

The Land Stewardship



Keeping the Land and People Together

Letter

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A Public-Public Partnership

It takes a village to raise an enlightened experiment station—and residents who are willing to be pains in the butt. (second in a series)

By Brian DeVore

In the late 1990s, University of Minnesota agronomist Paul Porter took cropping statistics and population figures for the 12-state Corn Belt region and dumped them into a computer. The computer spewed out calculations showing an inverse relationship between the acres planted to corn and soybeans in a given county and recent

population changes in that county. Put simply: more corn and soybeans equals fewer people.

That equation comes to life while one drives through the dozen counties that officially make up west-central Minnesota. The USDA says this region is one of the state's top producers of corn and soybeans. In fact one county, Renville, is number one in both commodities, while another, Yellow Medicine, is fourth. But the skeletal remains of farmhouses are

indicators that a lot of corn and beans are leaving the region by train and truck and taking the profits with them. From 1992 to 1997 (the latest year available from USDA), the 12-county region as a whole lost 374 farms and the average farm size grew 29 acres to 513. Despite their prowess in producing corn and beans, Yellow Medicine and Renville counties lost 5.2 percent and 3 percent of their general population respectively between 1990 and 2000.

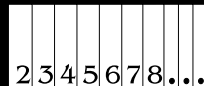
The loss of manufacturing jobs and other work has made some parts of west-central Minnesota a difficult place to

Partnership, see page 12...



At a recent public event held at the West Central Research and Outreach Center, hog farmer Paul Sobocinski (left) and Station Head Greg Cuomo gave a joint presentation on alternative swine research being conducted there. In the background are the hoop houses that serve as the basis for many of the swine studies. Such research came about because of efforts on the part of local farmers and other members of the public. (LSP photo)

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The *Land Stewardship Letter* is published five 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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Commentary !?!?!?

Amber Waves blows an ill wind

By Beth Waterhouse

I love a dark theater. Such intensity and artistic potential before the curtain rises. And this curtain rose on a farm kitchen. Squabbling teenagers, hope for rain, a creative and energetic mother holding it all together—these were nothing new to farm country—but the whole thing left me with a deep sadness about the land.

Amber Waves, which was staged at the Children's Theatre Company in Minneapolis earlier this fall, was beautifully acted. Take absolutely nothing away from Peter Brosius as director or Joseph Dodd as set designer. The set was magical and Terry Hempleman (farmer/ Mike) and Kelly Bertenshaw (farm wife/Penny) acted superbly. Jason Arbruster was terrific as their son, Scott, and Celeste Busa (in her first Children's Theatre Company production) was powerful in nearly every scene as a tempestuous yet land-loving daughter, Deb. T. Mychael Rambo was his usual artistic self as their neighbor, and lent a depth to the play that might not have come through in this script. These great characters kept the action moving and moved me as well. It was a slice of American farm life in nearly all aspects—the hard work, the faith-driven values, the silence or secrets of small town life. But a major aspect of farm country that I've come to know well was ignored: its creative resiliency.

The responsibility for this missing resiliency falls on the shoulders of playwright James Still, and anyone else who worked on adapting this 1993 story to a 2003 stage. Still explains in the program notes that his grandparents sold their Kansas farm in 1993, and that the auction took away the beloved details of his growing up years—even the house. His grandparents died within a year of moving to town, and *Amber Waves* was "his way of knocking on their door again—spiritually and emotionally—to a place where generations of a family were carved into the land like rings of a tree..."

This nostalgia and sorrow come through loud and clear in a script that takes us nowhere beyond sadness, and that settles for corn on corn on corn. Sure enough, Penny has to get a low-paying job off the farm to make ends meet, yet

she returns every afternoon to do all the work she used to do including some farm chores.

Sure enough, the family can't live on the price given for their crop. The system is killing them, financially and spiritually, and they hold the family together on sheer prayer, energy, humor, and a rather dry faith in history. Wal-Mart is even given a plug when they all go to have their family picture taken there.

I was convinced that if Penny's energy died—if her commitment to Mike and those two kids was to snap, they would all break. And this was shrouded in a system of Midwestern small town silence. Scott, their son, who knows he has the chance to take over this farming operation one day, sums it up quite well with his, "I don't wanna die here!"

So did the plot finally take some turn toward hope? Barely. Did these people do anything but farm more corn at awful prices? No. Did they ever mention global pricing systems, farm subsidies distributed unequally, politics and policies that hold them in their place? Never. The program notes left us thinking that this corn was food, not feedstock or industrial oil or corn syrup. The script left us thinking that the main risk in farming is the weather, and that low prices were just the status quo. This is the perfect play to support agribusiness' interests. Wouldn't big agribusiness companies want to leave the impression that there is absolutely nothing to do but slog inside the system that kills family by family? (Get bigger or get out.)

Wouldn't they love the message that **corn**, underpriced corn, is all there is every year, planted "right up to the windows of the church"? I believe they would.

And where is one ounce of creativity? Where is the vegetable plot that actually brings some cash by selling good food to the local community? Where is one idea, brought from anywhere, about direct marketing? Where is the community? Where is the energy of the families such as those running Easy Bean Farm or Pastures A' Plenty (both embedded in western Minnesota's corn-soybean country). Distant and silent—just like BIG Ag would have us believe, and hope

Play, see page 3...

for us to remain.

The Children's Theatre squandered a big chance to add some hope to the countryside, by doing well a play about corn. They did a great thing with their *Stories of Montevideo* last winter, yet here on the main stage, they gave up their creative power to a poor script and a deeply uncreative message. If farmers take encouragement from the empty hope given them in *Amber Waves*, it won't last beyond the next dry spell. □

Excelsior, Minn., writer and teacher Beth Waterhouse is a former member of the Land Stewardship Project's Board of Directors. She was recently named a senior fellow in the School of Agriculture Endowed Chair in Agricultural Systems at the University of Minnesota.

Letters

Scoring points at the expense of accuracy

In general I have been impressed by the journalism and editorship of the *Land Stewardship Letter*. However I am beginning to get the impression that issues are becoming ideologically tainted, folks are being divided into "good" and "bad" too easily, and integrity is becoming subservient to "scoring points" for the cause. As a case in point consider the sidebar entitled "Milking the losses" on page 13 of the July/August/September 2003 *Land Stewardship Letter*.

You surely know that averages can be misleading when there is no idea just what the actual distribution is. An average for a skewed distribution most likely is not a "representative" value. The sidebar reports average returns per cow of \$141 for 2002 dairy operations with 51 to 100 cows, and an average loss of \$44 for 500-plus cow operations. From the information given we have no idea if any of the 100 or less cow operations lost money per cow or if any of the larger operations made money per cow.

I have a friend, a third generation dairy farmer trying to keep his home farm going. His family has a long tradition of Wisconsin progressivism. He is bright and innovative and as concerned with being a good steward of the land and community as anybody. Their operation is currently milking 500 cows and is

integrated with a large composting operation. He recently told me that, "If small farmers made \$141 per cow and large farmers lost \$44 per cow, that would indicate that neither has a living wage. The best would be the 100-cow dairy with \$14,100 per year. If this snapshot were accurate for the next five years, nobody would milk cows ever again."

Most discussions on dairying that I have been involved in inevitably bring up good versus poor management. This applies to large and small operations. Good management is holistic, using a long-range view to evaluate benefit and cost. But this type of management is as applicable to large dairies as to small ones. It is also most likely true that good management is less likely with absentee or corporate ownership than with local

ownership. But the dividing line is between good and poor management and not between large and small dairies.

I recently looked at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's analysis of the economic impact of a 2,500-cow dairy in Dodge County referred to in the sidebar. Their analysis is also based on averages compiled from data that is left unspecified, as are the assumptions upon which the analysis is based. Their three scenarios are based upon three different prices for milk and not on, for example, three different abilities of management. In addition, if the operation doesn't make money, which of those economic benefits won't get paid?

— Jeff Falk, Fountain City, Wis.



What's on your mind?

Got an opinion? Comments? Criticisms? We like to print letters, commentaries, essays, poems, photos and illustrations related to issues we cover. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity.

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Myth Buster Box

An ongoing series on ag myths & ways of deflating them

◆ **Myth:** It will be prohibitively expensive to tell consumers what country their food comes from.

◆ **Fact:** A provision of the 2002 Farm Bill requires grocery stores to identify what country beef, pork, lamb, fish, shellfish, fruits, vegetables and peanuts originated from. This law, called Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) is scheduled to take effect on Sept. 30, 2004. It would provide consumers the same information they get when they buy, say, a shirt or a car.

The USDA has estimated that the first-year paperwork burden on industry would cost almost \$2 billion alone. That's a hugely inflated figure, concludes a paper published by the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences in May. The analysis concluded that the USDA in some cases overestimated the various costs of COOL by 95 percent. A more realistic estimate for labeling costs is between \$70 million and \$193 million, say the paper's authors, who are agricultural economists and agricultural law experts. "The costs and complexity of labeling have been overblown, often to absurd levels," they write. Several reasons for the USDA's inaccurate figures are cited by the analysis, including the agency's assumption it would cost farmers more to keep records than prior experience on other labeling programs shows to be the case.

In August, the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO), a nonpartisan investigative arm of Congress, issued a report that concluded the USDA's cost estimates were "questionable and not well supported." Again, said the GAO, USDA developed its estimates based on assumptions that record keeping would cost much higher than normal, and failed to provide reasons for the inflated estimates.

For a copy of *Country of Origin Labeling: A Legal and Economic Analysis*, log onto www.iaatpc.fred.ifas.ufl.edu/docs/policy_brief/PBTC_03-5.pdf. The GAO's COOL analysis, *Country-of-Origin Labeling: Opportunities for USDA and Industry to Implement Challenging Aspects of the New Law* is available at www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-780.

Parsing pork

What are some sure signs that agriculture is being industrialized, made into a conveyor belt technology more akin to a factory floor than a farm? Well, one indicator of this trend is an attempt by agribusiness to impose what sociologists call “pre-patterned dialogue” on farm and industry personnel. In other words, a script is provided for communicating with the media, consumers, and the public in general. It’s not like these people are reading line-by-line from a piece of paper. Rather, they are provided “phrases” to use when describing what they do and why they do it. It’s similar to how McDonald’s employees are taught to interact with the public (“Would you like fries with that order?”), thus removing the last vestiges of independent thought and action in the workplace.

The National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) is keenly aware of the power of

words, and has worked up some pre-patterned dialogue of its own. A recent book, *A Mediation on Social Problems* (Xlibris Corp. 2002, www2.xlibris.com), describes a NPPC-developed list of “words to avoid” when describing pork production to the public.

Don’t say:

Instead, say:

| | | |
|------------------------------|-------|---|
| <i>Piglet Processing</i> | ..... | <i>Baby Pig Care</i> |
| <i>Slats, Gutters, Pits</i> | ..... | <i>Sanitary Flooring</i> |
| <i>Crates, Stalls, Decks</i> | ..... | <i>Individual Sow Housing</i> |
| <i>Early Weaning</i> | ..... | <i>Segregated Weaning</i> |
| <i>Co-mingled</i> | ..... | <i>Community Nursery</i> |
| <i>Drugs</i> | ..... | <i>Prescription Medicine</i> |
| <i>Pig Density</i> | ..... | <i>Pen Space</i> |
| <i>Slaughter Deck</i> | ..... | <i>Health Status/monitor</i> |
| <i>Factory Farms</i> | ..... | <i>Pork Producers</i> |
| <i>Industry</i> | ..... | <i>Networking/alliances</i> |
| <i>Confinement</i> | ..... | <i>Environmentally Controlled Housing</i> |
| <i>Throughput</i> | ..... | <i>Productive</i> |
| <i>Disease Control</i> | ..... | <i>Health Control</i> |
| <i>Waste Removal</i> | ..... | <i>Nutrient Management</i> |
| <i>Load Hogs</i> | ..... | <i>Market Pork</i> |

Don’t say ‘pig dump’.....



Land Stewardship Project member Pat Deninger took this photo recently near a northeastern Iowa large-scale hog confinement operation. Animal mortality has always been a fact of life on farms, but the volume of dead animals produced on large-scale operations can be daunting. Carcasses can be a source of disease and environmental contamination. A 1,000 sow farrow-to-finish operation will produce 40,000 pounds of dead pigs in a year’s time, according to one estimate from North Carolina State University. Pens like the one pictured here are sometimes used to stockpile dead animals until disposal companies can pick them up.

Opportunities Resources

Get hooked up to

LIVE WIRE

Sign up for *LIVE-WIRE* for 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 lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org and put in the subject line “Subscribe LIVE-WIRE.” ☐

LSL back issues

Looking for a back issue of the *Land Stewardship Letter*? Some paper copies are available at no cost. Log onto www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/LSLbackissues.pdf for a pdf document that describes in detail every *Land Stewardship Letter* published between 1983 and 2002. For more information on ordering back issues, call Louise Arbuckle at 651-653-0618, or e-mail her at lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org. ☐

When democracy comes home to stay

By Adam Warthesen

Townships are an established foundation for democracy in America—local government through which people meet to discuss and act on community concerns. Organized towns are the primary local government unit for unincorporated areas in Minnesota. They exist in every county in the state, and have provided what some consider the purest form of democracy where soft money and party politics have been all but absent. Town boards and town meetings consist of community residents taking care of township issues at the local level. The power and rights of townships to make decisions to protect and enhance the quality of life of local citizens, while adhering to appropriate state or federal standards, has been coined “local control.”

Yet, there is a battle being waged across America to reduce and strip away the rights and powers of citizens to take civic action through their local governments, starting with townships. The attack is coming from factory farm proponents in government, corporate agribusiness and commodity groups.

In Minnesota, the attempt to make factory farming the dominant model of livestock production is running into organized citizens, who are using local control and democratic principles to promote guidelines for communities that are safe, fair and reasonable.

Just about anyone can see that it's a hard sell to get neighbors to believe that multi-million gallon manure lagoons and factory farms are good neighbors, good for communities, or good for the land. But special interest groups and corporations like Land O' Lakes, Monsanto, AgStar Financial Services, the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association, and the Minnesota Dairy Leaders Roundtable are committed to factory farms. So committed, in fact, that instead of finding better ways to promote a healthy and community-friendly livestock industry, their strategy is to attempt to browbeat local officials and residents to accept their agenda—or to strip away the rights of citizens to have any say in the matter.

Consider what happened on Oct. 6. That evening a virtual who's who in factory farming converged on Minnesota's Dodge County for a regularly scheduled Ripley Township meeting (a township with only 109 registered

voters, according to the Secretary of State's 2002 election data). About 180 factory farm proponents came from across the state and region to make sure the township would not initiate a township planning and zoning process. They fear such a process will interfere with the plans of the New Jersey-based Zaitz Trust to plop a 3,000-cow mega-dairy in the community. This operation would be mega-sized—in 2002, the average Minnesota dairy farm had 73 cows, and less than 4 percent of the state's dairies had more than 200 cows.

The vast majority of Ripley Township residents are adamantly opposed to this mega-dairy proposal and similar development. Township residents, including farmers and non-farm rural citizens, have collected signatures, attended numerous meetings, contacted supervisors, written letters and participated in committees. Despite residents' strong objections, some supervisors are leaning toward supporting the project.

“We can't just look at what the residents want,” Ripley Township Board Chair Bruce Schmoll told the crowd at one point. “We have to look at the big picture. If that upsets you, I'm sorry.”

The “big picture” Schmoll was referring to was easy to find—it was sitting right in front of him. Representatives of Land O'Lakes, Cargill, and AgStar Financial Services were all there, according to the meeting sign-up sheet. No less than five Monsanto representatives were present, including one who came all the way from corporate headquarters in St. Louis, Mo. (Monsanto is the main supplier of rBGH, a genetically modified growth hormone used by big dairies to boost milk production).

Commodity organizations were also a big presence at the meeting. The Minnesota Soybean Growers Association and Minnesota Soybean Research and Promotion Council sent at least eight representatives from outside the township and county to the meeting and used considerable space in their Oct. 10 *Minneline* newsletter to bash the Land Stewardship Project and local Ripley Township residents.

In all, of the roughly 200 people who squeezed into the community center, only around 35 were actually residents of Ripley Township, nearly all of whom oppose the factory farm proposal and support an ordinance to begin a planning and zoning process. Some local residents had to sit on the floor in their own town

meeting, and put up with an outside moderator who ignored pointed questions from citizens.

This display by agribusiness and factory farm proponents is a clear indication of how local control is a problem for industrial ag interests.

Factory farming's supporters feel that if they can slam dunk local control in Ripley Township, the door will be opened wide for large scale concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) throughout the state. Make no mistake—local control will be officially under attack yet again when the Minnesota Legislature reconvenes on Feb. 2.

“What happened at the Ripley Township Board meeting should be repeated over and over so that the activist groups no longer control the agenda of rural Minnesota,” crowed the Oct. 10 *Minneline* (see page 11 for more on recent tactics of factory farm supporters).

But they have underestimated the power of organized people. Here in Minnesota, there are many good examples of how local residents have acted on their best civic values and developed planning and zoning rules that protect the community far into the future. In the great tradition of American democracy, the residents of Ripley Township are working hard to make their voices heard above the din of the agribusiness intimidation machine. So far, not one permit has been issued and no government body has given any go ahead for the 3,000-cow mega-dairy proposal.

At the Nov. 3 Ripley Township meeting, outside proponents of the proposal again pressured supervisors to approve the mega-dairy. Mind you, they were pushing for approval of a proposal with unavailable changed plans, a newly replaced engineer, unanswered questions regarding roads and the concerns of citizens, and no environmental review completed. The supervisors, to the satisfaction of Ripley Township residents, denied any such approval at this time.

But in Ripley Township, as well as across the state and around the nation, the fight for democracy and local control is far from over. □

Adam Warthesen is an LSP Policy Program organizer. He can be reached at 612-722-6377 or adamw@landstewardshipproject.org. For more information on local democracy check out Jeffrey Kaplan's essay “Consent of the Governed” in the November/December 2003 issue of Orion magazine (www.oriononline.org/pages/om/03-6om/Kaplan.html).



Appeals Court rules checkoff unconstitutional

In a major defeat for the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) and their allies in government and corporate agribusiness, the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals on Oct. 22 affirmed a federal judge's ruling that the mandatory pork checkoff program is unconstitutional and should end.

Hog farmers climbed off their combines on the morning of Oct. 22 to call on the USDA and the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) to stop delaying the inevitable and recognize the rightful end of the pork checkoff. This ruling supports the contention of the Campaign for Family Farms (CFF), which since 1998 has argued through petition drives, a vote and a lawsuit that the pork checkoff forces independent farmers to support a system that hurts them. The Land Stewardship Project is a founding member of CFF.

"This is a huge victory for independent family farmers," says Rich Smith, a Wilmont, Minn., hog farmer-member of LSP. "The pork checkoff has forced family farmers to pay into a program that supports corporate concentration, industrialization and the factory farm system of livestock production, which drives family farmers out of business. The end of the checkoff is long overdue."

The Nov. 1 edition of the *New York Times* editorialized that, "It is time for the checkoffs to end...If the U.S.D.A. valued small farmers, as it claims, it would accede to the courts, not to the pressure of industry groups."

In ruling the pork checkoff unconstitutional, the Sixth Circuit found that the pork checkoff "compels [hog farmers] to express a message with which they do not agree," and struck down the entire Pork Act. The court's entire ruling is available at <http://pacer.ca6.uscourts.gov/opinions.pdf/03a0373p-06.pdf>.

Susan Stokes, legal director for Farmers' Legal Action Group (FLAG) and attorney for CFF, says, "This decision is a vindication of the rights of independent hog farmers, who have been fighting this illegitimate and unconstitutional checkoff for more than five years."

Although the ruling invalidates the pork checkoff, farmers are expressing

concerns that the NPPC and the USDA will use the courts to delay the end of the program and continue collecting millions of dollars in checkoff fees. Every week the termination of the mandatory pork checkoff is delayed means another approximately \$1 million is collected from hog farmers.

"There is absolutely no legitimate reason to keep collecting the checkoff fees," says southwest Minnesota hog farmer Jim Joens, an LSP member. "USDA and NPPC should not ask for a stay, should not keep delaying, and should quit collecting our money and let justice prevail. It's over."

The pork checkoff program was started in 1986 after Congress passed a law mandating that hog farmers pay into the fund. It generates about \$45-\$50 million annually. Money collected under the program goes to the National Pork Board. Prior to July 2001, most of that money ended up in the coffers of the NPPC.

The mandatory pork checkoff has been controversial among hog farmers for many years. In 1998, the Campaign for Family Farms initiated a national petition drive calling for a hog farmer referendum to decide if the program should be ended. That led to a vote conducted by the USDA in August-September 2000 in which over 30,000 U.S. hog producers voted 53 percent to 47 percent to terminate the mandatory pork checkoff. Following the announcement of the vote results in January 2001, then U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman ordered the termination of the program.

However, in a move that shocked hog farmers, the industry and various members of Congress, President Bush's newly appointed Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman cut a back room deal with NPPC in February 2001 to throw out the results of the vote and force hog farmers to keep paying the checkoff. This action led to the CFF lawsuit against USDA, which includes a specific claim that the mandatory pork checkoff violates hog producers' constitutional rights by infringing on the First Amendment.

The Campaign for Family Farms is a coalition of farm and rural groups that are leading the fight against factory farms and the corporate takeover of the hog industry. CFF is working for policies that support independent family farmers. The Sixth Circuit recognized that CFF is devoted to "ensuring the continued existence of family farms, particularly hog farms." Besides LSP, CFF members include Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement, Missouri Rural Crisis Center, Illinois Stewardship Alliance and Citizens Action Coalition of Indiana.

FLAG represents CFF and the individual hog farmers in the lawsuit. □

Twohig joins LSP

Cathy Twohig began duties earlier this month as the new Director of LSP's western Minnesota office. Twohig succeeds Audrey Arner, who left LSP this summer after 15 years of service.

Twohig has an extensive background in education and rural development. Recently she served as an evaluation consultant for LSP's Farm Beginnings program. She has also worked as a coordinator of distance learning services for Northern Arizona University and an instructional specialist with the University of Arizona Extension Service. Twohig has worked in various administrative capacities for the University of Minnesota's Twin Cities campus and has served on the Board of Directors of the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota.

She holds a bachelor's of science degree in social work/community development, a master's degree in adult education and a doctorate in adult education with a sustainable agriculture specialization, all from the University of Minnesota.

"I have been struck by how welcoming everyone is in the Monte community, and I'm looking forward to getting involved in lots of community activities," says Twohig.

Twohig can be reached in LSP's Montevideo office at 103 West Nichols. She can also be contacted at 320-269-2105 or cathyt@landstewardshipproject.org. □



Cathy Twohig

Survey: Federal farm policy stymies adoption of sustainable agriculture

Government policy ranks as one of the top challenges facing farmers who are trying to adopt alternative production systems, say farmers who were surveyed in Minnesota and Wisconsin. The survey, which was recently released by the Land Stewardship Project, also found that a significant number of agricultural educators feel government policy can be a barrier to sustainable farming and that current funding is inadequate for this kind of agriculture.

A two-state team led by LSP conducted the surveys of 1,600 sustainable farmers, farm lenders and agricultural educators in 2002 as part of the "Getting a Handle on the Barriers to Financing Sustainable Agriculture" project (see April/May/June 2003 *Land Stewardship Letter*, page 6). The surveys focused on credit-related practices as well as the perceptions each group holds about banks, sustainable farming and each other. There were 567 respondents, some of whom participated in follow-up, round-table discussions to review and react to the findings.

Current farm policy was marked by 43 percent of responding farmers as "a major challenge" they faced in implementing sustainable agricultural practices. Only "lack of experience" (49 percent) outranked farm policy as a challenge, according to the farmers who participated in the survey. Other major challenges included lack of knowledge (35 percent), a lack of external funding (25 percent) and social pressure (22 percent).

Caroline van Schaik, an LSP staff member who coordinated the survey, says it's no surprise that farmers see government policy as such a major barrier to sustainable agriculture. However, she says it's significant that in a survey focusing on credit issues, policy far outranked access to funding as a challenge.

"The surveys and our round-table discussions showed that the federal government's policy of inducing farmers to raise a handful of crops like corn and soybeans is a major roadblock when it comes to crop rotations, for example," she says. "A key feature of a good farming system is diversity. But current policy does not encourage farmers to incorporate small grains, livestock, or fruits and vegetables into their operations."

Thirty percent of agricultural educators said farm policy was "unfavorable"

toward sustainable agriculture, compared to 20 percent who said it was "favorable." Thirty-six percent of the educators said farm policy was "neutral" when it came to sustainable agriculture. Almost half said that current funding and resources "ignore" or "inadequately support" sustainable agriculture, and almost one-

*Complete survey results
are available at
[www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/
edsurvey.pdf](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/edsurvey.pdf).*

third said funding was at least adequate.

Mark Schultz, LSP's Policy Program Director, says these results show how critical it is for public policy to stop penalizing farmers for stewardship practices like utilizing diverse crop rotations and using well-managed grass and forage to raise livestock. One such policy initiative that actually rewards good stewardship, the Conservation Security Program (CSP), was made a part of the 2002 Farm Bill (see page 10).

Cooperating on the survey project were Minnesota and Wisconsin Extension Educators, Farm Business Management/Production instructors, lenders and

farmers, as well as the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture. The farmers surveyed were picked based on their membership in various sustainable agriculture organizations. □

Policy wish list

The Land Stewardship Project's Policy Program is looking for donated items to help in its organizing efforts and general office maintenance. They include:

- Masking tape
- Markers
- Folding chairs
- Filing cabinet
- D-ring binders (4 inch)
- Mop & bucket

To donate items, drop by the office at 2919 42nd St. E. in South Minneapolis.

You can also contact the Policy Program by calling 612-722-6377 or e-mailing mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org. □

Missing a crock-pot?

An orange crock-pot with no lid was left behind after LSP's Local Foods Potluck Benefit on Sept. 27. If you are the owner, you can contact Louise at 651-653-0618 or lpwbl@landstewardshipproject.org. It may not be much to look at, but that pot produced some yummy soup. □



Land Stewardship Project member Steve Larson's band Woodpile played at LSP's Local Foods Potluck on Sept. 27. The benefit was held at Gale Woods Farm, a sustainable farm park west of the Twin Cities (www.threeriversparkdistrict.org). Woodpile will be performing from 9 p.m. to 11 p.m. on Dec. 13 at Dunn Brothers Coffee, 1569 Grand Ave., St. Paul, Minn. (LSP photo)

A few words for wild farming

A special “Farming with the Wild” event was held Oct. 8 in Minneapolis. This event provided the public an opportunity to hear about some of the ideas behind the Wild Farm Alliance, a group founded in 2000 by wild lands proponents and ecological farming advocates. Through publications and educational programs, the Wild Farm Alliance is striving to bridge the gap between stewardship farming and wild lands conservation by promoting agriculture that helps protect and restore nature (see sidebar below). Land Stewardship Project Associate Director Dana Jackson helped found the Alliance and serves on its board of directors. Besides LSP and the Alliance, sponsors of the Oct. 8 event were the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy and Ruminator Books.

Here are a few quotes from the program:

◆ “When I went to one of these farms, I couldn’t quantify why it was wild but I had a sense this was a special place.” — **Dan Imhoff, author of *Farming with the Wild***

◆ “All that [farming with the wild] work is being squeezed by the elephant in the living room—i.e. the corn-soybean feedlot machine.” — **Becky Weed, Montana sheep rancher**

◆ “I think farming with the wild is one of the most challenging, exciting, important experiments going on today.” — **Dave Foreman, co-founder of the Wildlands Project and Earth First!**

◆ “We’ve been sold a vision by agribusiness,

agricultural economists and investment bankers that equates monotony and pollution on the landscape with efficiency.” — **Dana Jackson, LSP**

◆ “People say the only option to feed all these people is to push the pedal to the metal and that farming with the wild is a luxury. I maintain farming with the wild may be the *only* option.” — **Fred Kirschenmann, North Dakota farmer and Executive Director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture**

◆ “In our lifetime, a farm has become only its fields, and a ranch only a feedlot.” — **Gary Nabhan, co-founder of Native Seeds Search and author of *Coming Home to Eat***

For more information on the Wild Farm Alliance, contact Jackson at 651-653-0618, or log onto www.wildfarmalliance.org. □



Land Stewardship Project members Bob Austin (left) and Les Everett (right) join in a discussion about agriculture policy with farmers Fred Kirschenmann and Becky Weed during the “Farming with the Wild” event. (LSP photo)

The Wild Farm Alliance platform

The mission of the Wild Farm Alliance is to promote a healthy, viable agriculture that helps protect and restore wild nature.

To make our food systems sustainable in the 21st century, we envision a world in which community-based, ecologically managed farms and ranches are seamlessly integrated into landscapes that accommodate the full range of native species and ecological processes.

We recognize that:

→ The current rate of species extinction signifies an unprecedented biodiversity crisis.

→ Industrial agriculture is a primary cause of species losses and a devastating threat to sustainable, family-scale farms and ranches.

→ Protected and interconnected wildlands are essential to assuring biological diversity and sustaining healthy rural landscapes.



We believe:

→ Agriculture must be conducted in ways that are compatible with preservation of native plants and animals.

→ Sustainable family farms and ranches nourish healthy human communities and help safeguard natural communities.

→ The current biodiversity crisis calls for a new conservation ethic that promotes ecological recovery within agricultural lands and across the entire landscape.

We acknowledge:

→ Healthy ecosystems provide us with many life-giving services, including pollination, insect pest control, nutrient cycling, clean water, and erosion control.

→ The need of farmers need to succeed economically while farming ecologically.

→ The right of farmers and indigenous

people to maintain control over food production.

→ The right of consumers to know how and where their food is grown and the responsibility of consumers to support ecologically sound agriculture is also key.

We support:

→ Farming practices that accommodate wild habitat and native species, including large carnivores and wild fish.

→ Practices that strive to eliminate the use of environmentally toxic chemicals and contamination of soil and water.

→ Locally adapted crops and animals that are not genetically engineered.

→ Local and regional food and fiber systems that boost rural economies.

→ Existing community-based efforts to create a continental wildlands network in which large protected areas are connected by wildlife movement corridors and are complemented by ecologically managed farms and forests.

Farm Beginnings: Beginning farmer, rancher conf. March 27

The Land Stewardship Project is co-sponsoring a special conference on getting started in farming or ranching March 27 in Kearney, Neb. "Beginning Farmer and Rancher Conference: Realities and Opportunities," will be held from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Holiday Inn and Convention Center in Kearney. Besides LSP, this conference is sponsored by the Center for Rural Affairs, the University of Nebraska, and USDA's Risk Management Agency.

This conference will focus on practical ways of minimizing the risks of starting a farm or ranch. Established farmers and ranchers will also benefit from this event, which will cover ways of reducing the risks associated with helping a new generation get launched on the land.

Featured will be programs, strategies and tools that can help increase success

when starting a farm or ranch in the midsection of the United States. Farmers and agricultural educators will conduct workshops on generational farm transfer, whole farm planning, mentorship programs, risk management, financial planning, sharing expenses and equipment, legal issues, value-added options, low-cost sustainable systems, and alternative marketing. Participants in this conference will have the opportunity to meet other beginning farmers and ranchers, as well as established producers who are serving as mentors for a new generation of agriculturalists.

LSP will be taking a bus to the conference, starting March 26 in La Crosse, Wis. The bus will make stops in southern Minnesota and Iowa to pick up those interested in participating in this conference. For more information on the

bus trip and conference, contact Heidi Busse in LSP's southeast Minnesota office at 507-523-3366 or heidibusse@yahoo.com. More information as it becomes available will be posted on www.landstewardshipproject.org. □

Farmland available

Land Stewardship Project members Dave and Sue Roloff have land they would like to make available to someone interested in sustainable farming. The Roloffs are open to organic production, a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operation, tree farm, etc. The 57-acre farm is located outside of Turtle Lake, Wis., and is approximately 33 tillable acres. The owners prefer a long-term lease (it's not for sale) and want to provide land at a low cost. In turn, they would like the renters to honor and respect the land, animals and nature.

For information, call 651-430-2621 or e-mail goldenwhale@comcast.net. □

First livestock loans passed on

The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings program marked a milestone recently when the first livestock loans were passed on. What that means is the three original recipients of the loans—Jon Kaiser, Jennifer Mark and Roger and Michelle Benrud—paid money back into the revolving Livestock Loan Program fund, making it possible for other beginning farmers to use the money for the purchase of animals. Kaiser and the Benruds got dairy cows through the program three years ago. Mark purchased sheep two years ago.

The Livestock Loan program is made possible by Heifer International, a nonprofit organization that helps farmers around the world through innovative programs. Heifer International teamed up with LSP three years ago to provide interest-free livestock loans to qualified farmers who have completed the Farm Beginnings program. Although Heifer has provided such loans to farmers all over the world during the past four decades, this is the first time it's instituted the program in the Midwest.

The "passing on" of the livestock loans was marked by a candle-lighting ceremony at the Benrud farm. Such ceremonies are a tradition for Heifer International.

"This is the heart of what Heifer is about," Shari Burton, Midwest Major Gifts Officer for Heifer International, told the beginning farmers. Burton has been at passing on ceremonies in other countries. Such ceremonies are an important milestone and a time of celebration for farm families who are striving to become more self-sufficient. "You are carrying on a tradition started 40 years ago," Burton said.

Karen Stettler, coordinator for the Farm Beginnings program in southeast Minnesota, says the Livestock Loan Program has become an important community building initiative. Livestock loan recipients are teamed up with a group of people who make periodic visits to the farm. The teams consist of an established farmer who serves as a mentor. Also on the team are a financial adviser and someone who has expertise in that particular enterprise, as well as LSP staff. Such visits provide the beginning farmers a chance to gauge their progress and seek advice.

Thus far, 12 Farm Beginnings graduates have received

livestock loans. Dairy cows, beef cattle, sheep, meat goats and chickens have all been put on farms through the program. Because of the success of the Livestock Loan program in Minnesota, Heifer International is helping start similar programs in Pennsylvania, Vermont and Nebraska.

All graduates of the Farm Beginnings program are eligible to apply for Heifer International livestock loans. Application deadlines are Oct. 1 and March 1 of each year. For more information in southeast Minnesota, contact Stettler at 507-523-3366 or stettler@landstewardshipproject.org. In western Minnesota, contact Amy Bacigalupo at 320-269-2105 or amyb@landstewardshipproject.org. □



Carmene Pangrac (left) leads the livestock loan candle lighting ceremony with Farm Beginnings graduates Jon Kaiser, Roger Benrud, Michelle Benrud and Jennifer Mark. Pangrac is on the Livestock Loan Committee. (LSP photo)

Getting behind CSP & pushing

By the time you read this, the financial future of the Conservation Security Program (CSP) should be a little better known. Signed into law in May 2002, the program marks a watershed in farm policy by rewarding farmers for producing real conservation benefits on working lands.

However, the U.S. House of Representatives voted this summer to eliminate funding for CSP implementation in 2004. The U.S. Senate kept its commitment to conservation on working farmlands strong, and fully funded implementation for 2004 of the \$3.77 billion CSP, setting up a clash of priorities in the joint House-Senate conference committee session that was set for mid-November as of this writing.

In October, the Land Stewardship Project and other member-groups of the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, as well as other allies across the country, worked hard to encourage Congressional support for funding. The groups were eventually able to get more than 40 farm-state lawmakers from both parties in the U.S. House to write to the House Republican leadership urging full funding of CSP for 2004.

The other hurdle faced by CSP is implementation—actually getting the program out there and working well. The program cannot be implemented until rules are issued by the USDA. In fact, the final rule to guide the operation of the CSP was, by law, supposed to be issued by February 2003. However, as of this writing, the USDA has not even released a proposed rule for public comment. In the latest example of foot-dragging by the Administration on CSP, the rules have

been held at the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) since August. By a 1993 executive order, the OMB can only hold the rules for 90 days, or in this case until Nov. 27. At that point, they go back to the USDA, which is

Commenting on the rules

CSP needs to be operated in such a way that it produces the following results:

- ✓ Improved environmental stewardship/conservation on working farmland.
- ✓ Enough money delivered in such a way that it both rewards existing stewardship and provides an incentive for further changes in farming practices toward improved stewardship/sustainable farming.
- ✓ National in scope covering all regions of the country and agricultural crops/products.
- ✓ Strict payment limits are adhered to.

For information on how to contact the USDA about the rules, call or e-mail Mark Schultz at 612-722-6377; marks@landstewardshipproject.org. Watch for CSP updates at www.landstewardshipproject.org.

charged with issuing the proposed rule. Once they are published, the public will have either 45 or 60 days to comment on the makeup of the rules.

“LSP will be commenting on the proposed rules and encourages its members and allies to do so as well,” says Mark Schultz, LSP’s Policy Program Director. “Both farmers and nonfarmers need to comment. The CSP is about

changing the agricultural landscape toward real land stewardship, and it’s about the kind of food system we want. The proper implementation of this program will have a positive effect on our entire society. We’re worried though, that with all the Administration’s delays, insider influence by agribusiness and commodity groups is taking hold and will mean conservation-minded family farmers get left out again while the factory farms and the maximum-production mono-crop operations are given the money.”

EQIP victory

During consideration of the Fiscal Year 2004 agricultural appropriations bill, the U.S. Senate on Nov. 5 approved an amendment offered by Senators Charles Grassley (R-IA) and Byron Dorgan (D-ND) to reduce the per farm Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) payment limitation from \$450,000 to \$300,000, and to apply the limit to all the farming sites that are part of a single operation, regardless of the number of partners investing in the operation.

Since passage of the 2002 farm bill, the EQIP program has used taxpayer funds to subsidize and foster the expansion of large factory farms. The Sustainable Agriculture Coalition and the Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment has worked hard to limit the amount of EQIP funds that can go to factory farms. LSP is an active member of both coalitions.

“This is an important victory for limiting the amount of corporate welfare going to factory farms, and assuring that more producers across the country are actually able to access EQIP funds for real environmental improvements,” says Schultz. “We are urging the House and Senate conferees to accept this amendment in conference committee.” □

Smithfield buys out Farmland Industries’ hogs

Minnesota’s AG Hatch supports ban on packer ownership of livestock

If the world’s largest pork producer and processor is to be prevented from locking up the nation’s hog market, action must be taken on the national level, says Minnesota Attorney General Mike Hatch. He spoke recently at a Land Stewardship Project “Taking on Corporate Meatpackers” meeting in St. Paul, Minn.

This fall, Smithfield announced that it had submitted the winning bid to buy bankrupt Farmland Industries’ pork production and processing business.

With the acquisition, Smithfield, already the world’s largest pork packer and processor, will control 33 percent of U.S. hog slaughter.

Smithfield Food’s takeover of Farmland Industries is just another sign of the need for a federal ban on packer ownership of livestock, according to Hatch. “I support [a packer ban], and want to do what I can to help out,” he told the farmers gathered at the meeting.

Hatch is in discussions with attorneys

general in other states as how to best ensure competitive markets for independent pork producers in the face of Smithfield’s purchase. Of particular concern is Smithfield’s reputation for buying packing plants and then shutting them down, closing open, spot markets for independent family farmers.

“We’ve got to have these spot markets,” said Hatch. “Our capitalist system operates on the spot market. It operates

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on the give and take.”

Jim Joens, an LSP member and southwest Minnesota hog producer, says the unprecedented consolidation that’s taken place in the livestock industry has hurt farmers and consumers.

In 1994, five meatpacker/pork producing corporations were listed by *Successful Farming* as owning 5.2 percent of U.S. sows. In 2002, the magazine listed six meatpacker/pork-producers as owning 21.3 percent of the sows. Meanwhile, the open market price for hogs has dropped 24 percent during the past decade, sending 65 percent of hog farmers out of business. During that same period, the retail pork price increased 35 percent, says the USDA.

Bills have been introduced with bipartisan support in the U.S. House (H.R. 719)

and Senate (S.27) to ban packer ownership of livestock. Thus far, Senator Mark Dayton is the only member of Minnesota’s Congressional Delegation who is co-sponsoring the packer ban. Mark Schultz, Policy Program Director for LSP, says it is key for farmers and others to contact Rep. Gil Gutknecht, Rep. Collin Peterson and Sen. Norm Coleman, and tell them to co-sponsor the packer ban legislation. □



Jim Joens, a southwest Minnesota hog farmer and LSP member, talks about the importance of banning packer ownership of livestock. Looking on are LSP Policy Program Director Mark Schultz and staffers from the Minnesota Attorney General’s office. (LSP photo)

How low will factory farming’s boosters go?

As scientific and economic evidence mounts against large-scale factory farming, proponents of these operations are becoming increasingly desperate in their attempts to discredit any groups or individuals that oppose them. In Minnesota, they’re pulling out all the stops, as the commentary on page 5 outlines. But perhaps the lowest point in the campaign to silence opposition was documented in recent newsletters of two Minnesota organizations: the Southeast Minnesota Ag Alliance and the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association.

The September newsletter of the Ag Alliance carried an article by Trent Loos, a resident of Loup City, Neb. In the article Loos called local control of feedlots “socialism” and a threat to national security. He also claimed the Land Stewardship Project had “formulated a fake press release” using the letterhead of the Ag Alliance and sent it to media outlets. LSP did this “to cast doubt on my credibility,” Loos wrote in his article, which originally appeared on his Web site (www.facesofag.com).

He provided no source for his claim. No wonder—there’s no basis for it. LSP would never use such a tactic and has not written anything about Loos up until now, says George Boody, LSP’s Executive Director.

In addition, Loos claims LSP “filed a nuisance lawsuit for odor” against the proposer of a hog operation in Dodge County. Again, there is no factual basis for this claim.

Loos ended his article by encouraging readers to send harassing e-mails to a rural Dodge County resident who has worked with other local citizens to oppose a mega-dairy being proposed by the New Jersey-based Zaitz Trust. He provided the e-mail address and told readers to write “WEENIE” in the memo line.

Who is Trent Loos? At one time he was a manager with Rosebud Farms, a Bell Farms project that if completed would be one of the largest hog operations in the country, according to *National Hog Farmer*. The operation, which is on the Rosebud Sioux reservation in south-central South Dakota, is currently tied up in litigation. In 2002, Loos pled guilty to misdemeanor cattle fraud in Nebraska, according to the Associated Press. Until recently he was a farm broadcaster for the Missouri-based Brownfield Radio Network, where he came under heavy criticism from farmers for his pro-factory farm bias, according to the Missouri Rural Crisis Center.

On Oct. 6, Loos attended the Ripley Township meeting in Minnesota’s Dodge County (see page 5). Loos’ connections to the Southeast Minnesota Ag Alliance go back to at least April, when he keynoted their annual meeting in Rochester, Minn. The Southeast Minnesota Ag Alliance is a promoter of the Zaitz mega-dairy proposal. One of the Southeast Minnesota Ag Alliance founders, Bill Rowekamp, has partnered with Zaitz. The Alliance is funded by Land O’ Lakes and Ag Star Financial Services.

Also at the Oct. 6 Ripley Township

meeting pushing for the Zaitz/Rowekamp mega-dairy were several officials of the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association (MSGA) and the Minnesota Soybean Research and Promotion Council (the Council is funded by soybean checkoff funds). This fall, “Soy Minute” radio commercials that were identified on-air as being funded by “Minnesota’s soybean farmers” charged that “special interest, anti-livestock activist groups” are driving the livestock industry out of the state. And the Oct. 10 issue of *Minneline*, a newsletter published jointly by the two soybean organizations, specifically attacks LSP: “As many of you know, the Land Stewardship Project has been systematically infiltrating the countryside, spreading misinformation and threatening lawsuits in order to bring a halt to the livestock industry in Minnesota.”

Boody says factory farming’s supporters don’t have the facts or the public support to back up their arguments, so they are using increasingly desperate measures in their attempts to silence opponents.

“Why would groups like the Southeast Ag Alliance ally themselves with someone who uses the kinds of tactics Trent Loos does? The fact is, our members, many of whom raise livestock, live across the state and share their neighbors’ concerns about factory farm development. As our work over the last 21 years shows, LSP believes livestock play a critical role in developing a viable, environmentally sound, family-farm based agriculture in the Midwest.”

make a living. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, every county in west-central Minnesota has a higher percentage of residents living below the federal poverty level than the state average. One county, Stevens, has a poverty rate that is more than double the state average.

And the land itself is becoming impoverished. This region is at the headwaters of the Minnesota River, and intensive row crop production is a major factor in making that waterway one of the biggest single sources of sediment pollution in the Mississippi River basin.

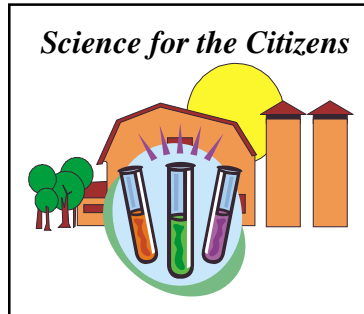
So, if you're a scientist at a land grant experiment station smack dab in the middle of such a region, what do you do? Conduct research on ways of somehow squeezing more homegrown profits out of corn and soybeans? That's certainly the road taken by many other Midwestern experiment stations. The result? More corn and soybeans...and fewer people.

But the West Central Research and Outreach Center is taking a different approach. During the past five years the station has carved out a niche for itself as a research facility that is looking at agriculture beyond the traditional reliance on one or two field crops. By taking sustainable farming techniques seriously, the station—called WCROC for short—has shown that agriculture can do more than produce crops that export wealth, people and soil. It can serve as an integral part of a community's economic, environmental and social fabric. Instead of only examining the impact of one input on one outcome, the station has made a serious commitment to using "interdisciplinary" or "systems" research to investigate problems that have big picture ramifications (see July/August/September 2003 *Land Stewardship Letter*). WCROC has made a name for itself researching alternative swine production, water quality issues related to livestock and the impacts of changes in farm structure on rural society. It has also recently become involved with initiatives related to local food systems and renewable energy options such as wind.

This didn't come about by accident. Committed groups of local citizens have pushed, prodded and promoted the station. It turns out not everyone has abandoned west-central Minnesota, and the people who are left (and who are moving into the area) are convinced of its potential, and of the positive role an experiment station can play in their future. WCROC doesn't offer any silver

bullet solutions for the region's problems. But it does offer a place for concerned citizens and scientists to meet and hash out ideas for helping the region.

"We're going to make changes and we're not going to rely on someone from the outside to come in with a fix," says lifelong resident Mary Ann Scharf. "We're not going to allow ourselves to be written off."



Regional Partnership

A lot of the increased community involvement in what's going on at WCROC can be traced back to the mid-1990s, when citizens from across the state were expressing strong concerns the University of Minnesota was not fulfilling its land grant mission of serving the public. As rural areas like west-central Minnesota were losing vitality at an alarming rate, it was felt institutions such as the state's six experiment stations were doing research that was scientifically valuable on a regional or even national scale, but were often not serving the interests of local residents and the landscapes they reside in. And even when the research did reflect local conditions, it often promoted production of more of the same—corn and soybeans—despite growing evidence that a reliance on this two-crop system is rife with environmental, economic and social problems.

Don Wyse, who was at the time Executive Director of the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture, and Carmen Fernholz, a west-central Minnesota farmer long involved with land grant issues, promoted the idea of regional "partnerships" that would connect university institutions around the state with local residents. The Minnesota Legislature finally funded the first of these partnerships in 1997.

By 1999, five Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships had been created around the state. The West Central Partnership consists of a 13-member board made up of a diverse cross-section of local residents: farmers,

business owners, a retired University of Minnesota-Morris professor, educators and elected officials, for example. This has created an impressive group of people committed to not allowing the university to forget its public mission.

"Sometimes we are a pain in the butt because we are so citizen-driven," says Executive Director Dorothy Rosemeier. "This to me is our last chance to have a say in the land grant system."

The Partnership's role is not only to build a relationship between WCROC and the community, but also between the University of Minnesota-Morris (UMM) and the Extension Service. That's no small task. Historically, UMM had suffered from the "town and gown" syndrome, and was seen as an institution that did not reach out to the local community, or even to other public institutions. Scharf, a former extension educator, says that isolation meant sometimes institutions competed for public monies. But in the mid-1990s the various University entities in the area started working together more when approaching regents and the legislature. Called unofficially "The Morris Four"—WCROC, UMM, Extension and Continuing Education—they could be an imposing force. "We said we represent the U of M in the west-central area," recalls Scharf. "We would get a regent or a vice president from the university out here and sit them down at a table at UMM to eat with seven people from the community."

And about five years ago, UMM increased its interaction with the surrounding community, thanks to efforts of administrators like Sandy Olson-Loy. Olson-Loy, who grew up on a farm in central Minnesota, says she was surprised when she first came to the liberal arts college and found that it seemed to have little connection to the surrounding rural area. As the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, she has worked to forge closer ties to the community in general, including the development of a Regional Fitness Center, which is often cited as a model for partnering between a campus and a community. UMM is also working to get students involved in the community through service learning internships.

"Part of the educational experience here should be that students understand the value of a farm and where their food comes from," says Olson-Loy, who recently joined the Land Stewardship Project's Board of Directors.

The Regional Partnership has been a

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natural outgrowth of the team approach. One of its main functions is to help guide research projects for the region through the use of seed money.

“When we provide seed money for projects, we always have board members who are involved with the projects, so it’s a true partnership and we’re just not seen as a source of funding,” says Rosemeier.

The seed money helps prime the pump, attracting foundation grants, as well as helping develop ties between various projects to make them more effective and cost-efficient. The Partnership funded an initiative of the Alternative Swine Task Force to bring farmers together to discuss pork production alternatives. It also helped develop the Minnesota Children’s Garden at WCROC and the Pride of the Prairie local foods initiative. The Partnership is involved in creating water quality study circles consisting of lakeshore owners and local livestock producers. Most recently, seed money for a renewable energy project in the region was provided by the Partnership. Plans for that project call for the “Renewable Energy Center” to be a research and demonstration complex housed at WCROC.

Citizen Advisory Committee

Another public pain in the behind is the station’s Citizen Advisory Committee. This is a group of 12-15 regional residents that meets officially twice a year to discuss the direction of research at the station. WCROC personnel take part in the meetings, which can include some spirited debate refereed by the station head, Greg Cuomo. Livestock farmer Mary Jo Forbord served on the committee from 1994 to 2000, and was its chair at one time. She’s served on other citizen advisory committees, and has been underwhelmed by their effectiveness. Too often they are a “rubber stamp” for the institution they are advising—a kind of whitewash showing that some decision or agenda has a “citizens’ seal of approval.” But Forbord says this committee is the real deal. She credits current station personnel such as Cuomo for taking seriously the committee’s suggestions.

Cuomo says the Citizen Advisory Committee provides a nice addition to the ongoing interaction the station tries to have in the community through meetings, events and chance encounters. It also provides a way for the station to strike that difficult balance of serving local needs while fulfilling its mission of

providing research relevant to the entire Minnesota land grant system.

Forbord also recognizes Cuomo’s predecessor, Gary Lemme, for taking the concept of citizen participation in the station’s agenda seriously. Lemme, who was the Station Head from 1992 to 1999, says a good citizen advisory committee is the “conscience” of a station. WCROC’s Citizen Advisory Committee has done a good job of bringing in fresh ideas and keeping the group diverse, with farmers, business owners, processors, consumers, nonprofit personnel and county officials involved. In the 1990s, the committee became even more diverse when LSP organizer Audrey Arner, who is also a farmer, and Forbord joined and brought sustainable agriculture to the table.

“It was one of the few places in the area where there were discussions about sustainable farming,” says Forbord, who earlier this year began work as Executive Director of the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota.

The committee has taken on some prickly issues, such as if the station’s swine research should add a sustainable component, and whether a sociologist was a right fit at WCROC (see sidebar on page 15). The group also discussed the need for more research, and research personnel, that reflect the needs of women in rural areas.

“That never really was settled satisfactorily,” says Forbord.

But perhaps one of the biggest issues the advisory committee has tackled, and the one that’s having immediate implications, is the issue of on-farm research versus science done exclusively at the station. Farmers like Forbord have long argued that more land grant research needs to take place on actual farms, where the real world is, in order for it to be applicable to the farmers.

“It comes down to who are you doing this research for—a scientist or for a farmer who wants to apply it?”

Scientists, on the other hand, often argue they can’t control variables on a farm and need the closed environment of a station or laboratory to get scientifically viable results. WCROC is still struggling with this issue, but some of its research now reflects a serious attempt to combine on-farm studies with station science.

Forbord says a highlight for her was when she served on a search committee for a station economist: “Having a full say in the search for personnel can be empowering.” The station ended up hiring Margot Rudstrom, who has been doing research on, among other things, the viability of raising dairy replacement

heifers on pasture rather than in a feedlot (see sidebar on page 14). It’s very satisfying to Forbord that Rudstrom’s research took place on actual farms in the region.

“That’s ground-breaking research,” says the farmer. “That’s something I’d like to see more of.”

Public good—public support

The excitement such research generates within the community is palpable, but hanging over the station like a dark cloud are a number of challenges. A rapidly shifting demographic that along with becoming more sparse is less farm-oriented is one. But the biggest short-term problem is funding. That became crystal clear at WCROC earlier this year when it was forced to terminate its sheep research program, letting go respected animal scientist Bill Head in the process.

Funding for all experiment stations, whether they push the envelope or not, is tight. Carving out a niche for oneself as an experiment station that investigates alternatives to the conventional agricultural system poses particular problems when it comes to funding. Some argue that as the public pocketbook shrinks, private funding of land grant research will fill the gap. Indeed, funding from corporations and commodity groups such as the National Pork Producers Council and National Corn Growers Association has become a larger presence at experiment stations and land grant campuses in recent years. The term “public/private partnership” is much bandied about at such institutions as administrators and researchers scramble for the cash needed to do test plots, feed trials and laboratory experiments. Any research related to biotechnology is particularly expensive.

Nationally, around 17 percent of land grant research is funded by private industry and commodity groups, according to an analysis done by University of Wisconsin researchers in the 1990s. That figure can vary dramatically by institution and discipline. For example, in 1998 roughly 29 percent of the research being done at the University of Minnesota’s agriculture college was funded by private industry and commodity groups, according to Michael Martin, who was then Dean of the college.

Concerns have been raised by farmers and the general public that this private money has too many strings attached—that it buys influence over research results and basically funds the

development of products that corporations can market to farmers.

Cuomo, the WCROC Station Head, says private money does not “buy” research results. Public researchers want to do good science first, no matter who is footing the bill, and he says he’s never heard of a researcher changing results to please a private funder. West-central Minnesota farmer Jim VanDerPol says it’s not so much how the research is influenced by private money, but how that money drives what research is done in the first place.

“The question is really about what is being asked and how it’s being asked,” says the farmer, who has served as a WCROC consultant on swine research.

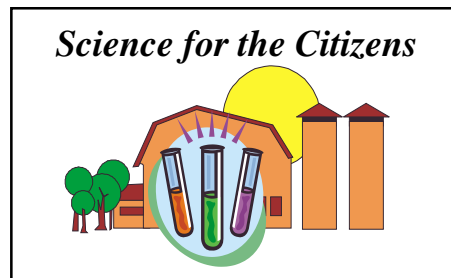
Private companies and commodity groups are interested in questions about how to, for example, make a certain corn hybrid produce more bushels per acre. This kind of research will produce a “product” such as an improved seed that may eventually be commercially viable. That will benefit the companies who market the seed, and perhaps even the farmers who raise that particular commodity. But research that has implications for society at large is probably not going to produce a marketable product, and thus is not attractive to private funders.

Former Station Head Lemme says in seeking out funding for systems research, administrators and researchers need to get creative when writing grants to private foundations and the federal government. Instead of writing a grant for simply doing “pasture improvement research” for example, the scientist could step back and describe how the study will look at the role perennial plant systems play in protecting water quality. That may broaden the appeal of the research while fitting into the systems approach the researchers want to take. In fact, WCROC has been doing research on how much nitrogen pollution leaves an outdoor dairy herd wintering area. It has major implications for water quality, but the research is also producing information of value to farmers who want to improve herd health and keep costs down.

Systems research can also broaden its funding appeal by producing applications that benefit conventional agriculture. University of Minnesota scientists recently found that conventional soybeans grown in a four-year rotation yielded 3 to 6 percent more than their counterparts grown in a two-year rotation. Such research may be labeled

“sustainable” because it involves a diverse cropping system. But it has implications for “conventional” producers as well. And research on how grazing can reduce input costs could help any farmer, not just organic milk producers.

Cuomo and other station staff are also exploring ways of making WCROC more self-sustaining financially. Its horticulture gardens, for example, are the facility’s most popular attraction. How can that be parlayed into a venture that generates



income? Will research in renewable energy and sustainable livestock generate products that can be marketed?

In the end, it all goes back to the community, says Forbord. She’s convinced that the station can use its community ties and willingness to respond to local needs as funding strengths. Stations that don’t respond to area residents are going to find themselves doing little research that’s applicable to the local landscape. Ultimately,

that means no local constituents. And no constituents means no one around to demand more funding from the state or federal government.

But even the infrastructure for making citizens’ voices heard on land grant research issues is being undermined by budget cuts. Earlier this year, Rosemeier moved the West Central Regional Sustainable Development Partnership’s office off the WCROC grounds and into her home because the Partnership couldn’t afford the rent.

On the bright side, the station has seen what can happen when a constituency speaks up for it. Last spring the Minnesota Legislature gave WCROC \$70,000 to finish remodeling a swine confinement barn into a deep-straw sustainable facility. That funding was the culmination of lobbying efforts on the part of hog farmers, citizens concerned about the environment and nonprofits like LSP.

Farmers want the research because it could help them raise hogs for lucrative natural pork markets without investing huge sums of money—allowing them to stay independent. Environmentalists like that deep-straw production doesn’t rely on liquid manure systems and creates a demand for soil-saving small grains—thus adding diversity to the landscape. In short, such a facility is a public good.

“If the research is going to benefit the community,” says VanDerPol, “then the community is going to have to find a way to pay for it.” □

Pastures—1

Once in awhile, a study dismantles the conventional wisdom that there’s nothing wrong with farm country that a few more bushels of corn or soybeans to the acre can’t fix. What if the study instead asks something like, “Is raising row crops on this land a good idea in the first place?”

For example, a three-year on-farm study conducted by West Central Research and Outreach Center economist Margot Rudstrom found that raising dairy replacement heifers on a well-managed pasture cost on average 93 cents per head, per day from 2000 to 2002. The three-year average for raising heifers in a feedlot was \$1.32 per head, per day during the same period. On average, pasturing the heifers beat feedlotting them by 39 cents per head, per day. The bottom line? Raising dairy heifers on pasture produced an average net return of \$121.67 per acre over the three-year period.

Now, one advantage of feedlotting cattle is that it concentrates several animals into a small area, saving for other uses land that would normally be needed to grow grass. In west-central Minnesota, historical land use statistics show that “saved” land is likely to be used to plant corn and soybeans. But consider this: the average per acre return on soybeans in west-central Minnesota from 2000 to 2002 was \$30.14. But soybeans were a cash cow compared to corn during that same period: for every acre farmers planted to corn, they *lost* \$14.79.

For more information on Rudstrom’s research, call WCROC at 320-589-1711, or log onto <http://wcroc.coafes.umn.edu>. Rudstrom is also participating in a multi-state analysis of the financial performance of dairy grazing operations. For the latest results on that ongoing study, contact the University of Wisconsin Center for Dairy Profitability at 608-263-2685 or <http://cdp.wisc.edu>.

Row Crops—0

Rough sailing for 'people science'

WCROC's attempt to integrate sociology into research hits a snag

When the West Central Research and Outreach Center (WCROC) began discussing the idea of adding a rural sociologist to its research staff, it made for an interesting meeting of the Citizen Advisory Committee. Both local citizens and WCROC staff took part in the debate.

"I think the sociology position must have turned over the ocean bottom," says Mary Jo Forbord, a farmer and former committee chair. "That seemed to be as far afield as anyone was willing to go."

In fact, it may have been too far afield for some. Wynne Wright was hired as the sociologist in 1999. Gary Lemme, who was Station Head at the time, was excited about the idea of interdisciplinary research—a concept that melds together a team of researchers representing various areas of science—and felt a sociologist could be an integral part in such an approach. Lemme had also been hearing from local residents that there needed to be research related to the impacts of agricultural systems on families.

"Agriculture is a people business," says Lemme, a soil scientist who is now the Associate Director of the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station. "You have the biological response, the economic response, the environmental response, and now the sociological response. I think it's a natural next step."

A clash of cultures

Wright, who had studied how changes in production systems affected tobacco farmers back in her native Kentucky, liked the idea of working at a research center that was located in a rural area. But she left WCROC after two years, nine months before the initial funding for her position was to run out. Wright could have waited to see if more funding was forthcoming, but a more permanent position became available at the University of Northern Iowa, so she took it. The decision was made easier by Wright's frustration with her inability to make social science a respected part of the station's research agenda. Wright knows of only one other experiment station in the country that has a social scientist on staff, and she says now she knows why.

The highly specialized focus of most natural sciences makes it difficult for researchers to look beyond what impact input X has on output Y. Sociology, by definition, looks at how the results of science affect people and the community.

"The focus of a natural scientist at an ag experiment station is productivity," says Wright. "The focus of a sociologist is the consequences of all of our actions in society, including increasing productivity. My work was really secondary to the primary function of the station, which was to increase productivity."

Station Head Greg Cuomo, who is a forage agronomist by training, acknowledges there is a culture clash between sociologists and natural scientists. "They're dealing with biology, and sociologists are dealing with people." But having a sociologist on staff fits well with the station's overall goal of doing big picture research, and losing Wright leaves a "hole" in those efforts, says Cuomo.

Dennis Johnson is a WCROC dairy scientist who has developed an interdisciplinary team to look at low-cost entries into dairy farming such as grazing. The team consists of him, a forage agronomist, an economist and a soil scientist.

• • •

"I think the sociology position must have turned over the ocean bottom."

—farmer Mary Jo Forbord

• • •

Johnson says not having a sociologist on the team makes it "certainly not as rich as it could be." A study of the societal impacts of farming systems is a natural outgrowth of interdisciplinary research, which tries to gauge the impact of farming holistically, he says.

"If this systems approach works out the way it should, diversity is a blessing, not a curse."

Jim VanDerPol, an area farmer who has served as a consultant to WCROC, says the inability of a sociologist to fit in the experiment station environment can be blamed on a system-wide approach to agricultural research. "It was nothing unique about Morris—it's the university system itself. They look at what seed to plant in this soil, but never, ever consider how many farmers we need in a county."

Wright says she made it clear that she wanted to, for example, study the impacts of large-scale hog production on farmers. This is in sharp contrast to what some natural scientists see as sociology's role. Rather than look at impacts, why not help researchers figure out how to break down resistance to such farming techniques?

Measuring impacts

But Wright did look at impacts, conducting research on the effects of industrialized hog farming on families in rural Minnesota. She interviewed 50 Minnesota farm women involved in hog production, asking questions related to their labor on hog farms, decision making, civic participation and self-identity. Wright found that although vertical integration was supposed to provide economic stability for hog farmers, in fact the opposite has been true. Wright was alarmed to find that the women were experiencing a great deal of "depression and pessimism" about the economic and social changes taking place in their communities. Hard economic times are not new in farm country, but Wright says the amount of stress these women felt over the change in the rural "lifestyle" was troubling. Part of that pessimism was due to the uncertain market climate, but also farm women are often on the frontline of controversies related to the establishment and expansion of large-scale hog facilities. That tension was taking its toll as the women noted "changes in the neighborliness of rural communities."

A system-wide problem

Wright feels good about the work she was able to do at WCROC, but says she feels badly that she and her colleagues were not able to craft a true interdisciplinary team. She agrees with VanDerPol that the entire land grant system's focus on specialization and production agriculture research makes it difficult for sociological research to be taken seriously at an experiment station. Change has to occur all the way back to the graduate and undergraduate level of education before true systems research takes hold. But she's concerned that as more private funding drives research agendas at public institutions, there will be even more of a focus on producing a product, and even less attention paid to the impacts of that product.

Cuomo, for his part, says he hopes the station's rocky foray into sociological research will be a learning experience. "Any time you are breaking new ground it's going to be tough, and hopefully we'll get better each time we do it. We hope it can be picked up again."

But the University of Minnesota's budget has been shrinking ever since Wright left. It's difficult to know when, if ever, money will be available for a new sociologist. □

Coffee, beans & rice...& social justice

How does a neighborhood café dedicated to justice serve affordable food?

By Dana Jackson

‘**M**ay I help you? Jeannie Inglehart asks a customer who has looked at the menu on the white board above the counter, perused the case filled with freshly baked scones, muffins and cookies, and wandered over to the coffee display near the cash register.

“I’d just like a cup of coffee,” he says. Jeannie grins, twinkles her lake-blue eyes and replies, “How would you like a *just* cup of coffee?”

Chef Jeannie Inglehart’s Café of the Americas serves only certified, fair trade organic coffee, which pays the growers in Central America a much better price than the world’s giant coffee companies. Customers can choose between Peace Coffee and Cloud Forest Coffee, both of which come through a nonprofit organization in Chiapas, Mexico.

This establishment is more than a café. As a program of the nonprofit organization Resource Center of the Americas, the Café’s mission is to provide nutritious, moderately priced food from throughout the Americas and provide financial support to the social justice work of the Resource Center. The Resource Center informs, educates and organizes to promote human rights, democratic participation, economic justice and cross-cultural understanding in the context of globalization in the Americas. Most Café employees speak Spanish and are attracted to working there because of their affinity with the work of the Resource Center.

Inglehart, a Land Stewardship Project member, serves up this social justice mission with rice and beans at the Café of the Americas. The Café provides an entryway for people to get acquainted with the Resource Center of the Americas in the building at 3019 Minnehaha Avenue in South Minneapolis, as do its two other mission-related businesses, a bookstore and an educational program. The Center charges fees for several levels of Spanish classes and for social justice workshops, such as “Working With Immigrants: Rights, Responsibilities and Risks,” and “Latinos in Minnesota: Developing Cultural Understanding.”

Food with a Latin accent is available at the Café from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. six days a week to customers from the surrounding neighborhood, instructors and students attending classes and workshops, and a loyal clientele from other parts of the city who gravitate to this cozy, hospitable place.



Jeannie Inglehart features Fair Trade Coffee. (LSP photo)

The core menu consists of the basics: rice and beans, tamales and burritos. In addition, the Café offers a choice of meat-based or vegetarian soup as well as 12 assorted sandwiches made with homemade bread (baked fresh every day and served with tortilla chips).

Salads on the menu are more diverse in summer as fresh, local produce becomes plentiful. The most expensive item is Oaxaqueno chicken, a spicy chicken tamale cooked in a banana leaf that costs \$7.50.

The Resource Center hopes to offer cooking classes of ethnic Latin food, which Jeannie sees as another way to bring people in and educate them.

One day recently when I stopped by the Café for a cup of coffee, she was preparing to serve rice and beans to 500 people that evening in Powderhorn Park. The Café was catering the meal for a rally to send off two busloads of people to Washington, D.C., to demonstrate for Immigrant Freedom Rights.

Catering is a major part of the Café’s business. The catering menu is basically the same as that served in the Café, with a few special things added. Jeannie and her staff cater food for special meetings held in the classrooms at the Resource Center and recently prepared the dinner for a conference celebrating the Resource Center’s 20th anniversary. The Café of the Americas was a major presence at the Living Green Fair last spring at the Minnesota State Fair Grounds, serving nutritious rice and beans, tortillas and salsa.

Jeannie wants the Café to be more of a major presence.

“I want to do more education around fair trade issues and ethnic food of the Americas in the Café—visual education with posters. I also want to grow the business so more people will know about the Resource Center.”

The challenges

Knowing Jeannie’s dedication to social justice, and her evangelizing on behalf of certified, fair-trade coffee, I was curious how this carried over into her purchases of food for the menu. What I learned is that Jeannie, like most of us dedicated to buying food produced and processed in environmentally sound and socially just ways, must make compromises.

Keeping the prices affordable so the Café can attract customers and earn money for the Center is Jeannie’s challenge. The business is small, seating only 30 at a time, so orders to food

Café, see page 17...

distributors are not large enough to bargain for price breaks. And the biggest cost factor is labor, not the price of food. For example, Jeannie buys sliced processed cheese for sandwiches, because first, that is what customers expect on sandwiches, and second, because her employees don't have time to cut cheese for sandwiches. She sadly decided not to continue buying fresh tortillas from the local tortilla factory because it moved and it would take 20 minutes to drive to the new location to get the three dozen the restaurant would use each day.

In March, LSP sponsored a dialogue between farmers and chefs (see April/May/June 2003 *Land Stewardship Letter*, page 12). Our goal was to bring Minnesota growers and direct marketers of produce, meats and dairy together with chefs interested in buying fresh, locally produced food. All of these chefs need to watch costs and source food efficiently to keep labor costs down, but they also prefer fresh local vegetables and meat from animals raised without growth hormones and antibiotics in their feed. These chefs must make compromises too, choosing for example to serve a good quality butter, but not the significantly more delicious, bright yellow Pastureland

butter (from cows raised on grass), which is more expensive.

The advantage that most of these chefs have over Chef Jeannie is the capacity to charge the customer more. The regular clientele expect to pay higher prices to dine at these "upscale" restaurants. They can afford to pay more for the higher quality ingredients and the time it takes the chefs to prepare the creations set before them. Jeannie knows about this world too, having cooked in a couple premier restaurants before she became the chef at the Café of the Americas in 1996.

Serving up social justice in the Americas with the rice and beans and coffee is not easy. On the one hand, Jeannie's choices help those Central America coffee farmers rise above the poverty prices paid them by international coffee traders. On the other hand, her financial limitations prevent her from buying from local Minnesota chicken producers. She gets the small amount of chicken breasts the Café needs from the Sysco International truck, because she has to stretch to reach the minimal order of 15 cases. That order brings sliced cheese and everything canned and frozen. Another problem is very limited freezer space, a common difficulty that restaurants have. And direct marketers of chicken must generally sell whole

chickens because they aren't raising the quantity that allow them to market chicken breasts separately and still find uses and markets for the rest of the chicken.

Jeannie's other suppliers include El Burrito, a foods supplier with specialty foods and Mexican soda, and Roots and Fruits, where she gets organic bananas. Asked why she insists on organic bananas, Jeannie replies, "On the banana coast in Nicaragua, the highest rate of DDT in mothers' milk is found in banana workers."

Jeannie recognizes her trade-offs; she is aware of the dilemma American farmers find themselves in. After all, she is an LSP member.

"If farmers don't get paid enough, they make choices out of necessity, like using lots of fertilizer and pesticides to increase the quantity they produce," says the chef. "I'm concerned about how we can take care of the farmer in this country, so the farmer can take care of the land." □

Dana Jackson is LSP's Associate Director. More information about the Café of the Americas and the Resource Center of the Americas is at www.americas.org.

Food & Farm → → → Connection—Resources

Western Minnesota local foods guide

The second edition of the *Pride of the Prairie's There's No Taste Like Home: Local Foods Guide for the Upper Minnesota River Valley* is now available. This year's listing includes 94 farms in the region that produce food for direct marketing to consumers.

For a free copy, contact the Land Stewardship Project's western Minnesota office at 320-269-2105 or lsptest@landstewardshipproject.org.

Organic food cyber course

"Certified Organic Food: What Is It? Who Grows It?" is the name of a new on-line course authored and instructed by Tim King. King is a farmer, former Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture board member, co-founder of the Whole Farm Cooperative and past program manager for the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota.

The course, which is hosted at Suite101.com's Suite University, has four chapters. The chapters walk students

through a history of organic certification, take them on organic farm tours, introduce them to small and large organic processors, and review some of the research regarding organic food's nutrition and taste. Along the way students can participate in discussions about the integrity of the organic certification system and who is responsible for maintaining that integrity.

The "quick course" costs \$9.95 and the "interactive course" fee is \$19.95.

The link for a free look at the course overview, introduction and curriculum can be found at: www.suite101.com/course.cfm/18004/overview/229462.

Add this to your shopping cart

The Land Stewardship Project has developed a handy brochure on how consumers can support local farmers who are using sustainable methods to produce food. It contains information on certification labels such as the Midwest Food Alliance (MWFA), resources for buying direct and tips on other ways to support a local food system. This brief fact sheet is perfect for

local foods dinners, farmers' markets and other similar venues. For information on obtaining free copies of the "Buy Local" brochure, contact Cathy Eberhart at 651-653-0618 or cathye@landstewardshipproject.org.

SE Food Network looking for farmers

The Southeast Minnesota Food Network is seeking producers to supply a little or a lot of the good food the region is demanding. The Network is in its third year and currently markets the produce, meats, and dairy products of 46 farmers in an eight-county region. It offers mentoring opportunities and occasional workshops as it strives to combine sustainable production with a sustained rural community. It accepts producers according to criteria that emphasize limited chemical input, open-air livestock handling, and other sustainable methods.

Restaurants, stores, and institutions can also contact the Network about sourcing locally-produced food.

For information, contact Pam Benike, 507-932-3996; Lisa Klein, 507-876-2304; or Sandy Dietz, 507-932-5225.

Sodexo USA Partners with MWFA

Sodexo USA, a major provider of food and facilities management services, is featuring foods from farms endorsed by Food Alliance, a leading certifier of environmentally friendly and socially responsible agricultural practices. Sodexo has begun to offer Midwest Food Alliance (MWFA) certified foods on its menus in select venues at college and university campuses in Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin and North Dakota.

Over 65 farms and ranches growing more than 100 different products have been certified under the MWFA's label program. Obtaining certification means meeting a rigorous set of criteria for pesticide reduction and elimination; soil and water conservation; wildlife habitat preservation; safe and fair working conditions; and healthy and humane care of livestock. MWFA is a collaboration of the Land Stewardship Project and Cooperative Development Services.

The college campuses featuring Midwest Food Alliance certified products include: Augsburg College, Minneapolis; College of St. Catherine, St. Paul; Concordia University, St. Paul; Bethel College and Seminary, St. Paul; Minnesota State University-Moorhead; University of Minnesota-Morris; Carleton College, Northfield; Waldorf College, Forest City, Iowa; University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire; Mayville State University, Mayville, N. Dak.; and Valley City State University, Valley City, N. Dak. Students can expect to see certified products such as peppers, green beans, sweet corn, squash, apples, apple cider, and potatoes while in season on their menus, and dairy products and apple cider in campus food stores.

"This partnership is a natural for us," says Don Kulick, Sodexo USA District Manager. "Working with Midwest Food Alliance allows us to fulfill our commitment to improving human health and the environment, and promoting sustainable development at all levels of our own organization and the communities we serve."

"We are thrilled to be working with Sodexo in this region," says MWFA Program Director Jim Ennis. "As a major player in the food industry, Sodexo is showing



real leadership and sending a strong message—that the sustainable marketplace is real and that visionary companies will work to meet market demand for food produced in an environmentally friendly and socially responsible manner."

MWFA now has 47 retail partners and is working with food services in 10 colleges and universities. Five distributors have partnered with MWFA. More information on MWFA is available at www.landstewardshipproject.org by linking through the Food & Farm Connection section. Information is also available at www.foodalliance.org/midwest.html or by calling 651-265-3682. □

Demand for local food may increase

U.S. consumer demand for locally grown food may go up due to concerns about food safety and agroterrorism, says a University of Georgia economist.

Luanne Lohr has examined growth and change in U.S. organic food markets in the north central region of the U.S. She found that consumers choose locally grown food for product freshness and to help support local small farmers. "People feel safer buying local food, especially meat and dairy products," says Lohr.

Consumers are also more willing to pay a higher premium for "locally grown" than "organic," according to Lohr's analysis. Sales of organic food products have increased rapidly in recent years, but there's some evidence that growth is slowing, she says.

The economist did her analysis, "Growth and Change in U.S. Organic Food Markets" last year while she held an Endowed Chair in Agricultural Systems at the University of Minnesota. The Endowed Chair is managed by the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA). Details Lohr used for the analysis are in a chapter she wrote for a USDA report called *Factors Affecting International Demand and Trade in Organic Food Products*. The chapter can be viewed at www.ers.usda.gov/publications/wrs011. □



Midwest Food Alliance volunteer Kindi Harala talks to a shopper about MWFA-approved apples at a Kowalski's Market in Minneapolis in October. In-store demonstrations by MWFA volunteers have proven to be a very effective way of educating consumers about local, sustainably-produced foods. This fall, 70 demonstrations were held. Besides Kowalski's, Coborn's and Cash Wise stores hosted these events. (LSP photo)

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 and click on **Food & Farm Connection**.

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

Twin Cities Metro

☐ Auriga Restaurant

Melinda Van Eeckhout
1934 Hennepin Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55403
Phone: 612-872-0777
E-mail: melinda@scatterbright.com
→ Products: *Restaurant that promotes locally produced food*

☐ Heartland Restaurant

Lenny Russo
1806 St. Clair Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55105
Phone: 651-699-3536
→ Products: *Restaurant that promotes locally produced food*

☐ Hog's Back CSA Farm

David Van Eeckhout
680 Hyacinth Avenue East
St. Paul, MN 55106
Phone: 651-238-9645
E-mail: vanee@bitstream.net
→ Products: *Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) produce operation*

☐ Sapor Cafe and Bar

Tanya Siebenaler
428 Washington Avenue North
Minneapolis, MN 55401

Phone: 612-375-1971

→ Products: *Restaurant that promotes locally produced food*

☐ Trotters Cafe

Pat and Dick Trotter
232 North Cleveland Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55104
Phone: 651-645-8950
Web site: www.trotters-stpaul.com
→ Products: *Restaurant that promotes locally produced food*

☐ W.A. Frost

Russell Klein
374 Selby Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55102
Phone: 651-224-5715
E-mail: wafrost@wafrost.com
Web site: www.wafrost.com
→ Products: *Restaurant that promotes locally produced food*

Southwest Minn.

☐ Dry Weather Creek Farm

Mark & Wendy Lange
8095 40th Street NW
Milan, MN 56262
Phone: 320-269-9617
E-mail: dwcreek@fedteldirect.net
→ Products: *Goat meat, stone ground whole wheat flour*

Opportunities



Resources

Vendor seeking farmer(s)

If you've considered selling your crop at the Minneapolis Farmer's Market, but haven't been able to make it happen yet, this may be an opportunity for you. Dave Kemnitz, who has a booth at the market, would like to team up with farmers who have products to sell. "You grow it, I'll sell it," says Kemnitz. He can be contacted at 763-529-5081. ☐

Organic deadline Dec. 12

The deadline to apply for grants from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Organic Demonstration Program is Dec. 12. The program provides up to \$5,000 for individuals who want to conduct organic demonstration projects on their Minnesota farms. To get a flavor of what research projects have been funded in the past, check out the *Greenbook* at www.mda.state.mn.us/esap/Greenbook.html.

For more information, contact Meg Moynihan at 651-297-8916 or Meg.Moynihan@state.mn.us. Information is also available at www.mda.state.mn.us/esap/organic. ☐

LSP seeking submissions for new Stewardship Art Gallery

In 2004, the Land Stewardship Project will be opening an on-line art gallery at www.landstewardshipproject.org. This will provide a showcase for images that reflect efforts to foster and support stewardship of our food and farm system. We are asking our members to submit photos, illustrations or paintings for this Stewardship Gallery. The theme of our first gallery "show" will be "The Farm as Natural Habitat." The deadline for these first entries is March 1. Do you have art or photos that fit that theme? We'd love to see them. An LSP panel will select some of the

entries for display in our gallery.

The entries should:

→ Reflect human interaction with land and farms. The art or photos do not have to include people in them, but we are not interested in wilderness scenes.

→ For photos, candid shots work well, black and white or color are fine.

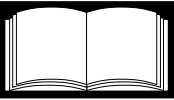
Entry guidelines

→ 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.

Send entries by March 1 to:

Brian DeVore, bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org. If you have questions, you can e-mail DeVore or call him at 612-729-6294. ☐



Fateful Harvest

The True Story of a Small Town, a Global Industry, and a Toxic Secret

By Duff Wilson

2001; 322 pages; \$26 (hardcover)

HarperCollins Publishers

10 East 53rd St.

New York, NY 10022

www.harpercollins.com

Reviewed by Brian DeVore

When a book is written about how innocent people are being wronged, it usually falls under one of two categories: 1) a kind of feel-good testimonial about what happens when the truth is exposed and the right thing is finally done; or 2) the first shot in a long battle.

Fateful Harvest: The True Story of a Small Town, a Global Industry, and a Toxic Secret is the latter. This book is part investigative report, part human-interest story about how a group of citizens in the small farm town of Quincy, Wash., learned that the fertilizer being spread on surrounding fields was full of cast-off toxins, and how that initial revelation unmasked a worldwide industry. The author, Duff Wilson, sees the “toxic wastes in fertilizer” issue as being at the same place the tobacco controversy was a decade ago: the industry is in denial, while the public is getting an inkling that something is awry. “Actually we hope this book is the beginning of the story,” Wilson said recently at a Minnesota book reading.

And Wilson, an investigative reporter for the *Seattle Times*, provides a thorough, entertaining, and at times infuriating introduction to this story. He explains clearly and concisely how it became common practice to “recycle” toxic industrial wastes such as arsenic, cadmium, lead and dioxins by putting them in fertilizers—the same fertilizers used to grow the foods we put on our supper tables. This is a standard practice that is endorsed by state and federal environmental regulators. Many involved in placing toxins in fertilizer see this as a way to recycle waste while helping agribusiness. But at times even these “recyclers” seem amazed at what they’re getting away with.

“When it comes into our [recycling] silo, it’s a hazardous waste. When it comes out of the silo, it’s no longer regulated. The exact same material. Don’t ask me why. That’s the wisdom of the EPA,” one waste “recycler” told Wilson.

And because it’s no longer regulated, it can be applied to soil, where plants are free to take it up through the roots. This is taking place across the country. In Oklahoma, for example, Wilson found a uranium processing plant was getting rid of low-level radioactive waste by spraying it over 9,000 acres of company-owned grazing land. Stories like that make a public health official’s skin crawl. Many of the toxins being placed in fertilizer are the kind that can cause major, long-term health problems when consumed even in low-level doses, particularly by children.

Sometimes the toxic fertilizer helps the plants grow, and no one is the wiser. At other times, it shows its toxic colors and causes a crop failure that can’t be explained by weather, poor management or bad luck. In fact, it was a crop failure that first turned Wilson onto this story.

And this brings up the other important part of the book: the concerned citizens. Wilson knows that he would have never gotten wind of this story if it weren’t for Patty Martin and a handful of farmers from the Quincy area, and the journalist gives them due credit in his book. It all started when the Quincy branch of Cenex/Land O’Lakes decided that instead of spending the money to dispose of “what-all,” a term for chemical residue that had accumulated in the company’s waste pond, it would spread it on a farmer’s field. The corn crop failed. Then other crops in the area that had received the fertilizer started looking sick. Horses that had been fed hay fertilized with the “what-all” started dying and miscarrying. Eventually, Cenex paid a minor fine for the incident.

Martin wasn’t satisfied that this was an isolated incident executed by a few individuals who were skirting the law. She collected evidence that toxic industrial wastes in fertilizer was a common, legal practice, and that it had potential environmental and human health impacts.

Martin’s campaign led her to join forces with local farmers who felt their land had been damaged by toxin-laced fertilizers. These farmers, in turn, became activists themselves. Wilson describes the fateful day when crop and livestock farmer Tom Witte taped a tin can to a pole and dipped it into a fertilizer storage tank that Cenex had left on his farm.

Laboratory tests showed the tin-can sample contained high levels of arsenic and lead. Later tests revealed that these and other toxins were accumulating in area peas, beans, hay and potatoes.

“The circle closed: from waste to fertilizer to food,” writes Wilson.

Martin went on to found a group called Safe Food and Fertilizer (www.safefoodandfertilizer.com), and she and others have taken the battle for better regulation of toxic wastes in fertilizers all the way to Washington, D.C.

Such activism takes a toll, particularly in a small town. Martin and the farmers have become pariahs in the community, which is dominated by large agribusiness. Martin, who had been elected mayor of the town at one point, was later voted out of office. At the Quincy Rotary Club, a businessman gave Wilson a thumbs down sign and “a mean, crooked grin” to show the reporter what many in Martin’s town thought of her activism.

“I felt sorry for Patty,” writes Wilson. “I was cocooned in Seattle; she was ostracized in Quincy. I won journalism awards; she lost friends. I could relax for a weekend; she could never give up.”

The Quincy revelations led Wilson to write a series of newspaper articles that were a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. Some state regulations were tightened as a result, but in general the “recycling” of toxic industrial waste through fertilizer continues unabated. As Wilson said, this is the beginning of the story.

Reading *Fateful Harvest*, I was reminded of the accidental activists that live in places like Minnesota’s Renville County. Almost a decade ago, when the manure lagoons of hog giant ValAdCo started making people like Julie Jansen sick, she and her neighbors became embroiled in a fight they didn’t want. They conducted midnight air monitoring, tracked down manure spills, testified before indifferent (or outright hostile) officials and in general refused to shut up. As their reward, these citizens were accused of spreading misinformation, being anti-farmer, and worse.

Late last year, state officials announced that five of the lagoons would be drained. They are too much of a public health threat to remain full of manure. Those loud-mouthed citizen activists had been right all along.

Let’s hope Patty Martin and her band of troublemakers don’t have to wait as long for their day of vindication. □

Brian DeVore is the editor of the Land Stewardship Letter.

Navigating the GEIS: Farm Animal Welfare

An ongoing series on the Animal Agriculture GEIS

In farm country, the subject of humane treatment of livestock is a lot like religion and politics: one doesn't bring it up in polite conversation. So perhaps the biggest surprise of the "animal welfare" document written for Minnesota's Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) on Animal Agriculture is that it exists at all. That it is part of the study is a tribute to participants in the GEIS Citizen Advisory Committee who pushed for its inclusion.

But "Farm Animal Health and Well-Being," a technical working paper and supplementary literature summary prepared by Marlene Halverson, offers more than a moral victory for people who are trying to make farm animal welfare a major issue. Halverson, an agricultural consultant with a background in alternative swine production systems, provides a thorough accounting of worldwide research related to livestock well-being, debunking the claim that there's no scientific evidence to support certain humane production methods. She also makes a strong argument for farm animal well-being constituting a "public good" that society should encourage through research, regulation and the markets.

Most farmers know there are certain aspects of industrialized agriculture that are not good for the general welfare of animals. But they often feel forced into treating animals in certain ways because of economic forces—crowding them into extremely tight quarters, for example, because that's the most efficient use of space in a building that costs major bucks to build and maintain. This has become an increasing problem as the size and concentration of farms rise, limiting an operator's ability to give individual animals attention, points out Halverson.

The author cites studies showing how animals raised in large-scale confinement operations are under extreme stress: they attack each other, veterinary bills soar. But such systems have proven efficient. Pigs produce more pork in a day's time than ever before, while cows turn feed into milk with machine-like efficiency and chickens go to market in a matter of weeks, rather than months.

Animal scientists and industrial agriculture's boosters point to these amazing strides in productivity as proof that the animal is being treated humanely. "If that pig wasn't happy, it wouldn't be gaining weight," goes a common argument.

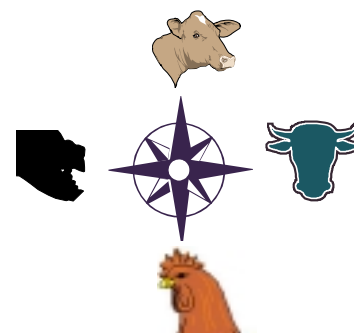
But a happy animal and a productive animal are not always one-in-the-same. "It is true that welfare is important for functioning, but in many cases animals can continue to produce while in a state of poor welfare" thanks to the help of antibiotics, hormones and climate-controlled facilities, writes Halverson.

Like it or not, restrictions related to farm animal well-being are on the horizon, whether it be through the government (Florida banning sow crates for example) or through the marketplace (McDonald's forcing its suppliers to increase the size of chicken cages).

Several alternative livestock production methods are proving to be highly humane. In fact, Halverson has taken farmers to Sweden to see firsthand that country's extensive use of deep-bedded straw hog production, a system that's considered highly humane as well as economically viable. Such methods require closer attention to the needs of individual animals (read: animal husbandry), and less of a reliance on drugs and intensive housing. In this country, a small minority of farmers are utilizing such systems. How can these humane systems become more widespread?

Surveys show the public supports humane treatment of animals and that shoppers are willing to pay more for food produced under such conditions. But when it comes time to go to the store, most consumers buy their meat, dairy products and eggs based on price.

Increased demand for humanely raised products must go hand-in-hand with research that helps farmers adapt and utilize such systems, says Halverson. She



cites the alternative swine research going on at Minnesota's West Central Research and Outreach Center (see page 1) as a good example of how public funding can produce more humane conditions.

Better markets and more research will only go so far in supporting humane farming. Animal welfare scientists feel that ultimately farm animal well-being must be seen as a "public good" that deserves society's support. Part of this can be intangible, a kind of innate desire to have "...a good conscience from being able to purchase animal products that have been produced by methods consistent with their values," writes Halverson.

There are also tangible benefits to raising animals in a humane manner. For example, hogs raised in deep-straw systems feel less stress, studies show, dramatically reducing the need for antibiotics. The overuse of antibiotics has been implicated as a factor in the development of "superbugs," which are a threat to human health. In addition, humane production systems that rotate dairy cows on grass can dramatically reduce water quality problems.

It may be hard for people to identify with a pig or cow. But when the future of a major medical tool or the nearest stream is at stake, happier animals becomes a tangible public good after all. □

Navigate the GEIS yourself

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

to find the closest library that carries it.

To find the study discussed here

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

→ Click on "Farm animal health and well-being: technical work paper: Effect of animal agriculture on animal health."

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

On CD-ROM, you can find the paper by clicking on the file **TWP_AN~1.PDF**.

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Membership Update



Fundraising 101: Getting excited about fundraising

By Cathy Eberhart

This October, I started my sixth year working with the Land Stewardship Project as Membership Coordinator. My how time flies when you're having fun!

A good portion of my job is fundraising and membership recruitment, so you may think that I am being sarcastic. But I'm not.

I didn't start this job thinking that I would enjoy fundraising, but over the past five years, I have not only come to enjoy the work that I do, but to see it as my mission in life.

"Wow—she *is* crazy!" you must be thinking.

Perhaps I am, but that said, I take my inspiration from others who have also found fundraising to be a noble calling. My latest mission is to spread some of my enthusiasm to others with the hope more people will catch the fundraising spark—there is after all only so much I can accomplish on my own.

I am pleased to say our staff and board are getting more excited about this kind of work (well, they are warming to the idea at least). And you dear members are my next target. Over the coming year, you can expect to see an article from me on this page of each issue of the *Land Stewardship Letter* introducing some of the ideas that keep me enthusiastically coming to work each day. You'll also find a simple step that you can take to promote the Land Stewardship Project.

The first reason that I get excited about fundraising for LSP is that I believe it is fundamental social change work. Fundraising guru Kim Klein continually reminds me of that in her *Grassroots Fundraising Journal* articles and you'll find me quoting her from time to time. Back in 1998, she wrote an article that convinced me that "my role in working for social justice will be to help generate money."

The reality, as George Pillsbury points out is that "although money cannot buy social change, no significant change can happen without it."

The important work of Land Steward-

ship Project reflected in the other pages of this newsletter can't happen without money to pay the bills.

Money talks

Money, I know, is not a comfortable subject for most of us. We're taught not to talk about it or ask about it. We rarely share our experiences with money—good or bad—with each other. And so it is not surprising that asking for money is especially hard.

Fundraising forces us to break through some of those taboos about money—taboos that help promote racism, sexism, and other inequalities in society.

As Klein challenges us, "people who cannot talk about money, who will not learn to ask for it and deal with it, actually collaborate with a system that the rest of social change work seeks to dismantle...Fundraising will allow you, perhaps even force you, to confront basic issues of class in yourself, in your organization and in the people you raise money for and from."

Strong words—are you squirming yet?

My current challenge to you is to start to cut through the silence that surrounds money. A simple way to start this daunting task might be to share with another person why you support the Land Stewardship Project.

We're excited to have brand new brochures that can help you tell LSP's story. If you'd like a copy or two or 20 to give out, contact any LSP office and we'll happily send them to you. Or you can print out your own copies off our Web site. Just go to www.landstewardshipproject.org and click on the **Join Us** link at the top.

Fundraising isn't easy work, but I believe it is essential work if we are to realize our vision that one day, "a stewardship ethic will be the foundation of our society." I welcome you to join me in this mission. □

Cathy Eberhart is LSP's Membership Coordinator. She can be reached at 651-653-0618 or 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 18 environmental organizations in Minnesota that offer workplace giving as an option in making our communities better places to live. Together member organizations of the Minnesota Environmental Fund work to

- ➔ 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.

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



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 lsplib@landstewardshipproject.org.

STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

→ **DEC. 5—Holiday Social at Land Stewardship Project's western Minnesota office**, 2 p.m.-6 p.m., 103 W. Nichols, Montevideo, Minn.; Contact: 320-269-2105; lspwest@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **DEC. 7-10—LSP's George Boody will give a presentation at the Midwest Fish & Wildlife Conference**, Kansas City; Contact: 573-882-9880 (ext. 3255) or www.midwest2003.com

→ **National Conference on Grazing Lands**, Nashville, Tenn.; Contact: 703-455-4387; www.glci.org

→ **DEC. 9—Holiday Social at Land Stewardship Project's southeast Minnesota office**, 2 p.m.-6 p.m., 180 E. Main Street, Lewiston; Contact: 507-523-3366; lspse@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **DEC. 12—Holiday Social at Land Stewardship Project's White Bear Lake office**, 3 p.m.-6 p.m., 2200 4th St., White Bear Lake; Contact: 651-653-0618; lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **Deadline for Minnesota Organic Demonstration Grant Program** (see page 19)

→ **JAN. 4-6—Wisconsin Fruit & Vegetable Conference**, Oconomowoc, Wis.; Contact: Anna Maenner, 920-478-4277; office@waga.org

→ **JAN. 9-10—Practical Farmers of Iowa Annual Conference**, Des Moines, Iowa; Contact: 515-232-5661, ext. 101; www.pfi.iastate.edu/Calendar/upcoming-events.htm

→ **JAN. 16—LSP's Dana Jackson will speak at the Quivira Coalition annual conference**, Albuquerque, N. Mex.; Contact:

Courtney White, 505-820-2544

→ **JAN. 16-18—Wisconsin School for Beginning Market Growers**, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Contact: John Hendrickson, 608-265-3704; jhendric@facstaff.wisc.edu

→ **JAN. 23-24—Minnesota Organic & Grazing Conference**, St. Cloud Civic Center; Contact: Meg Moynihan or Mary Hanks, 651-296-1277

→ **JAN. 29-30—Iowa Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association Annual Convention**, Marshalltown, Iowa; Contact: Debi Smith, 515-465-5992; ifvga@att.net

The Beginning Farmer & Rancher Conference: Realities & Opportunities, will be held March 27 in Kearney, Neb. See page 9.

→ **JAN. 30-31—6th Annual Midwest Value Added Conference: Enhancing Profit on the Farm**, Eau Claire, Wis.; Contact: 715-834-9672;

heather.amundson@wi.usda.gov

→ **FEB. 2—2004 Minnesota Legislative Session convenes**; Call LSP's Policy Program at 612-722-6377 for information on legislative issues affecting family farming, sustainable agriculture and a food system that's safe & environmentally sound

→ **FEB. 5-6—Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference & Trade Show**, St. Cloud Civic Center; Contact: 763-434-0400; www.mfvga.org

→ **FEB. 5-7—Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society's 25th Annual Winter Conference**, featuring David Kline & Wendell Berry, Mandan, N. Dak.;

Contact: 701-883-4304 or www.npsas.org

→ **Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture 13th Annual Farming for the Future Conference**, State College, Penn.; Contact: 814-349-9856; www.pasafarming.org

→ **FEB. 13—LSP's Dana Jackson will speak at the Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society's Healthy Farms Conference**, Lincoln, Neb.; Contact: Paul Rohrbaugh, 402-869-2288

→ **FEB. 21—Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota Annual Meeting**, Waldorf School, St. Paul, Minn.; Contact: Julie Bloor, julieforager@yahoo.com, or Mary Jo Forbord, 320-760-8732; mforbord@sfa-mn.org;

www.sfa-mn.org

→ **FEB. 26-28—2004 Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference & Organic University**, La Crosse, Wis.; Contact: 715-772-3153; www.mosesorganic.org

→ **MARCH 29—Environmental Health Impacts of CAFOs: Anticipating Hazards-Searching for Solutions**, Iowa City, Iowa; Contact: 319-335-4418; www.ehsr.org

→ **APRIL—LSP's Introduction to Grazing with Howard Moechnig**, (exact date to be announced) southeast Minn. LSP office, Lewiston; Contact: 507-523-3366; stettler@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **APRIL 25-27—LSP's Dana Jackson will be a keynote speaker at "Eating as a Moral Act: Ethics & Power from Agrarianism to Consumerism,"** University of New Hampshire, Durham, N.H.; Contact: 603-862-4088; www.sustainableunh.unh.edu/fas/eating_moral_act.html

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



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