials and food.

Lou Anne Kling, director of Granite Falls' Neighbors United Resource Center and a member of LSP's Board of Directors, will be the primary instructor.

The workshop stems from LSP's Farmer/Lender survey work, which quantified the need for better record-keeping by farmers in need of credit (see [www.landstewardshipproject.org/pr/03/newsr\\_030826.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pr/03/newsr_030826.html) for more on this work). This workshop will address aspects of both record keeping and loan applications, with a goal of better preparing farmers to manage their farming as a business and feeling confident when they enter a bank. Cash flows, balance statements, credit card ratings, and bank packets for loan applications will be covered.

Priority for enrollment will be given to Farm Beginnings™ graduates, with the public welcome as space permits. Participants will be expected to work from their Farm Beginnings business plans or case studies (to be provided).

Kling's strategy is to motivate students to test themselves by checking their farm projections with actual records, and then fine-tuning the process to meet goals.

For details, contact Caroline van Schaik at 507-523-3366 ([caroline@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:caroline@landstewardshipproject.org)) or Amy Bacigalupo at 320-269-2105 ([amyb@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:amyb@landstewardshipproject.org)). □



Earlier this spring, the Land Stewardship Project helped organize a meeting to plan the 2005 Chippewa County CROP Walk, held June 15 in the western Minnesota community of Montevideo. Eight percent of the money raised through the CROP Walk in Chippewa County goes to LSP's western Minnesota office to help it create a sustainable food system. The rest of the money goes to help alleviate hunger in this country and abroad. For information on donating to the CROP Walk, visit [www.kintera.org/faf/home/default.asp?ievent=64055](http://www.kintera.org/faf/home/default.asp?ievent=64055). (LSP photo)



## Johnson & Kling join LSP Board of Directors

**Dennis Johnson** and **Lou Anne Kling** have joined the Land Stewardship Project's Board of Directors.

**Johnson** is a dairy scientist at the University of Minnesota's West Central Research and Outreach Center in Morris. In recent years, the Center has gained a regional and national reputation for its

research on managed rotational grazing in dairy herds. Johnson received his master's and doctorate degrees in dairy husbandry from the University of Minnesota.

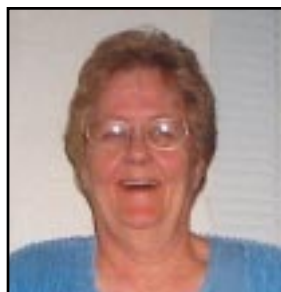


**Dennis Johnson**

He has studied dairy systems in several countries, including New Zealand, Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands. Johnson also volunteers his time working on hunger and poverty issues for the Southwestern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

**Kling** farmed with her husband for 25 years near Granite Falls, Minn. She helped develop the Minnesota Farm Advocates program, which provides one-on-one assistance for farmers who face crisis caused by either a natural disaster or financial problems. This initiative continues to serve as a model for many advocate programs across the country.

She also was a founding board member of the Farmers' Legal Action Group (FLAG), and organized and served as director of the Neighbors United Resource Center, a Granite Falls organization that helps farmers in



**Lou Anne Kling**

financial difficulty.

In 1983, Kling was appointed Minnesota director of the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA), and during the

mid-1990s was in Washington, D.C., where she served as the Deputy Administrator of the Farmer Loan Program. □



Land Stewardship Project member-farmer **Ray Mark** helped with an LSP "Day at the Farm" Earth Day petting zoo April 23 at Winona State University. Besides showing the public farm animals and conducting prize drawings, LSP members and staff handed out free tree seedlings during the event. (photo by *Caroline van Schaik*)

## 10% of Linden Hills sales to benefit LSP Sept. 12

On Monday, Sept. 12, 10 percent of store sales at Linden Hills Natural Home will be contributed to the Land Stewardship Project.

Located at 2822 West 43<sup>rd</sup> Street in Minneapolis, Minn., Linden Hills Natural Home offers earth-friendly, local and sustainable products for homes, gardens and pets.

For information, call 612-279-2479, or visit [www.lindenhills.coop](http://www.lindenhills.coop). □

## Hook up with

### LIVE ~~WIRE~~ WIRE

Sign up for *LIVE-WIRE* to get regular e-mail updates and news from the Land Stewardship Project. Stay current on information and activities related to land stewardship, local food and grassroots organizing.

To subscribe, call Louise Arbuckle at 651-653-0618 or e-mail [lspswb1@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:lspswb1@landstewardshipproject.org) and put in the subject line "Subscribe LIVE-WIRE." □

## Voices film on DVD

*Voices of Minnesota Farm Women*, a film presented by the Land Stewardship Project and featuring several LSP members, is now available as a DVD.

The film, which had its broadcast premiere in April on Pioneer Public Television, tells the story of Minnesota's heritage and legacy through oral history interviews of contemporary women who are involved in farming and local sustainable food systems. Produced and directed by documentarian Cynthia Vagnetti, *Voices* features Minnesota farmers Annette and Kay Fernholz of Madison; Paula Marti of Cambria; Robin Moore of Milan; Bev Struxness, also of Milan; Muriel French of Mantorville; Florence Minar of New Prague; Jean Peterson of Delano; Linda Noble of Kenyon; and Mary Doerr, also of Kenyon.

The DVDs are available for \$15 each (Minnesota residents add 97 cents to cover state sales tax). Send a check payable to LSP to: Louise Arbuckle, LSP, 2200 4<sup>th</sup> Street, White Bear Lake, MN 55110. For more information, or to order via credit card, call Arbuckle at 651-653-0618.



## 2005-2006 Farm Beginnings™ course deadline Sept. 15

The application deadline for the 2005-2006 edition of the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings™ Minnesota program is Sept. 15. The classes run from the end of October until March, followed by an on-farm education component, including farm tours and one-on-one mentoring.

This is the ninth year of the program, which provides participants an opportunity to learn firsthand about low-cost, sustainable methods of farming. Farm Beginnings students take part in a course that teaches goal setting, financial planning, business plan creation, alternative marketing and innovative farming techniques. Established farmers and other professionals present at the seminars and provide a strong foundation of resources and networks for those interested in farming. There are also opportunities to connect with established farmers through farm visits and one-on-one mentorships. The course includes 34 hours of class time, course supplies and an application for a no-interest livestock loan.

Since 1998, over 220 people have completed the Farm Beginnings course, and 60 percent of those graduates are farming today (see page 15 for a profile of a Farm Beginnings graduate).

### Farm Beginnings now in Ill., Mo. & Neb.

Versions of LSP's Farm Beginnings program are being launched in Illinois, Missouri and Nebraska, starting this fall. If you are a beginning farmer who is interested in learning more about Farm Beginnings, there are several ways to get started:

→ **Southeast Minnesota**—Contact Karen Stettler or Karen Benson at 507-523-3366. You can also e-mail Benson at [lpse@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:lpse@landstewardshipproject.org).

→ **Western Minnesota**—Contact Amy Bacigalupo ([amyb@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:amyb@landstewardshipproject.org)) or Cathy Twohig ([cathyt@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:cathyt@landstewardshipproject.org)) at 320-269-2105.

→ **Northern Illinois**—Contact Parker Forsell at 608-637-8361 or [parkerforsell@hotmail.com](mailto:parkerforsell@hotmail.com).

→ **Central Illinois**—Contact Deborah Cavanagh-Grant at 217-968-5512 or [cynghgrn@uiuc.edu](mailto:cynghgrn@uiuc.edu).

→ **Missouri**—Contact Randy Saner at 417-256-2391 ([sanerr@missouri.edu](mailto:sanerr@missouri.edu)) or Debi Kelly at 573-882-1905 ([kellyd@umsystem.edu](mailto:kellyd@umsystem.edu)).

→ **Nebraska**—Contact Martin Kleinschmit ([martink@cfra.org](mailto:martink@cfra.org)) at 402-254-6893, Jim Peterson ([jpeterson2@unl.edu](mailto:jpeterson2@unl.edu)) at 402-426-9455 or Paul Rohrbaugh at 402-869-2396.

→ **On the internet**—  
[www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs\\_farmbeginnings.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_farmbeginnings.html) for the **Minnesota** program, [www.farmbeginnings.uiuc.edu](http://www.farmbeginnings.uiuc.edu) for the **central Illinois** program, and [www.csalearningcenter.org/craft.html](http://www.csalearningcenter.org/craft.html) for the **northern Illinois** initiative.

### Are you an established farmer?

If you are an established farmer who would like to help the Farm Beginnings program by serving as a mentor, we would love to hear from you. □



Connie Karstens (second from left) and Doug Rathke (with the shepherd's hook) hosted a Farm Beginnings field day May 14 on their Hutchinson, Minn., livestock operation. Karstens and Rathke raise sheep, cattle, chickens and turkeys on a grass-based farm. They process the meat and sell it out of an on-farm store called the Lamb Shoppe. The farm also sells products to several retailers and restaurants in the Twin Cities area. For more information, visit [www.ourfarmtoyou.com](http://www.ourfarmtoyou.com). (photo by Laura Borgendale)

### Farm Beginnings™ Field day July 16

Farm Beginnings™ graduates Dave and Erin Varney will host a tour of their LaFarge, Wis., farm on Saturday, July 16, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. The Varneys' One Sun Farm is a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operation that is a member of the Bad Axe Farmer's Alliance. The Bad Axe Farmer's Alliance is a cooperatively-run program that creates a supportive work relationship between three area CSAs (see the Oct./Nov./Dec. 2004 *Land Stewardship Letter*, pages 12-13). Each farm grows different crops for the CSA, and they all share in the work of packing boxes, doing deliveries and writing a weekly newsletter.

The Varneys have also been mentoring with permaculture farmer and consultant Mark Shepard to create a farm design that implements permaculture principles. Current and future production plans include perennials, asparagus, apples, pears, blueberries, raspberries, hazelnuts, chestnuts, cherries, herbs, flowers, maple syrup and honey.

This field day is free and open to the public. For more information, contact the Varneys at 608-637-6895, or the Land Stewardship Project's Laura Borgendale at 320-269-2105 ([laurab@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:laurab@landstewardshipproject.org)).

# Minnesota Legislature: Future of local control still up in the air

*There may still be time to take action during special session to protect township & community rights.*

By Bobby King & Paul Sobocinski

The regular session of the 2005 Minnesota Legislature ended on May 23 without passage of the bills that would weaken local government control of development. This is due in large part to the efforts of Land Stewardship Project members who contacted their legislators and let them know how important strong local democracy is. However, factory farming's supporters have not given up and the issue will come up in the special legislative session, which began immediately after the regular session ended. At this writing, all

signs were that the Omnibus Ag Finance bill will be the vehicle during the special session for attempting to pass language that weakens local control.

The original legislation (Senate File 1629 and House File 1732) was an initiative of Governor Tim Pawlenty's Livestock Advisory Task Force (see Jan./Feb./March 2005 *Land Stewardship Letter*, page 8), which was dominated by the largest corporate ag interests in the state. Provisions in the legislation undermine township rights by placing unneeded roadblocks and bureaucratic hurdles in the way of creating local zoning ordinances that affect feedlots.

During the regular session, the Senate

stood up to the special interests and dramatically improved the Senate bill in committee. The House, however, failed to make the improvements necessary to protect strong local control. In addition, Senator Steve Dille (R-Dassel) has proposed language that would gut the ability of townships to enact temporary moratoriums on feedlots. His language would be retroactive and undo the work of the residents of Ripley Township who have worked for over two years to enact a temporary moratorium against major development, including large feedlots (see page 13). Neither the Senate nor House bill, or even the Dille language, passed in regular session.

During the special session, big ag interests will push hard for the House language to be included in the Omnibus Ag Finance Bill. Senator Gary Kubly (DFL-Granite Falls) is one of the five Senators on the Ag Finance Working Group and is taking the lead on protecting local control. He has drafted an amendment with language similar to that in Senate File 1629 which protects local control. **To keep township rights strong we need to ensure if anything passes it is Sen. Kubly's amendment.** It is also critical that Senator Dille's proposed moratorium language does not end up in the final bill.

The other Senators on the Ag Finance working group are Thomas Bakk (DFL-Virginia), Dallas Sams (DFL-Staples), Ellen Anderson (DFL-St. Paul) and Dennis Frederickson (R-New Ulm). The House members are Representatives Dennis Ozment (R-Rosemount), Maxine Penas (R-Badger), Tom Hackbarth (R-Cedar), Bob Gunther (R-Fairmont) and David Dill (DFL-Crane Lake).

Take action now to protect local control. Minnesotans value township government and our state is a better place because township officials have effectively used their right to enact local ordinances to protect the community. We need to ensure that local control stays strong in Minnesota. Here is what you can do to help:

→ If the Minnesota Legislature's special session is still in progress as you read this, call **Senate Majority Leader Dean Johnson (DFL-Willmar) at 651-296-3826**. Let Senator Johnson know that you are counting on him to be a leader in keeping township rights strong and to keep the House language that undermines



LSP staffer Andria Williams gathered signatures on postcards during the "Ducks, Wetlands and Clean Water" rally April 2 at the Minnesota state capitol (see page 6). The postcards, which were sent to Governor Tim Pawlenty, called for resisting legislative efforts to weaken local control. (LSP photo)

Legislature, see page 11...

local control out of the Omnibus Ag Finance Bill. Tell him that you want Sen. Kubly's compromise amendment that protects local control passed. If the House will not accept this compromise then there should be no changes to local control.

→ **Call Senator Frederickson, a key member of the Senate Ag and Environment Working Group, at 651-296-8138.** Tell him that as a member of the Ag Finance Working Group he should not agree to Sen. Dille's new language that guts township powers to enact temporary

moratoriums on large feedlots. Ask him to support the amendment drafted by Sen. Kubly that protects local control. If you have time to call others on the working group, they are Senators: Sams, 651-297-8063; Kubly, 651-296-5094; Bakk, 651-296-8881; and Anderson, 651-296-5537.

→ **Call Governor Pawlenty at 651-296-3391 or 800-657-3717.** Tell him that Sen. Dille, the Chief Author of his Livestock Siting bill (Senate File 1629), has proposed new language that dramatically weakens local control by gutting the power of townships to enact temporary moratoriums on large feedlots. The Governor needs to let all the members on

the Ag Finance Working Group know that he does not support this language and that it should not be offered as an amendment. If it is offered, the Governor's office must testify against it; to do otherwise would indicate support for Dille's language. □

*Bobby King and Paul Sobocinski are Land Stewardship Project Policy Program organizers. For more information on activities at the legislature, contact King at 507-523-3366 or Sobocinski at 507-342-2323. You can also check the latest legislative action alerts at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/news-alerts.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/news-alerts.html).*

## Sustainable ag, family farm proposals losing out to pro-factory farm initiatives

By Paul Sobocinski

Several proposals that affect family farming and sustainable agriculture were introduced during the 2005 session of the Minnesota Legislature. Many of these bills were drawn from recommendations created by the Citizen Task Force on Livestock Farmers and Rural Communities, a collaboration of the Land Stewardship Project, Minnesota Farmers Union, National Farmers Organization of Minnesota and the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota (the full recommendations are at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/citiz\\_task\\_report.pdf](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/citiz_task_report.pdf)). At this writing, here's where some of these proposals stood:

→ **Creating a Beginning Dairy Farmer Incentive Payments program (Senate File 0296 and House File 1403)—DEAD.** It would provide payments of \$1 per hundredweight of milk production to beginning dairy farmers up to \$10,000 a year for five years. The bill passed the Senate Agriculture Committee but later died in both the Senate and the House.

→ **Dairy investment tax credit (Senate File 516 and House File 719, which is now in the Tax Bill, House File 785)—PENDING.** This would provide tax credits for improvements made to dairy operations. The credit amounts to 10 percent of the first \$500,000 in investment and a declining amount as the qualifying investment increases to \$1 million, at which level the total tax credit is capped

at \$75,000. The House bill includes tax credits for investment in on-farm processing and pasture development. The Senate bill includes on-farm processing but not pasture development. LSP and other groups have been urging the Senate to include pasture development in the final bill.

→ **\$200,000 in funding for the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) information exchange program (Senate File 1764 and House File 1653)—PASSED IN REGULAR SESSION.** The MISA information exchange program provides a valuable clearinghouse for resources on sustainable practices. The conference committee added \$135,000 to the University of Minnesota's baseline allocation. There is an understanding between the university and Senate Majority Leader Dean Johnson that this money should be allocated as additional funding for MISA.

→ **\$400,000 in funding for MISA's Alternative Swine Task Force, expanding the program to dairy and other livestock (Senate File 662 and House File 796)—DEAD.** The Alternative Swine Task Force is a farmer-directed program that has proven very effective at helping producers who want to adopt sustainable systems. It could serve as a model for other types of livestock farming innovations. Both the Senate and the House failed to put this program in the final Omnibus Funding Bill.

→ **\$400,000 in funding for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Sustainable Ag Grants and Demonstration Program (Senate**

**File 1761 and House File 1791).**—**PENDING.** This popular program allows farmers to do research into alternatives and facilitates farmer-to-farmer education. There was a proposal to increase funding for this program to \$400,000 for two years, but the conference committee has agreed to fund it at \$160,000 for two years instead. The overall bill is still being conferred in the special session, so final outcome is pending.

### Factory farm funding

One excuse for not funding such programs that help family farmers and promote sustainable agriculture is that money is tight. However, that defense doesn't hold up when one looks at two legislative initiatives that are still pending as of this writing:

→ There is a proposal to give \$200,000 to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to "train" township and county officials in zoning for animal agriculture. The Agriculture Department's last attempt to engage local governments in zoning issues was its failed "Livestock Friendly County" program, which was an attempt to pave the way for factory farms at the county level (see Jan./Feb./March 2003 *Land Stewardship Letter*, page 12).

→ Another proposal would give \$220,000 to the University of Minnesota to help in reducing odor for large-scale hog confinement operations. Funding sustainable agriculture research and development would help eliminate the need for odor-reducing technology in the first place. □

*Paul Sobocinski is an LSP Policy Program organizer. See his commentary on page 5.*

# The view from an African farm

*Cotton producer Alimata Traoré says firm caps are needed on U.S. crop subsidy payments.*

**A**gricultural subsidies are not a bad thing when used correctly, but uncapped subsidies are harming rural economies both here and abroad, said a West African rural leader during a recent tour of western Minnesota. Madame Alimata Traoré, who is with the Regional Union of Rural Women, visited the area on April 14 as a guest of the Land Stewardship Project and Oxfam America. Traoré spoke at the United Church of Christ in Granite Falls, as well as at the Chippewa County CROP Walk rally in Montevideo.

An affiliate of Oxfam International,

centers, causing families to walk many miles to get medical treatment for their children.

"Basically it has cost lives," said Traoré, who spoke through an interpreter.

While in the U.S., the rural leader talked to farmers, politicians and the media about the impact of uncapped subsidies on her community. She said during her time here it has become clear that farm subsidies can be helpful, but that too often the bulk of the money goes to large producers who do not need it. Massive subsidy payments are hurting moderate sized family farmers in this

country as well, Traoré said.

"I've been able to draw a parallel as well about the situation of small farmers here in America," she said. "From talking to them I've noticed that they're suffering from the subsidy program that the United States has right now because small farms are the ones that encounter the most

problems, and they are leaving the countryside as well to go to town."

Audrey Arner, a Montevideo area crop and livestock farmer, said exorbitant subsidy payments for cotton, as well as corn, rice, soybeans and wheat, are slashing the number of farmers on the land, as well as reducing the ecological diversity of the landscape in places like western Minnesota. Commodity payments have averaged about \$15 billion per year recently and are expected to reach \$24 billion in 2005. Currently 8 percent of the U.S. farmers who receive federal farm program payments get 78 percent of the payments, and nearly two-thirds of the farmers don't get any, according to USDA statistics quoted in a recent Associated Press story.

Even modest payment limit reform, such as the payment cap proposed in the

Rural America Preservation Act of 2005, would be a major step in the right direction, said Arner, adding that it would help farm communities both here and in places like Mali. The bill, which would bring the payment cap down from \$360,000 per year to \$250,000, was authored by Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND). Such a cut would save billions of dollars annually and help nutrition programs and conservation initiatives such as the Conservation Security Program, said Arner, who is an LSP member.

"We should cut the waste at the top, while keeping important farm support, nutrition and conservation funding that helps millions of people and society as a whole," she said.

## More calls for payment limits

In April, after meeting with LSP Policy Program staff, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Minnesota Catholic Conference, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA), and the Lutheran Coalition for Public Policy in Minnesota-ELCA, all called for passage of the Rural America Preservation Act in letters written to key members of Congress.

In addition, Dave Serfling and Carla Johnson co-authored a commentary that called for limiting budget cuts that negatively impact conservation and nutrition programs, and enacting meaningful payment limits in crop subsidy programs. Serfling, a southeast Minnesota crop and livestock farmer, serves on LSP's Federal Farm Policy Committee. Johnson is the Executive Director of Channel One Food Bank and Food Shelf in Rochester, Minn. In late March, LSP and Oxfam America sponsored a series of newspaper and radio advertisements calling for support of payment caps (visit [www.landstewardshipproject.org/pr/05/newsr\\_050329.htm](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pr/05/newsr_050329.htm) to see and hear the ads). □

*For more information on subsidy payment caps, contact Mark Schultz, LSP's Policy Program Director, at 612-722-6377 or [marks@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:marks@landstewardshipproject.org).*



**West African farmer Alimata Traoré talked to West Central Tribune reporter Tom Cherveney about the negative impacts of crop subsidies. (LSP photo)**

the Boston-based Oxfam America is dedicated to finding long-term solutions to poverty, hunger and social injustice around the world.

Traoré, a cotton farmer from the country of Mali, said what amounts to uncapped subsidies paid to large U.S. producers is creating a massive oversupply of cotton. This has reduced the price farmers like Traoré receive to well below the cost of production, she said. That has had a devastating impact in Mali, where over 70 percent of the population is engaged in farming. The loss of income from cotton has forced farmers to leave rural areas to look for work in cities. Because of low cotton prices, parents cannot afford to send their children to school or buy basic necessities. In addition, rural communities are unable to build such basic facilities as health care

# CSP: How is it working so far?

By Mark Schultz

The second signup for the Conservation Security Program (CSP) wrapped up in 220 watersheds around the country at the end of May. CSP was enacted by Congress in the 2002 Farm Bill with the goal of producing better stewardship of working farmland in the United States. CSP was designed to make payments to farmers who have historically practiced good stewardship on their land, and provide incentives for those who want to do more.

The Land Stewardship Project is closely monitoring USDA's implementation of CSP now that farmers have had a chance to sign up for the new program.

The good news is that CSP is being implemented, and that some farmers can take advantage of it. LSP has been actively communicating with several thousand farmers in the Upper Midwest about CSP, with a special outreach effort targeted to sustainable family farmers who farm in watersheds selected by USDA for CSP signup.

But inadequate funding provided by

the Bush Administration and Congress, as well as problems with the rules by which CSP is being implemented, have caused roadblocks. A major problem is that under USDA's current plan, farmers will only be able to apply for CSP once every eight years. That means that a correctable conservation problem that makes farmers ineligible for CSP but could be addressed in a matter of months or a year will keep them out of the program for at least eight years. For example, if a farmer applied for CSP but had not taken steps to effectively treat gully erosion, he or she would be considered ineligible. Farmers in this situation would not be able to apply again for eight years, even though the problem that kept them out of the program could be effectively dealt with in a year's time, to the benefit of the environment. What financial incentive is there to deal with that gully erosion in the intervening years between signups?

We are interested in hearing from LSP members and other farmers regarding their experience—positive, negative or mixed—with CSP. We need to make sure CSP delivers real environmental benefits to society, and that it is accessible to all

farmers practicing effective conservation through continuous program signup, not just once every eight years. Contact us at 612-722-6377 or [marks@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:marks@landstewardshipproject.org).

The next watersheds eligible for the 2006 CSP signup will be announced later this year. In the meantime, we urge LSP members to contact members of Congress and tell them to increase, not decrease, the current funding levels for CSP. CSP has never been fully funded as authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill, meaning that its effective implementation has been shackled and that many farmers who should get into the program will not be given an opportunity to participate.

Rather than cutting CSP, Congress should set a firm limit on the commodity payments going out to the largest megafarms and apply those savings to CSP (see page 12). Tell your U.S. Senators and Representative not to favor the gravy train for a few over the responsible care of the land for all of us. □

*Mark Schultz is LSP's Policy Program Director. For more on CSP, including fact sheets and other resources, visit [www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs\\_csp.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_csp.html).*

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## Township takes step toward controlling its future

By Adam Warthesen

In early April, the supervisors in southeast Minnesota's Ripley Township adopted an "interim ordinance." This action puts a moratorium on land uses such as feedlots over 1,000 animal units, earthen manure lagoons for livestock facilities that are 500 animal units or larger, racetracks, adult entertainment establishments and hazardous waste storage facilities. During the moratorium, a seven-person planning committee will study, develop and present a comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance. The committee, which was appointed by the township board in late May, is made up of livestock and crop farmers, rural residents and township officers.

The planning process will give the residents of this Dodge County township an opportunity to figure out what kind of development is best for the long-term future of their community. Ashland Township, which is also in Dodge County, passed an interim ordinance in 2003 and is going through the process of developing comprehensive planning and

zoning (see the July/August/September 2003 *Land Stewardship Letter*, page 12).

Ripley and Ashland township's actions have drawn fire from the boosters of the 2,961-animal unit Ripley Dairy proposal. If built, the factory farm would be one of the largest in the state. Farmers and other rural residents have expressed concern that the mega-dairy will have a negative impact on the environment. Agribusiness firms, commodity groups and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture have pushed hard for the project. Several of the rural residents and farmers who have expressed concern about the proposal are Land Stewardship Project members, and promoters of the Ripley Dairy have tried to label them "elitists" and "outside agitators," among other things.

The mega-dairy's investors, which include a New Jersey-based trust, have continued to try to force the operation onto the community, and have filed a lawsuit against Ripley Township challenging the interim ordinance and claiming that it doesn't apply to them.

Ripley Township supervisor Kerry Schroeder says the majority of his

constituents called for the interim ordinance, and he felt a duty to respond to this sentiment.

"Over 75 percent of residents signed two petitions asking for township planning and zoning, which was reaffirmed by the past two township elections where candidates that support planning and zoning won," he says. "The first step to planning and zoning is protecting the township while its citizens look into the process of land use planning."

The 1,000 animal-unit cap that's part of the moratorium is equal to 714 dairy cows and 3,333 finishing hogs. Eighty-three percent of Minnesota livestock operations have fewer than 300 animal units, according to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

"I support animal agriculture and believe our temporary cap is fair and balanced," says Schroeder. "The vast majority of livestock producers in Minnesota could double and even triple before hitting our cap." □

*Adam Warthesen, an LSP Policy organizer, can be reached at 612-722-6377 or [adamw@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:adamw@landstewardshipproject.org).*

## High court rules beef checkoff constitutional

### *Ruling will affect mandatory pork checkoff program.*

In a move that surprised farmers and legal experts, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on May 23 that the beef checkoff is “government speech” and does not violate producers’ First Amendment rights. The decision not only reversed decisions made by lower courts, but seemed to go counter to how the Supreme Court itself has ruled on checkoff programs in the past.

The Court is expected, at the Bush Administration’s request, to apply their decision on the beef case to the pork checkoff case, which was won at the federal, district and circuit court levels by the Campaign for Family Farms (CFF) and individual hog farmers, including Land Stewardship Project members Rich Smith and Jim Joens. This is despite differences in the legal record of the two cases and an additional claim won in the pork checkoff case. The lower courts had ruled the entire mandatory pork checkoff unconstitutional because it infringes on hog producers’ right to free speech and association by forcing them to pay into a program that supports factory-style hog production and corporate control of the industry, and is detrimental to their interests. CFF is currently evaluating its legal options.

In a memo to family farm organizations around the country, Susan Stokes,

legal director of Farmers’ Legal Action Group and the attorney for CFF in the pork checkoff case, wrote: “We are disappointed because we had won every step of the way and we know we had the better legal and factual arguments. We are surprised that ‘conservative’ Justices, Justices who have claimed to be ‘strict constructionists,’ created an entirely new doctrine to reach their decision. We are also surprised because, in creating this new doctrine, the ‘conservative’ Justices greatly expanded the reach of the government.”

This decision has far reaching implications for checkoff programs in general. The Campaign for Family Farms has worked during the past seven years to organize hog farmers and end the mandatory pork checkoff. In fact, in 2000, U.S. hog farmers voted to terminate the mandatory pork checkoff in a nationwide referendum run by USDA. That vote was later thrown out in early 2001 in a backroom deal between then Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman and the National Pork Producers Council. This rejection of the vote began a series of court cases.

“Mandatory checkoff programs have always been represented as producer-run and -controlled programs. This ruling flies in the face of that representation and

says that these programs are nothing more than a government tax that targets a specific group of people,” says Mark Schultz, LSP’s Policy Program Director.

The Court said the beef checkoff is the same as the mushroom checkoff, although it ruled in 2001 that the mushroom checkoff was unconstitutional.

Dave Serfling, a southeast Minnesota hog farmer and LSP member, is concerned that the Court’s decision will allow powerful, influential groups to get government support for their public relations agendas and that the public will have little control over it.

“It’s another right that we’ve lost, the right to free speech,” he said in an interview with *agriculture.com*. “I think it’s a dangerous precedent.”

Schultz said that LSP and the Campaign for Family Farms will continue its work on behalf of family farms, rural communities, and the environment. “The USDA and the commodity groups have all the government speech they want and often more than the rest of us can stomach,” says Schultz. “But we’ll continue to stand up and work for democracy, for family farms, and for the land. That’s what we’re here for, and we’re not going away.”

Besides LSP, Campaign for Family Farms member groups include: Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement, Missouri Rural Crisis Center, Citizens Action Coalition of Indiana, and the Illinois Stewardship Alliance. Farmers’ Legal Action Group (FLAG) represents CFF and the individual hog farmers in the pork checkoff lawsuit. □

## Opportunities

## Resources

### CSP hotline

The Center for Rural Affairs has a Conservation Security Program (CSP) hotline for farmers and ranchers interested in enrolling in the federal initiative. The hotline—402-687-2100—is designed to assist farmers and ranchers with questions they may have concerning enrollment and eligibility. For more information, contact Traci Bruckner at 402-687-2100 or [tracib@cfra.org](mailto:tracib@cfra.org). □

### Organic processing

Minnesotans looking for information on the processing of organic products can now turn to Meg Moynihan. Moynihan, a Minnesota Department of Agriculture Organic

and Diversification Specialist, recently received training on grain and meat processing. She can help on-farm and stand-alone processors troubleshoot their processing systems, devise lot numbering and product tracking protocols, and prepare for USDA certification inspections.

Moynihan can be contacted at 651-297-8916 or [meg.moynihan@state.mn.us](mailto:meg.moynihan@state.mn.us). □

### 3<sup>rd</sup> crop help

Looking for a third, or fourth, crop to add diversity to your farm? Guide sheets on flax, hay, high value hardwoods, hybrid hazelnuts, native plant and seed production, and woody decorative florals are currently available from the Blue Earth River Basin Initiative (BERBI).

This is part of BERBI’s ongoing efforts to highlight third crop opportunities avail-

able to farmers in the Blue Earth River watershed and beyond. The initiative sponsors several workshops in the region throughout the year. For a copy of the guide sheets, or for more information, call 507-238-5449 or visit [www.berbi.org/third\\_croptions.htm](http://www.berbi.org/third_croptions.htm). □

### Campus ag programs

The New Farm website ([www.newfarm.org/depts/student-farm/index.shtml](http://www.newfarm.org/depts/student-farm/index.shtml)) has launched a “Farming for Credit” page that focuses on sustainable agriculture on campus. The page includes a directory of 55 student farm programs in 27 states and one province. It profiles sustainable and organic ag programs at community colleges, universities and high schools across the country. □

# Robin Moore Farming alone no more

**NOTE:** This is part of an ongoing series of profiles featuring graduates of the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings™ program.

Robin Moore got involved in flower production because it seemed like it was something a young single person could do with minimal access to land, equipment and facilities. Indeed, the 31-year-old woman raises flowers for direct marketing near the western Minnesota community of Montevideo using an eight-horsepower garden tiller, a weed whacker, a greenhouse, a van for transportation and two-thirds of an acre of borrowed land. And she does it by herself.

After five years in the flower raising business, Moore is realizing that there's different varieties of *alone*. For example, there's the daily work pressures of being a sole proprietor of a business that raises dozens of varieties of flowers.

"This time of year I feel if you cut me air would come out," she says, "I have nothing left inside."

But then there's another kind of *alone*, as in no network to turn to for advice and support. Moore feels she can overcome a little labor shortage by getting up earlier in the morning. On the other hand, she knew from the start her business would not be sustainable if she didn't have a network to turn to for advice and support. That's why in 2001, a year after she started Easy Blooms, Moore took the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings™ course. The course, now in its eighth year, provides participants a chance to learn firsthand about low-cost, sustainable methods of farming. It also provides, as people like Moore have discovered, a critical support network consisting of established farmers and other beginners.

Farm Beginnings participants take part in a course that teaches goal setting, financial planning, business plan creation, alternative marketing and innovative farming techniques. Established farmers and other professionals present at the seminars, providing a strong foundation of community resources, networks and contacts for those interested in farming. There are also opportunities to connect with established farmers through farm visits and one-on-one mentorships.

Moore, a native of Missouri, says the

course came at a good time for her, although she had significant experience raising flowers already.

"I was painfully aware of what I didn't know. My first year I started out with a flood and ended with a drought," she recalls. Moore made mistakes from the small—trying to transport flowers in a pickup truck—to the large—raising flowers on separate plots of land. "I thought I could just do it anywhere, like it was just some traveling event," she says of that latter misstep. "I was wrong—it's not sustainable to have the production all spread out."

Farm Beginnings connected her with other beginning and established farmers in western Minnesota. It also gave her a good grounding in Holistic Management and business planning.

Moore also learned a lot about



Robin Moore

marketing, something that's important in a venture like direct sales of a particularly volatile product like cut flowers.

"I had no idea how to approach people out there from a marketing sense," she says. "Luckily my flowers speak better to strangers than I do."

Moore didn't quite see her life taking such a turn when she graduated from Macalester College in St. Paul, Minn., with a degree in French literature. She had plans to work as a literary translator, but found the field "insanely competitive" and the brass ring not all that attractive: "You were competing to translate legal documents." And, she found to her dismay, you are doing it inside.

"I lasted about eight months," she recalls of a job she had as a translator/office administrator. "I would look up at the skylight and just cry because I wanted

## Fresh Faces-Fresh Farming



to be outside."

She worked for two years as a "flower intern" on a Twin Cities area Community Supported Agriculture farm and liked the experience. Not only was it something she could do on her own with minimal investment, but she saw a need for a local source of organically raised cut flowers. As she will tell any customer that is brave enough to ask, 70 percent of cut flowers sold in this country are imported, mostly from Kenya, Holland and Columbia. Those imported flowers come with many hidden price tags attached: transporting all those pretty things thousands of miles burns a lot of jet fuel and diesel; chemicals that are banned in this country are often used; and the workers put their health at risk.

"People are very aware of chemicals on food and the politics of food, but they are unaware of things that are not food," she says.

Today, five years after getting started, Moore sells the bulk of her flowers through Easy Bean, a local Community Supported Agriculture vegetable operation. Members of the farm can sign up for an Easy Blooms flower subscription. Moore also has office clients in the region, and sells to local florists. In a given year she will grow 50 to 60 varieties of annuals and perennials: from the common sunflower to the not so well known. "This year I'm trying something called cardoon," she says. "I have no idea what it looks like."

Moore has continued to use Farm Beginnings—taking a follow-up course on business planning offered by the program, for example. She is also constantly tapping into that network of other established and beginning farmers she learned about through the course.

"The best thing Farm Beginnings gave me was a network. In a lot of ways it made me feel a lot less alone." □

## Fresh Faces-Fresh Farming

To read other profiles of graduates of the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings™ program, see the Oct./Nov./Dec. 2004 issue of the *LSL*, or log onto [www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs\\_farmbeginnings.html#profiles](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_farmbeginnings.html#profiles).

marketing landscape. Cooperative efforts like OFARM could help fend off what seems to be the inevitable devolution of niche, high-value farm products into low-price raw commodities. At a time when the organic food business is experiencing unprecedented growth, farmers are vulnerable in ways people like Carmen Fernholz couldn't have dreamed of 30 years ago. Successful cooperative efforts, which have often gone awry in the farm community in general, may be the only way to save organic agriculture from too much success.

### New times, new problems

In the late 1990s, the National Farmers Organization in Ames, Iowa, hosted a few meetings involving Fernholz and other organic farmers concerned about their vulnerability in the marketplace. The original focus was on soybeans, but it soon became clear that there were marketing problems with a variety of organic crops.

A few decades ago, farmers like Fernholz were vulnerable because the embryonic organic industry itself was vulnerable. The processors who were buying organic farm products were living hand-to-mouth. Markets and supplies were unpredictable and infrastructural tools that conventional agriculture takes for granted—transportation, credit, bonding, regulatory oversight—were hit and miss at best. That's not to mention that farmers like Fernholz were pioneering production practices and had few places to turn to for information on keeping them viable.

In the 1990s, organic farmers became vulnerable for a different reason: demand for organic food took off. In 1990, U.S. sales of organic foods were \$1 billion. By 1996 those sales had more than tripled. In 2003, that figure was \$10.4 billion, or about 1.8 percent of total U.S. retail sales of food, according to the *Nutrition Business Journal*. Organic sales have been growing at an annual rate of 20 percent. By 2010, sales of organic foods could hit \$23.8 billion, estimates the *Journal*. That's good news for farmers like Fernholz. But it has also ushered in a time of wide fluctuations in prices. This was partially the result of what makes organic agriculture so attractive to small- and medium-sized farmers: it's disparate, independent nature.

The Chicago Board of Trade does not track organic prices for all to see. When a

buyer offers an organic farmer \$10 for a bushel of soybeans, there is no national price list that producers can check to make certain it's a fair offer (*newfarm.org* recently relaunched an effort to create a national "Organic Price Index"). That means farmers can sometimes be played against each other by buyers looking for cheap sources of organic products.

In addition, organic food's growing market clout is getting the attention of the same mega-food companies that dominate conventional processing, distribution and retailing. ConAgra, Tyson Foods, Philip Morris/Kraft, Pepsi, Dean Foods, General Mills, Coca-Cola, Kellogg's, Archer Daniels Midland and Novartis are just some of the food giants who have either bought out smaller organic companies or started their own from scratch. A diversified landscape of many smaller buyers of organic farm products is fast

• • •

*"It's information.  
It's information.  
It's information."*

• • •

concentrating into fewer, larger players. And that means less competition, which, as we've seen in the conventional marketplace, means lower prices for farmers.

"We knew that the organic market was going to be in the same predicament as the conventional market if we didn't do something," Fernholz says.

### A virtual co-op

OFARM, which stands for Organic Farmers' Agency for Relationship Marketing, was launched in 2000 with the goal of making it difficult for organic buyers to capitalize on the industry's independent nature and play one farmer against another. It is a virtual cooperative—there are no bricks and mortar, no fleet of trucks. In reality, it is a group of several already existing cooperatives, some of which have been around for more than a decade. Currently eight organic marketing cooperatives belong to OFARM, representing wheat farmers on the Great Plains, soybean and corn producers in the Upper Midwest, and flax, oat, buckwheat, specialty bean, barley and field pea farmers from as far away as Ontario. Individual farmers cannot join OFARM; they must either already be a member of one of its co-ops, or form a cooperative that joins.

Each cooperative has a marketing coordinator that for a commission (5.5 to

7 percent) helps set up sales and deliveries for the members of the cooperatives. There's nothing new about that. What is different is the role OFARM can play in getting consistently profitable prices for the members of these cooperatives. On the third Tuesday of the month, the marketers for each cooperative meet via teleconference and discuss issues that affect the prices their farmers receive for organic grains: weather, crop conditions, inventories, market conditions, which buyers are lagging behind in their payments or are looking financially shaky, planting and harvest progression, etc. They then take that information back and share it with their perspective farmer-constituents.

"It's information. It's information. It's information," says Fernholz. "We really get a diverse picture of organics."

A gander at such a picture can pay off big time. Before OFARM, Fernholz had food grade organic soybeans he was supposed to be paid \$15 per bushel for. But when one of his loads was being dumped, corn was found mixed in with the oilseed. That slashed the farmer's per bushel price by almost half. But it turns out there are electronic eyes that can kick out corn contamination. Not knowing that piece of information cost Fernholz \$5,000.

"I decided that was too much tuition."

Contrast that with what happened in 2003 when Fernholz had some organic wheat that tested low for protein. Suddenly, he was facing the prospect of getting under \$3 a bushel in the local nonorganic market. But his marketer knew from talking to the other OFARM marketers that there were sources of organic wheat that could be blended with Carmen's, bringing the protein level up. The farmer ended up getting \$5.50 per bushel for the wheat.

The southwest Minnesota farmer's experience isn't atypical. During 2002 and 2003, farmers with OFARM received higher prices when compared to the average price paid for organic grains, according to an analysis done by Richard Levins, an emeritus professor of agricultural economics at the University of Minnesota. Levins, who did the study for the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture in Iowa, found in some cases the OFARM farmers received significantly higher prices. In 2002, OFARM producers received a 42 percent higher price for spring wheat than the average organic farmer. In 2003, the OFARM

OFARM see page 17...



price premium for Vinton soybeans was 24 percent.

These higher prices are not only the result of marketers sharing information—OFARM members agree not to undersell each other. Each year at its annual meeting, OFARM's members make a target price list for each of the commodities the farmers are marketing. The goal is to get as close to that target, which is based on what the market has been historically paying and what farmers need to sustain a "fair return." Those targets aren't always reached, but they do keep the various cooperatives from getting played against each other in the organic marketplace.

Fernholz, for his part, is just glad he has a way to remove some of the "emotional attachment" he has to the soybeans, corn, flax, oats, alfalfa and other organic crops he raises on 350-tillable acres.

"I consider myself a very poor marketer, for the basic reason I'm too emotionally attached to the product," he says.

Working with OFARM and its target prices lets Fernholz detach himself somewhat from the marketing end of organic agriculture. Fernholz may not always get the best price, but he feels he gets a consistently profitable price, a goal marketing experts say more farmers need to seek. That's difficult to accept in organics, which has historically experienced excellent premiums because of short supply. But as the market matures, and more farmers start producing certified organic products, the supply will catch up with demand; those premiums will inevitably shrink. Organic farmers are finding they need to be more mindful of cost of production, and what price they are willing to market their product for.

### A rusty tool

The Capper-Volstead Act of 1922 made it legal for farmers to get together to negotiate prices with buyers. Such price collusion is illegal for other business entities (it got grain giant Archer Daniels Midland in a lot of trouble a few years ago), but Congress made it clear in 1922 they wanted farmers to have this special allowance so they could stay independent without getting big.

Levins says farmers, organic and conventional, woefully underutilize the tool the Capper-Volstead Act provides. That's too bad, because since farmers are often put at a disadvantage in the market-

place, they eventually end up competing with each other to see who can produce a commodity the cheapest—even a commodity that enjoyed price premiums such as organics.

### Adding real value

Large, national farmer cooperatives don't have such a great track record in recent years. Many have gone under, while others have evolved into the same entities farmers were trying to avoid dealing with in the first place: faceless corporations run by executives who are not accountable to their member/shareholders. How is OFARM different? Each member co-op operates independently of OFARM in general, marketing its members' grain as it sees fit (although OFARM members do join forces at times to fill orders for big buyers, giving them significant clout volume-wise). That means each co-op is free to deal with the internal turmoil of operating a local or regional cooperative. OFARM uses the clout and access to information that results from being an umbrella organization to provide national or even international influence in the organic market.

What really sets OFARM apart as a co-op is that it is adding value to the product without changing how it is produced or processed. It's doing that by focusing on "pricing power" rather than an "efficiency strategy" to be profitable.

For farmers, the efficiency strategy is based on the idea that you can't do anything about the price you receive for the product sold off the farm—a situation economists call being a "price taker"—so you produce it as cheaply as possible in order to make a profit. That's why farmers plant more acres, build larger livestock operations, seek financing for bigger machinery, buy out their neighbors—they're making up for a lack of market control by playing the volume game. But there's always someone else able to produce it more cheaply—in the next county, state or overseas.

When cooperatives focus exclusively on efficiency, they are vulnerable to the demands of retailers, who have gained so much power in recent decades that they are able to force suppliers to drive down their asking price.

"Getting efficient at levels below retail doesn't really help. They'll just lower what they pay you" by playing one farmer against another, says Levins. In order to have real bargaining power, farmers have to collectively draw a line in the grain dust and say, "This is the price we won't go below."

"No individual farmer is big enough to do that on their own," says the economist.

Could the OFARM model keep crop and livestock production in the hands of small- and medium-sized family farmers? Not on its own. There's nothing keeping mega-food companies, even organic ones, from simply raising the farm products themselves, either directly or via contracts that make farmers nothing more than employees. That's what's happened in the poultry industry already.

That's where the consumer enters the picture. By purchasing organic food that's produced by family farmers locally, food buyers can help farmers maintain the value they've added to their product before it even leaves the field.

That will require another kind of cooperation—one that forges links all along the food chain from the field to the supper table. Organics has an advantage there: When the USDA proposed national organic standards that were not as strict as the organic community hoped, the agency received more than 275,000 e-mails and letters, many of them from consumers upset over proposals they saw as threatening something near and dear to them. That kind of loyalty from the supermarket shopper just isn't seen when the topic of conversation is number two yellow field corn.

And adding to that consumer loyalty is the fact that a bargaining co-op like OFARM is keeping agriculture financially viable while preserving the independent family farm model—a model that Congress sought to protect in 1922 and which the public has consistently supported in public opinion surveys.

"This is about preserving independence; it's not about giving up independence," says Levins. "These people have found a way to maintain profits without getting bigger and consolidating." □

### Co-oping resources

◆ OFARM can be contacted at 866-846-5544 or [www.ofarm.org](http://www.ofarm.org).

◆ Richard Levins' preliminary report on the marketing success of OFARM is at [www.leopold.iastate.edu/pubs/nwl/2005/2005-1-leoletter/coops.htm](http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/pubs/nwl/2005/2005-1-leoletter/coops.htm).

◆ To read more about the Capper-Volstead Act and how it grants farmers the legal right to market collectively, see [www.apec.umn.edu/faculty/dlevins/LegalFoundations.pdf](http://www.apec.umn.edu/faculty/dlevins/LegalFoundations.pdf).

## Minnesota Cooks! Aug. 30 at Minn. State Fair

The third annual Food Alliance Midwest Minnesota Cooks! event will be Tuesday, Aug. 30, at the Minnesota State Fair. It will be held from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Minnesota State Fair's Carousel Park (near the Grandstand).

This event will showcase local farmers and feature Twin Cities chefs preparing Food Alliance-certified products. During the past two years, this has become an excellent way for fairgoers to learn more about food and farming. Last year, more than 2,500 State Fair visitors were shown the connections between leading chefs from the Twin Cities and farmers who grow foods in environmentally and socially responsible ways. As in the past, chefs will put on cooking demonstrations while talking about why they prefer to source their food locally. Ingredi-

ents from Food Alliance Midwest farmers will be used, and several farmers will be

on hand to talk about their production methods. Minnesota Farmers Union will again co-sponsor this event with Food Alliance Midwest. For more information, contact the Food Alliance at 651-265-3684. □



During the 2004 Minnesota Cooks! event, more than 2,500 State Fair visitors were shown the connections between leading chefs and Food Alliance Midwest farmers. (LSP photo)

## Food Alliance takes next step in certification through ICS partnership

Food Alliance has formed a partnership with International Certification Services (ICS) to provide certification to farms, ranches and food processors nationwide.

Through the partnership, Food Alliance will transfer administration of its certification inspections to ICS. Food Alliance will retain responsibility for the quality of the certification program, including the development of certification standards, promotion of the certification program and service to certified businesses. ICS will take charge of recruiting and training inspectors, scheduling inspections, reviewing inspector reports, issuing certification decisions and maintaining certification records.

With offices in Minnesota and Oregon, Food Alliance has over 200 certified farms and ranches in 16 states—representing approximately 3.3 million acres of farm and rangeland. The number of Food Alliance certified farms and ranches has grown by an average of 34 percent in each of the past three years. The Midwest



affiliate of Food Alliance was established in 2000 by the Land Stewardship Project and Cooperative Development Services. All Food Alliance farms and ranches are certified for producing foods using environmentally friendly and socially responsible agricultural practices. During the past five years, Food Alliance has certified more than 60 farmers across Minnesota, Wisconsin and the Dakotas. Fifty-four retail stores and 11 college

campuses across the Upper Midwest carry Food Alliance certified products.

Food Alliance's certification standards cover:

- ✓ Reduction or elimination of pesticide use through Integrated Pest Management.
- ✓ Conservation of soil and water resources.
- ✓ Protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat.
- ✓ Provision of safe and fair working conditions.
- ✓ Provision of healthy and humane care for livestock.

Food Alliance certification also prohibits hormones or sub-therapeutic antibiotics, genetically modified organisms, and pesticide ingredients that have been identified as acute risks to human and environmental health.

Up until now, Food Alliance has

**Food Alliance, see page 19...**

administered its own certification program, says Jim Ennis, the Alliance's Midwest Program Director. But as the number of farmers and other businesses involved has grown, it has become clear that a professional certification service is needed to meet this growing demand and to maintain top-notch services.

Based in North Dakota, ICS was started in 1980 and operates in 13 countries. One advantage of working with ICS is that it will allow the Food Alliance to expand its certification capabilities by certifying farmers throughout the U.S., Canada and elsewhere. In addition, ICS can provide multiple certifications with a single inspection—including organic certifications—reducing both cost and time for producers serving diverse markets, according to Ennis.

Ennis says the Food Alliance certification seal is only as good as the certification behind it.

“Our partnership with ICS strengthens our commitment to third-party certification and to providing the best services possible for our farms and ranches.”

For more information, contact Ennis at 651-265-3684 or jim@foodalliance.org. □



**Charlie and Carol Johnson raise Food Alliance certified apples and pumpkins near the Minnesota community of Hastings, southeast of the Twin Cities. Their operation, Whistling Well Farm ([www.whistlingwellfarm.com](http://www.whistlingwellfarm.com)), markets to a natural foods co-op, and sells direct through farmers' markets, including the one in St. Paul, Minn. The farm also offers pre-picked and pick-your-own services to customers who visit. The Johnsons utilize various innovative methods to cut chemical use and tillage, including starting pumpkins in a greenhouse to reduce weed pressure. (photo courtesy of Whistling Well Farm)**

## If you grow food...

This is a good time for farmers to sit down and complete a Food Alliance Midwest application.

An application takes about an hour to complete, and Food Alliance certification is good for three years. Thus, your investment of an hour pays dividends for years.

To receive an application, contact Food Alliance Midwest Certification Coordinator Ray Kirsch at 651-653-0618 or ray@foodalliance.org. Application forms can also be downloaded from [www.foodalliance.org/certification/howapply.html](http://www.foodalliance.org/certification/howapply.html).

Kirsch can provide a list of the Food Alliance's "guiding principles," or they can be downloaded from [www.foodalliance.org/certification/guidingprinciples.htm](http://www.foodalliance.org/certification/guidingprinciples.htm).

## If you eat food...

Look for the Food Alliance certification seal everywhere you shop and eat. If your local store or restaurant doesn't carry Food Alliance certified foods, ask them to become "market partners." Food Alliance Midwest market partners are committed to carrying Food Alliance certified, locally grown foods. For a listing of retailers and food services that carry Food Alliance certified products, visit [www.foodalliance.org/midwest/partners\\_mw.htm](http://www.foodalliance.org/midwest/partners_mw.htm). A list of certified farmers is at [www.foodalliance.org/certification/producers/producers\\_MW.htm](http://www.foodalliance.org/certification/producers/producers_MW.htm).

For information on how food retailers can become Food Alliance market partners, contact Bob Olson at 651-265-3682 or bob@foodalliance.org.

## Food Alliance/PFI grass beef production field day Aug. 3

Food Alliance Midwest and Practical Farmers of Iowa are cosponsoring a field day Wednesday, Aug. 3, at the Tom and Kristi German farm near Holstein, in northwest Iowa. The field day is from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. and is free and open to the public.

On their 400-acre organic farm, the Germans raise grass-finished beef,

pastured poultry, farmstead eggs, sweet corn and potatoes. They sell their products direct to area customers, food co-ops, and buying clubs, as well as to customers nationwide.

There will be a presentation on grass-fed beef production covering genetics, breeds, pastures, fencing, assessing your animals (weighing, ultrasound, visual

inspection), etc. Federal incentives for grass-based production will also be discussed. In addition, the Food Alliance's Ray Kirsch and Todd Churchill of Thousand Hills Cattle Company will talk about marketing grass-fed beef.

For more information, contact the Germans at 712-365-4433 or tagerman@netllc.net. □

## Dine Fresh Dine Local Oct. 11

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual “Dine Fresh Dine Local” event will be held in select Twin Cities area restaurants on Tuesday, Oct. 11.

This is a special one-day culinary event that connects local restaurants, farmers and conscientious diners in a fun way. At least 200 dining parties showed their support for local farmers last October during the first annual Dine Fresh Dine Local event. Participating restaurants donated a portion of the day or evening’s proceeds to the Land Stewardship Project, Food Alliance Midwest and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture’s Minnesota Grown program for their work in promoting sustainable farming and healthy local foods.

Restaurants participating in this year’s event will be announced later this summer in the *Land Stewardship Letter* and at [www.dinefreshdinelocal.com](http://www.dinefreshdinelocal.com). In the meantime, you can “Dine Fresh Dine Local” by visiting restaurants that buy sustainably-raised or organic products from local farmers.

For a list of those restaurants, visit the *Blue Sky Guide* website at [www.findbluesky.com](http://www.findbluesky.com) and click on the “Blue Sky Guide Dining Guide.” This guide is the result of a collaboration between the *Blue Sky Guide* and Food Alliance Midwest (see page 18). You can also check the restaurants and retailers listed in the Land Stewardship Project’s 2005 Stewardship Food Network (see page 21). □

## Study: Farmers’ markets produce fresh greenbacks

Farmers’ markets are much more than glorified swap meets. In fact, they are starting to put up some impressive financials, according to a recent analysis out of Iowa.

Iowa State researchers collected information during the 2004 farmers’ market season in that state, and found that these markets generated \$20.8 million in total sales. Those sales, in turn, resulted in an additional \$12.2 million of economic activity, of which \$4.3 million represents the supplies and services purchased by vendors and growers, and



Gary Brever, who operates Ploughshare Farm near Parkers Prairie, Minn., talks to consumers about Community Supported Agriculture during the 2005 Community Food and Farm Festival April 30 and May 1. Some 20 farmers met with consumers during the Festival, which was held as part of the Living Green Expo at the Minnesota State Fair Grounds. For a listing of the farms that participated in this year’s Festival, visit [www.landstewardshipproject.org/cfff/cfff.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/cfff/cfff.html). (LSP photo)

\$7.2 million in induced (payroll effects), according to the analysis, which was prepared for the Regional Food Systems Working Group.

Farmers’ markets represent an estimated 325 jobs in Iowa, plus an additional 146 fulltime jobs created by the secondary impacts of the markets.

The report, “Consumers, Vendors and the Economic Importance of Iowa Farmers’ Markets,” is available at [www.valuechains.org](http://www.valuechains.org), or by calling 515-294-1854. □

## Niman Ranch receives urban business award

The Niman Ranch meat company was recently named to the 2005 *ICIC-Inc. Magazine* Inner City 100. The award honors the fastest-growing, inner-city-base companies in America. ICIC (Initiative for a Competitive Inner City) is a national nonprofit organization that promotes a market-based approach and cutting-edge solutions for inner-city revitalization.

Niman Ranch, based in Oakland, Cal., utilizes a network of 500 family farms and ranches to produce hormone and antibiotic-free pork, beef and lamb for restaurants and retailers across the

## New U of M farmers’ market

A new farmers’ market will be running on the University of Minnesota’s East Bank in Minneapolis from July 13 until Aug. 24. It will be held from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. on seven consecutive Wednesdays. The vendors will be selling locally grown fresh fruits, vegetables and cut flowers.

For more information, contact Jill Thielen at 612-626-9355 or [well@umn.edu](mailto:well@umn.edu). □

country. Several Land Stewardship Project member-farmers produce hogs for Niman. For more information on Niman visit [www.nimanranch.com](http://www.nimanranch.com) or call 866-808-0340.

The 2005 *ICIC-Inc. Magazine* Inner City 100 was culled from more than 4,500 nominees located in 150 cities across the U.S. In order to be considered for the list, companies are required to have at least 51 percent of their operation located in economically distressed urban areas and sales of at least \$150,000 in 1999 and at least \$1 million in 2003. □

# 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, humanely raised and slaughtered, 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/foodfarm-main.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/foodfarm-main.html). LSP periodically updates and makes corrections to its Stewardship Food Network list. If you are an LSP member who would like to be listed, call 651-653-0618 or e-mail [cathy@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:cathy@landstewardshipproject.org). Here are the latest additions:

## National

### ☐ Fairfield Farm Kitchens

309 Battles Street  
Brockton, MA 02301  
Phone: 508-584-9300  
Fax: 508-580-9910  
E-mail: [info@fairfieldfarmkitchens.com](mailto:info@fairfieldfarmkitchens.com)  
Website: [www.fairfieldfarmkitchens.com](http://www.fairfieldfarmkitchens.com)  
➔ Products: *Manufacturer of certified organic refrigerated soups, frozen entrees & toaster muffins under the Organic Classics & Moosewood labels*  
◆ Certified by: *Quality Assurance International (QAI)*

## West Central MN

### ☐ Wilson's Organic Strawberries

Laura & Brian Wilson  
8375 Sethney Lane Southwest  
Alexandria, MN 56308  
Phone: 877-817-0331  
➔ Products: *U-pick strawberries, vegetables for sale*  
◆ Certified by: *ICS*

## Twin Cities Metro

### ☐ Community Homestead

501 280th St.  
Osceola, WI 54020

Phone: 715-294-3038

Fax: 715-294-4805

E-mail: [christine.elmquist@communityhomestead.org](mailto:christine.elmquist@communityhomestead.org)

Website: [www.communityhomestead.org](http://www.communityhomestead.org)

➔ Products: *Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) produce operation, flowers, fruit, vegetables, jam, honey, beef, pork, chicken, eggs, baked goods, handicrafts*

◆ Certified by: *MOSA*

✓ Volunteers/Interns? *Yes*

### ☐ Mississippi Market Food Co-op

1810 Randolph Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55105  
Phone: 651-690-0507  
622 Selby Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
Phone: 651-310-9499  
Website: [www.msmarket.coop](http://www.msmarket.coop)

➔ Products: *Natural foods co-op*

## Southeast MN

### ☐ Hill & Vale Farms

Joe & Bonnie Austin  
RR-1 Box 152  
Wykoff, MN 55990-9750

Phone: 507-352-4441

E-mail: [jobon@hmtel.com](mailto:jobon@hmtel.com)

➔ Products: *Lamb, beef & goat; all livestock grass-fed & raised without feed antibiotics*

✕ Also services: *Available at natural food stores; also delivery to Twin Cities, MN, IA, WI, ND, SD (mail order), IL, MI, MO, KY, KS, NE, OH, KS (1-2 day ground)*

## North Central WI

### ☐ Igl Farms

Brian & Tom Igl  
W9689 Cherry Road  
Antigo, WI 54409-8734  
Phone: 715-627-7888  
Fax: 715-627-7888  
E-mail: [bigl@g2a.net](mailto:bigl@g2a.net)

➔ Products: *Potatoes, beef raised on grass without feed antibiotics, oats, yellow field peas*

◆ Certified by: *MOSA*

✕ Also services: *Wisconsin, northern Illinois, eastern Minnesota*

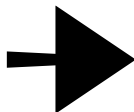
✓ Volunteers/Interns? *Yes*

## Hello, I must be going; food trade's revolving door

*Selected U.S. imports & exports\**

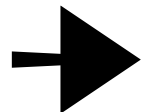
### Tons imported

- Potatoes (365,350)
- Beef & veal (953,142)
- Green beans (26,967)



### Tons exported

- Potatoes (324,479)
- Beef & veal (988,834)
- Green beans (32,455)



\*From the report, *Cultivating Common Ground: Linking Health and Sustainable Agriculture*, Sept. 2004, Prevention Institute; website: [www.preventioninstitute.org](http://www.preventioninstitute.org); phone: 510-444-7738

# Depositing some green in the food bank

*Food For Folk gets quality vegetables to those that need it the most.*

When Gary Brever was working in a Catholic Worker House near Olympia, Wash., in the late 1990s, he saw the kind of food low-income people brought back from the food shelves.

“Many times the food shelves are into quantity, but the quality isn’t always there,” says Brever. “People staying at the shelter would come home from the food shelf with a lot of corn syrup and sugar-based canned goods and cereals. These products are not good for their minds, their spirits or their bodies.”

The Catholic Worker House Brever was at also operated a working farm. As the manager of the farm, he saw how making connections between people, the land and food could create a sense of community for those that were down on their luck. It could also give them access to better quality food.

So when Brever moved back to his native Minnesota and started vegetable farming in 2002, he immediately looked for a way to make sure the food he was producing wouldn’t just go to those who could afford it. What he ended up creating was the “Food For Folk Project.” It’s a creative initiative that combines the concepts of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) with providing “scholarship shares” to people who otherwise couldn’t afford to buy fresh produce on a weekly basis.

Now in its fourth year, the program shows potential as one of those initiatives that helps people on both ends of the food chain, while creating a sense of community in between.

Initiatives like Food For Folk could

also help deflect criticism that organic and sustainable production and marketing systems leave low-income families out in the cold, creating a two-tiered food system where only people of a certain income level can afford good, fresh food.

## Sharing the shares

Food For Folk works like this: Each winter and spring, Gary and his wife Jennifer sell shares in their CSA operation, Ploughshare Farm, which is located near the western Minnesota community of Parkers Prairie. Like other CSA farms, Ploughshare sells shares to consumers before each growing season. In return, the farm agrees to deliver fresh, organic vegetables weekly for the duration of the season. But Ploughshare also offers the opportunity for individuals and businesses to buy a “scholarship share” for a food-based charity. That charity then receives a weekly delivery of vegetables, just like the other CSA members. Food For Folk is also working with the Whole Farm Co-op, a collaboration of farmers in central Minnesota, to provide sustainably

raised meat and eggs to food programs. Organizations that benefit from Food For Folk include Camphill Village, a Sauk Centre, Minn., community for adults with disabilities; Listening Ear Women’s Crisis Center in Alexandria, Minn.; and Campus Kitchen at Augsburg College in Minneapolis. Beginning this year, the Emergency Foodshelf Network, a coalition of 200 emergency and supplemental food programs across Minnesota, is receiving food via Brever’s program.

## Going to good use

This year, a dozen vegetable share scholarships have been purchased by individuals, families and even businesses. Some cover the cost of the entire share—\$465 for a full share and \$325 for half a share—while others donate what they can toward the price of a share. One business donated \$5,000 this year to the program, while there have been donations from individuals of as little as \$25. A full share consists of 10-15 kinds of fresh, certified organic vegetables and can weigh seven to 12 pounds in the spring, and as much as 25 pounds in the fall. In general, one of the farm’s shares will feed two people on a vegetarian diet, or a family of four on a mixed diet.

Not all food shelf and food bank programs are set up to take fresh, whole food straight off the farm and make use of it. Often quantity does trump quality because of the sheer volume of people a program must provide canned goods to. But the organizations partnered with Food For Folk are small enough to make use of the food Ploughshare provides, and that’s important to Brever.

“It’s one thing to receive a box of vegetables, it’s another to know what to do with a radicchio,” says the farmer. “I don’t want my vegetables to just sit in someone’s kitchen for a week and then they throw



**Through Campus Kitchen, people are given an opportunity to learn food preparation using fresh, organic food from Ploughshare Farm.**  
*(photo by Campus Kitchen)*

**Food Folk, see page 23...**

it away.”

Augsburg's Campus Kitchen not only can make good use of Ploughshare's bounty, it welcomes it. The program, one of five similar college initiatives in the country (it was launched at St. Louis University by Sodexo, the food service company), Campus Kitchen partners university students, faculty and staff with local community organizations to provide healthy, well balanced meals and snacks to social service agencies that serve low-income seniors, children and families in Minneapolis. Since it started in 2003, Augsburg's Campus Kitchen program has served 15,682 meals to shelters, youth programs and other organizations with the help of 300 volunteers.

The initiative also uses Ploughshare's produce in its Culinary Job Training Program, which teaches food preparation to unemployed and underemployed people in the community. In 2004, nine trainees in that program received Professional Food Manager Certification. Abby Flottesch, Development Manager for Campus Kitchen, says the volunteers and staff look forward to working with the fresh vegetables from Ploughshare when deliveries begin in June. The quality is excellent, making for a better end product, plus people get a sense of "where the food comes from" through this relationship. Other Campus Kitchen programs around the country get fresh produce from farmers' markets, but the Augsburg program is the only one to have a relationship with a CSA farm, says Flottesch.

"Having a weekly delivery direct from a farm is unique."

### Generous shareholders

Jean Cameron, a Minneapolis resident who, along with her husband Robert Linde, has contributed Food For Folk shares for two years, says she believes it is vital to get good quality fresh food to everyone. She says we already have a multi-tiered food system where lower income people who can't afford transportation are forced to buy junk food at convenience stores in their neighborhoods. Procuring food that way is ultimately costly for individuals and society as a whole, both directly and through health problems such as obesity.

She hates to admit it, but Cameron says one thing she likes about Food For Folk is how easy it was to make a difference. She and her husband were

already buying a share in the farm themselves, so they just added another share for the program. Gary, who delivers shares to the Alexandria, Minn., area as well as the Twin Cities, handles the deliveries. Cameron likes that the food she's financing is going straight to people who need it. She also likes that the program is helping support a local family

• • •

***"It could be a real opportunity for young families to get started on the land. It's also an opportunity to make it a community, and not just mere charity."***

• • •

farm.

"Everything about it is positive. We hope many more of these programs will grow," she says.

Without the generosity of people like Cameron, Brever says he doesn't know how he could afford to donate his vegetables. The Brevers' CSA operation has grown steadily since they started it: from 40 to 130 memberships. They are proud of the quality of produce they raise and deliver to their members, and Gary says he would eventually like to be doing well enough economically that they could donate shares directly.

"But we are just a small start-up farm; we can't just give away quality produce," says Brever.

The farmer sees a lot of room for growth with an initiative like Food For Folk, but there is a limit as to how much time and resources one farm like Ploughshare can devote to "scholarship shares." He says one possibility would be that a nonprofit organization coordinate the program. He even sees it as a sort of "beginning farmer" launching pad for CSA operations. For example, a new CSA could have a quarter to half of its shares covered by a Food For Folk-like program during the first five years or so of operation, says Brever. That would give such farms a major foot up during those first few years when recruiting members can be difficult.

"It could be a real opportunity for young families to get started on the land," he says. "It's also an opportunity to make it a community, and not just mere charity." □

*For more information on the Food For Folk Project, contact: 6653 Harvest Place NW, Parkers Prairie, MN 56361; phone: 218-267-5117; website: [www.ploughsharefarm.com](http://www.ploughsharefarm.com).*

*Campus Kitchen at Augsburg can be contacted at: 2211 Riverside Avenue, CB #108, Minneapolis, MN 55454; phone: 612-330-1624; website: [www.campuskitchens.org](http://www.campuskitchens.org).*

## Slow food on a slim budget

You have to love a publication that has as its slogan, "Champagne Living on a Beer Budget!" The 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Better Times Almanac* provides practical, accessible tips on how to live a sustainable lifestyle without breaking the bank. The editor of the *Almanac* sees it as a resource for low and moderate-income people who want to participate in the burgeoning "slow food" movement (see Jan./Feb./March 2005 *LSL*, page 2). Anyone who wants fresh food purchased from local farmers to be a bigger part of their household would benefit from this resource. Articles with titles like, "Making the Perfect Soup Stock," "7 Easy Steps to Kitchen Frugality and Tasty Food," and "Hamburger is More Than a Fast

Food Sandwich" pepper this publication. It also provides information on buying direct from a farmer and avoiding convenience store "traps." The *Almanac* isn't just about food; it also contains tips on cutting energy use as well as general guidelines for frugal living.

True to its philosophy of saving people money, the *Almanac* is free. It's available at [www.bettertimesinfo.org/2004index.htm](http://www.bettertimesinfo.org/2004index.htm). For a printed copy, send a stamped, self-addressed 9 inch by 12 inch envelope with \$1.06 in postage on it to: Better Times, 1524 NW 21<sup>st</sup>, Oklahoma, OK 73106. If you would like multiple copies, e-mail [rmwj@sooner.net](mailto:rmwj@sooner.net) or call 405-613-4688.

## Hope's Edge The Next Diet for a Small Planet

By Frances Moore Lappé & Anna Lappé  
2003; 464 pages; \$14.95 (softcover)  
Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam  
Small Planet Institute  
25 Mt. Auburn St., Suite 203  
Cambridge, MA 02138  
www.smallplanetinstitute.org

*Reviewed by Cathy Eberhart*

I started reading *Hope's Edge* on a 5:45 a.m. flight in mid-March—the first leg of our annual journey to visit my husband Guillermo's family in Honduras. Despite the early hour and a nearly sleepless night, I found the book easy to read.

Perhaps I was still stimulated by the cup of coffee I'd had at 3:30 am before I left the house. But I know it also helped that I'd had the chance to hear Frances Moore Lappé speak a month earlier when the Land Stewardship Project co-sponsored her visit to Winona.

The first chapter, which I read on the airplane, was a good review of the main points of her speech:

- Her conviction that hunger exists because of a lack of democracy rather than a scarcity of food.
- The five “thought traps” that lead us to do as a society those things that we as individuals abhor.
- Those “moments of dissonance” that push us to take the first steps toward change.
- The importance of putting ourselves in the company of those who are finding the courage to create a more sustainable world.

It was for this last purpose that Frances and her daughter Anna made their seven-month journey around the world to write *Hope's Edge*.

The book became a literary equivalent of the incredible Terre Madre event that Audrey Arner wrote about in the last *Land Stewardship Letter*—a bringing together of many voices and stories from around the globe, and a source of inspiration and hope.

Relaxing in my sister-in-law's newly-built cement block house in Honduras, I

read about Frances and Anna's trip to Brazil to learn about the Landless Worker's Movement. I had first heard about this initiative in Frances' speech and was eager to learn more about this incredible social movement that has settled a quarter of a million landless families on 15 million acres in 2,600 settlements throughout Brazil. I was also moved by their visit to the city of Belo Horizonte (translation: “beautiful horizon”) which has declared food security a right of citizenship.

In the lush tropical cloud forest, where my husband's parents live and farm, I followed Frances and Anna to tropical Bangladesh to learn about the Grameen bank and its 20-year history of providing “micro-credit” to the poor.

After a long hot drive to visit another of Guillermo's sisters, I escaped the heat in front of a fan and read about Frances and Anna's visit to steamy India to see the often disastrous impacts of the “Green Revolution” as well as the eco-farming, seed-saving movement begun by Vandana Shiva in response.

Surrounded by the ever-present poverty of Honduras, I appreciated the mother-daughter team's reflection on the “learned helplessness” that keeps millions in desperate poverty. They also described the joyful Green Belt movement founded by Nobel Prize winner Wangari Maathai that has planted over 20 million trees in the desert and brought empowerment to millions of women in the process.

I was especially pleased to find the chapter on Fair Trade that bounces Frances and Anna from the Max Havelaar Foundation in Holland to TransFair USA in California to conversations with coffee farmers in Guatemala and Nicaragua and even to Food Alliance. Our own Fair Trade coffee business, Velasquez Family Coffee, sells the organic shade-grown coffee produced by Guillermo's father, two brothers and a brother-in-law.

As my thoughts started turning to our return trip, the book touched a bit closer to home as well, with a description of the authors' visit to France. Here, they write about the concept of multifunctional farming (we call it “Multiple Benefits of Agriculture,” see page 6) with familiar stories of farmers moving from confinement livestock operations and row crops to hoop houses and grazing.

As our airplane landed back in Minnesota, I finished the last few pages of the final chapter that features all the great things going on in neighboring Wisconsin—a perfect homecoming.

The book was engaging vacation

reading because Frances and Anna are such great storytellers, filling the book with colorful details. The book could be equally valuable as a college textbook—it is full of facts and careful analysis of the most challenging issues of our times.

While I was already somewhat familiar with many of these issues and some of the stories, some things were completely new to me, like the “Tobin Tax,” a proposal to levy tiny taxes on the \$2 trillion in foreign currency transactions that occur every day as a way to slow speculative trading, while also raising billions of dollars that could go to alleviate the worst impacts of poverty.

This book is practical and inspirational. I would be amiss not to mention the 100 pages of recipes in the book (which to be honest with you I have yet to try) as well as the extensive bibliography, list of resources, and discussion questions at the end, all intended to help us take our own next steps.

Frances and Anna expertly weave facts and analysis with the stories of their travels into an inspirational and philosophical journey of hope. Not a simple hope that just looks at the happy part of life, but a grounded, honest hope that, as they write, challenges us to “expand our hearts to let it all in, all the messiness, the fear, the sadness, the loss, the longing—as well as the wondrous sense of awakening that this era holds.” I especially appreciate the way they incorporate their own doubts and questions about whether these efforts are making any real difference, in a sense taking us on their mental journey to find the “edge of hope.”

At the risk of “giving away” the end of the story, I leave you with some of their final words:

“Hope does not come from convincing ourselves the good news is winning out over the bad. Nor does it come from assessing what's possible and going for that. Since it's not possible to know what's possible....we are free to focus on creating the world we want....Hope is not what we find in evidence; it is what we become in action. We become hope because we are alive. We become hope because our planet needs us to. And our hope can spur us on—to take our own stand, to choose.” □

*Cathy Eberhart is LSP's Membership Coordinator. See her Membership Update on page 26.*



# The Triumph of Technique

## The Industrialization of Agriculture and the Destruction of Rural America

By Robert Wolf

Art by Bonnie Koloc

2003; 120 pages; \$15.00 (softcover)

Ruskin Press, P.O. Box 163

Halls, TN 38040

www.freeriverpress.org

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Reviewed by Brian DeVore

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Technique is a god that rules all aspects of our lives, from what kind of food we eat to the health care we receive to the education our children receive. Technique is an idea that thrives on conformity, repetition and centralized power. Our pork chops and tomatoes are produced a certain way not because that's what consumers want, or what the land can produce sustainably, or even because farmers have determined that's the best way to do it. All of these factors are subservient to the invisible hand of technique, which predetermines that such food must be produced in a concentrated system that utilizes resources, animals and humans as cheap inputs. In a world where technique has triumphed, people are mere technicians who exist to serve a master that won't tolerate chance, impulse, and all of the other wonderful things that make up the human condition. It's not what you do, but how (and what cool toys you use in the process) you do it.

It wasn't supposed to be this way. And that, writes Robert Wolf in his sharp-tongued book-length essay, *The Triumph of Technique: The Industrialization of Agriculture and the Destruction of Rural America*, is the source of many problems in modern society: "Technique began as a means to ease man's burden; now man exists to sustain technique."

Such insightful, diamond-hard phrases are sprinkled throughout this slim volume. They succinctly wrap up the author's various arguments, even when they tend to get more intricate than the typical reader might like. This is a book of philosophy that has everyday uses in rural America.

As Wolf, an Iowa-based publisher, teacher and writer who has worked in rural communities throughout the

Midwest and South, points out, one could write about any manifestation of technique to point out its shortcomings. But he chose to focus on how it has impacted contemporary agriculture, because, among other things, it produces something that all of us require to survive: food. Concerns about how humans have allowed technique to wag the dog of society are not new: Henry David Thoreau wrote eloquently about how humans have become "tools of our tools" over a century and a half ago. But Wolf's book uses current examples drawn from Midwestern agriculture to paint a picture of a world where technique has been absorbed into our very beings.

The author focuses on two areas of agriculture in particular: the rise of industrialized large-scale livestock operations, and how genetic engineering is coming to dominate crop production. Both are examples of how tools of agriculture transmuted into drivers of agriculture to the point where they can blind their practitioners to their faults.

At first blush, buying a seed that has been genetically engineered to produce a plant resistant to being killed by a herbicide is a smart, labor-saving decision on the part of a farmer. It can reduce tillage, save soil and cut down on fuel use significantly. When Roundup Ready soybeans debuted in the 1990s, I talked to several no-till farmers who said it was the best tool to come their way in years. But GMO technology no longer knows its place. That's become evident in recent years as problems have popped up: the development of herbicide resistant super weeds, contamination of organic crop fields, reduced yields, and even economic analyses showing that farmers who grow GMO crops may be worse off financially. That's not to mention the fact that the use of such technology has caused U.S. crops to be rejected by certain world markets. But the promoters of this technology refuse to see the blemishes. To them, it's an inevitable part of an overall strategy to modernize agriculture and make it more efficient. The critics be damned.

Raising livestock in large-scale concentrated animal feedlot operations has undergone a similar evolution to where it now drives everything from the genetics of livestock to how animals are slaughtered to land management, as well as local, state and national politics. Express some doubts about the manure produced by a 3,000-cow dairy being proposed for your neighborhood and you'll soon find yourself being characterized as an "anti"—anti-livestock, anti-

farming, anti-rural, anti-growth, anti-profit, anti-human being. That's how intertwined farming and rural American have become with something that started out as simply a production method.

Technique has truly triumphed.

*Triumph of Technique* concludes with some ideas for dethroning this artificial deity. Wolf briefly discusses the rise of local food systems, as well as alternative business models and barter initiatives. These solutions fall under the tent of "decentralization" and "regionalism." Wolf feels decentralizing economic, political and cultural power is the only way communities rooted in the land will thrive.

Wolf is a realist: he knows that decentralization will only thrive when technique is reined in. When what kind of soybean a farmer plants is controlled by Monsanto's St. Louis headquarters, or what kind of hog is produced under what conditions is driven by political decisions made in Des Moines or D.C., there is no hope of putting technique in its proper place.

How can technique be corralled? The author feels the key is for us to realize our limits. Critics of such ideas interpret that as a call for us all to eat raw food and start wearing gunnysacks. But in reality, knowing our limits has its roots in learning how to set goals and make decisions that take in the big picture.

One form of this is Holistic Management, a method some farmers and ranchers use to set and attain goals. This decision-making model takes into account an operation's natural and human resources, as well as its place in the community. And yes, it considers limitations as well. The bottom line is that technique is subservient to goals. I've seen the Holistic Management model—and its cousin, whole farm management—in action, and it can be a wonderful thing. It can help a farm family determine if a new tractor will truly help attain their goals, or if such a tool has become an end in itself. It can also help people adjust in mid-stride and figure out if the decisions they've made are still directing them toward their ultimate goals—something the mindless determinism of technique cannot do.

What if the same decision making model was used on millions of farms? Even better—in millions of communities? Now that would be a triumph worth tooting about. □

Brian DeVore is editor of the Land Stewardship Letter.

## Myth Buster Box

An ongoing series on ag myths & ways of deflating them

→ **Myth:** Strict “Right to Farm” laws help alleviate land use conflicts in rural and suburban areas.

→ **Fact:** In their basic form, such laws serve the critical role of protecting existing farms from nuisance lawsuits filed by new rural residents. But in recent years, owners of large-scale concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) have been successful in “strengthening” the laws to the point where in some cases even the most egregious environmental/human health threats posed by these operations are lawsuit-proof.

That’s too bad, because the idea behind Right to Farm laws is a good one. By the late 1970s, it became clear that suburban sprawl posed a major threat to America’s farms, and not just because subdivisions were gobbling up acres. The people who move into these new developments often know next to nothing about farming, and can make bad neighbors as they object to typical crop and livestock production practices. Horror stories emerged of farmers being restricted from undertaking normal agricultural activities such as doing fieldwork at night and spreading moderate amounts of manure.

As a result, between 1978 and 1983, at least 40 states passed Right to Farm

laws. Eventually all 50 states passed such laws. The particulars of these laws varied from state-to-state, but in general they protected farmers from nuisance suits as long as the farm was established before surrounding suburban activities were put in place, and as long as the farm’s activities did not “jeopardize public health and safety.”

But in the early 1990s, the explosive growth of CAFOs gave a whole new meaning to the word “nuisance.” Odor and water quality problems took on industrial-sized proportions. Proponents of factory farming soon realized that traditional Right to Farm laws may not protect them. As a result, they lobbied successfully for passage of Right to Farm laws that protected industrialized operations from nuisance suits regardless of whether or not they predated suburban development.

As Samuel Krasnow reports in the April 2005 issue of *The Next American City*, there has been a recent backlash against these stricter incarnations of Right to Farm laws, and not just from suburbanites. Family farmers and other long-time rural residents who are quite familiar with the smell of manure are complaining that these new Right to Farm laws represent an “unconstitutional takings” of property and thus vio-

late the 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution. State courts in Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Idaho and Kansas have agreed with these rural residents, invalidating some of the strictest provisions of these laws, according to Krasnow.

But throwing out the baby with the bath water is not the answer. Sprawling development is a bigger threat to agriculture—no matter what its scale—than it ever has been. A new generation of Right to Farm laws that take into account the growth of CAFOs can play a critical role in maintaining viable crop and livestock operations in many parts of the country. Krasnow cites the 2004 rewriting of Vermont’s Right to Farm law as one good example of how to deal with this issue. Among other things, it protects established farm activities as long as there is no “substantial adverse effect on health, safety, or welfare.” The revised bill was endorsed by the Vermont Farm Bureau, rural residents, small and organic farmers, environmental groups and state officials.

→ **More information:** Samuel Krasnow’s article is at [www.americancity.org/article.php?id\\_article=124](http://www.americancity.org/article.php?id_article=124).

Vermont’s new 2004 Right to Farm law is at [www.leg.state.vt.us/statutes/sections.cfm?Title=12&Chapter=195](http://www.leg.state.vt.us/statutes/sections.cfm?Title=12&Chapter=195).



## Membership Update



## Worth writing home about

*Why it’s important that we drop you a line occasionally.*

By Cathy Eberhart

After hearing France Moore Lappé speak in Winona this past February (see review on page 24), we were inspired to think about the many ways that Land Stewardship Project embodies living democracy.

The result was a special appeal letter

that most of you should have received at the end of May that tells the story of ninth grader Kayla Koether’s trip to Washington, D.C., with her dad Greg and 12 other farmers from Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois and Ohio. In addition to telling you more about the LSP-sponsored D.C. “fly-in” in March, the letter also highlights the other creative ways that our members and our programs are strengthening our democ-

racy through citizen action. (See our website for links to even more information about these exciting efforts.)

This very important work requires funds, however, and so the letter also asked you to consider a special gift above your membership (or to renew or join, if you did not have a current membership). ***We are extremely grateful to all of you who have already responded.***

The money that we raise through mailings like this is extremely important.

**Membership, see page 27...**

With foundation and government money shrinking (or coming with complicated strings attached), the gifts that we receive from our members are an invaluable source of flexible funding—funding that we can use strategically when and where it is needed most.

And yet, we know that fundraising letters are *not* your favorite kind of mail to receive. And we are conscious of the environmental costs of wasteful “junk” mail—so we work hard to make our mail efforts as efficient and earth-friendly as possible.

### Clean mailing lists

We work especially hard to keep the addresses in our database current and to prevent duplicates, but mistakes do occur. You can help by letting us know via telephone, e-mail or with a note of changes or if you start receiving duplicate mailings.

### Reusable envelopes & recycled paper

Because of a partnership with Ecolopes, we have been able to use environmentally friendly reusable envelopes for many of our mailings, which reduces our costs, eliminates the need for return envelopes and saves paper. We also work with a “Great Minnesota Printer” that uses recycled paper products and environmentally friendly printing processes.

### Multiple purpose mailings

Twice a year, you may receive special campaign letters, like the one mentioned above. Our aim is to make these “special appeal” letters informative while providing opportunities for those members who wish to give extra donations beyond their membership dues. However, if you prefer to only be contacted when it is time for your membership renewal, let us know.

In order to build our power to make change, LSP must continue to expand our membership base and raise funds. Mail is an important tool toward those ends, but we want to use it wisely. We will do our best to honor your preferences for how much mail you want to receive. I welcome your comments and suggestions. □

*Cathy Eberhart is LSP's Membership Coordinator. She can be reached at 651-653-0618 or [cathy@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:cathy@landstewardshipproject.org).*

## Help keep LSP's costs down & reduce unwanted mail

- ✓ Call, e-mail or write us if your address changes or if you start receiving duplicate mailings so we can update our database.
- ✓ Volunteer with an upcoming mailing at the LSP office nearest you.
- ✓ Renew your membership on time to avoid multiple renewal notices. Your renewal date should appear above your name and address on this newsletter. You can renew using the envelope enclosed in this newsletter, by telephone at 651-653-0618, or online at

[www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org).

- ✓ Eliminate renewal letters by signing up for e-mail renewal reminders. Mark this option on your next membership contribution or e-mail us at [cathy@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:cathy@landstewardshipproject.org).
- ✓ “Recycle” this newsletter (and the enclosed envelope) by passing it on to someone interested in our work and encouraging them to join.
- ✓ Let us know if you would prefer fewer letters from us.

## Thank you

Occasionally, people give the Land Stewardship Project monetary memorial gifts in honor of a loved one. We would like to express our gratitude for three recent memorial gifts:

◆ **Richard and Marjorie McManus**, in memory of **Mark and Katie**

**McManus.**

◆ **Robert Raymond**, in memory of **Eileen Schultz.**

◆ **John and Julie Essame**, in memory of **Cynthia Kelley O'Neill.**

For information on honoring a loved one with a memorial give to LSP, contact Cathy Eberhart at 651-653-0618 or [cathy@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:cathy@landstewardshipproject.org). □

## Support LSP in your workplace

The Land Stewardship Project is a proud member of the Minnesota Environmental Fund, which is a coalition of 20 environmental organizations in Minnesota that offer work-place giving as an option in making our communities better places to live.

Together member organizations of the Minnesota Environmental Fund work to

- 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 [lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org).

## STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

→ **JULY 8-9**—“Building a Wonderful Credit Relationship” workshop on loan applications & credit, western Minnesota (see page 7)

→ **NPSAS Annual Summer Symposium & Farm Tour**, Crookston & Fertile, Minn.; Contact: 701-883-4304; www.npsas.org

→ **JULY 11**—Grazing management workshop on livestock watering systems, southeastern Minn. (see page 7)

→ **JULY 14**—LSP Policy Program Open House, 5 p.m.-8:30 p.m., 2919 42nd St. E., Minneapolis, MN; Contact: 612-722-6377; mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **JULY 15**—Upper Midwest Organic Tree Fruit Growers Network field day, Countryside Orchard, Lansing, Iowa; Contact: 608-967-2362; www.mosesorganic.org/treefruit/intro.htm

→ **JULY 15-16**—“Building a Wonderful Credit Relationship” workshop on loan applications & credit, southeast Minnesota (see page 7)

→ **JULY 16**—Farm Beginnings field day featuring CSA production & permaculture, One Sun Farm, LaFarge, Wis. (see page 9)

→ **JULY 18**—Grazing management workshop on livestock watering systems, southeastern Minn. (see page 7)

→ **JULY 25**—Grazing management workshop on strategies for maximizing forage production, southeastern Minn. (see page 7)

→ **JULY 27-30**—Windy River Renewable Energy & Sustainable Agriculture Fair, Little Falls, Minn.; Contact: www.windyriver.us; 218-575-2837

→ **JULY 28-29**—Minnesota Rural Sum-

mit: The Great Reconnect—Bridging Rural & Urban Resources for Community & Economic Success, St. John's College, Collegeville, Minn.; Contact: 651-645-9403; www.minnesotaruralpartners.org/2005\_summit/index.htm

→ **AUGUST**—Farm Beginnings potluck picnic (details to be announced) Contact: LSP, 320-269-2105

→ **AUG. 1**—Grazing management workshop on fencing for livestock/sensitive area identification & management, south-eastern Minn. (see page 7)

→ **AUG. 2-4**—Upper Midwest Grazing Conference, Dubuque, Iowa; Contact: 218-385-3000; www.cias.wisc.edu/uppermidwest

→ **AUG. 3**—Food Alliance Midwest & Practical Farmers of Iowa field day on grazing & marketing, Tom & Kristi German farm, Holstein, Iowa (see page 19)

→ **AUG. 8**—Grazing management workshop on fencing for livestock/sensitive area identification & management, south-eastern Minn. (see page 7)

→ **AUG. 11-14**—The American Community Gardening Association's 26th National Conference, with the theme “Gardening in the Heartland: At the Water's Edge,” Minneapolis, Minn.; Contact: www.communitygarden.org; 877-275-2242

→ **AUG. 20**—Breakfast on the Farm—a celebration of local food & farmers, Gale Woods Farm, Minnetrista, Minn.; Contact: 763-694-2001; www.threeriversparkdistrict.org/parks/galewoods.cfm

→ **AUG. 23-25**—Midwest Specialty Grains Conference & Trade Show, Minneapolis, Minn.; Contact: www.mnshippers.com/conference/index2.cfm or 612-252-1453

→ **AUG. 30**—3rd Annual Minnesota Cooks! Food Alliance Midwest Event,

Minnesota State Fair (see page 18)

→ **SEPT. 8**—Field Day on Conservation Security Program, stewardship practices & performance, 2 p.m.-7:30 p.m., Vic & Cindy Madsen farm, Audubon, Iowa; Contact: Caroline van Schaik, LSP, 507-523-3366; caroline@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **SEPT. 10**—12th Annual Duluth Harvest Festival, Bayfront Festival Park, Duluth, Minn.; Contact: Jean Sramek, SFA, farming@charter.net; 218-393-3276

→ **SEPT. 12**—Sustainable Shopping at Linden Hills Natural Home in Minneapolis, with 10 percent of sales benefiting the Land Stewardship Project (see page 8)

→ **SEPT. 12-15**—Conference to Reinvigorate Public Breeding of Seeds & Animals for a Healthy 21st Century Agriculture, Ames, Iowa; Contact: 919-542-6067; www.rafiusa.org

→ **SEPT. 30-OCT. 2**—2nd Annual Meander—Upper Minnesota River Arts Crawl & CURE River Revival, western Minnesota; Contact: CURE, 877-269-2873; www.curemriver.org

→ **SEPT. 15**—Farm Beginnings™ course registration deadline for Minnesota program (see page 9)

→ **OCT. 6-9**—9th Conference of Community Food Security Coalition, Atlanta, Ga.; Contact: www.foodsecurity.org

→ **OCT. 11**—2nd Annual Dine Fresh Dine Local event at Twin Cities (Minn.) area restaurants (see page 20)

→ **JAN. 9-FEB. 10**—“Family Farms: A Tribute” traveling art show, Northfield, Minn.; Contact: Stephanie Henriksen, 507-645-7086; dkamis@rconnect.com

Check [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org) for the latest on upcoming events.



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