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News and Perspectives  
(2006 Spring-Fall)

# AGRO-ECOLOGY

Science and Education for a Sustainable Agriculture



Volume 15 • Number 1

## New Sea Grant Aquaculture Expert Highlights Marketing

by Irene Miles

Seafood seems to be going the way of many other industries in the U.S. In the past decade, the rate of imports has steadily increased. In fact, in 2004, imports made up 80 percent of the U.S. seafood market.

Due to this trend, aquaculture producers in Illinois and Indiana need to find new ways to turn a profit as they bring their fish to market, according to Kwamena Quagraine, Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant's new aquaculture marketing specialist. "Imported seafood is typically priced lower than these producers can compete with."

He offers several suggestions. "Imported fish is usually shipped fresh or frozen, so ethnic markets that sell live fish offer a niche for local producers," said Quagraine. "Another approach is to add value to the product. For example, producers can get an advantage in the market by partnering with processors to produce ready-to-serve products for the food service industry." Quagraine says producers should think about making money from more than just producing the fish.

Quagraine, who is also funded through Purdue University Extension and University of Illinois Extension, comes to the Sea Grant program from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, where he was an assistant professor of aquaculture marketing for four years. Originally from Ghana, he received his doctorate in agricultural economics from the University of Alberta in Canada.

With his focus on marketing, Quagraine will be working with the aquaculture industries, aquaculture producers, aquaculture associations, distributors, restaurants, retail out-

*continued on next page*

SPRING 2006

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*The fish cages are submerged into large bodies of water such as lakes and large deep ponds. They cannot be used in shallow ponds.*



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*Agro-Ecology News and Perspectives is published by the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, Agroecology/Sustainable Agriculture Program, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). This newsletter is designed to inform its readers about the well being of human and natural communities through the adoption of agricultural practices and farming systems that are economically viable, environmentally sound, and socially just. This issue was edited by Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant and Debra Levey Larson, designed by Scherer Communications and produced by Roberts Design Company. Copy editing by Molly Bentsen. Photos not credited in this issue were taken by Debra Levey Larson.*

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*Acrobat PDF files of this and past issues are available at <http://www.aces.uiuc.edu/asap/news/newspersp.html>.*

*New Sea Grant Aquaculture (continued)*

lets, and consumers to develop viable markets for Indiana and Illinois farm-raised aquaculture products. First and foremost, he will provide assistance to aquaculture producers in pursuing and realizing economic and market development opportunities. "My approach is to provide information to producers on how to be successful in today's market and how to keep their production costs competitive," said Quagraine.

Quagraine is positioned at Purdue University in West Lafayette in the Department of Agricultural Economics and the Department of Forestry and Natural Resources. He is beginning to plan aquaculture marketing workshops in several counties in Indiana to reach local producers. "I look forward down the road to bringing these workshops to Illinois counties as well," he added.

Quagraine is also an author. *The Aquaculture Marketing Handbook*, co-authored by Carole Engle of the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, has recently been released through Blackwell Publishing. The 288-page book provides a broad base of information on aquaculture economics, markets, and marketing. For more information, visit [www.blackwellpublishing.com](http://www.blackwellpublishing.com).

*For more information about aquaculture marketing in Illinois and Indiana contact Quagraine at (765-494-4200; or [kquagrai@purdue.edu](mailto:kquagrai@purdue.edu)).*



*The stocking rates depend on the species and system of production since each has a different production cycle. Indoor systems tend to stock high compared to outdoor ponds like these. Survival depends on management and the species. For example, freshwater prawns are carnivores so if stock high, they eat each other and you will end up with nothing. With good management, we should be able to get as high as 80-90% survival.*



*Asian markets offer an opportunity for aquaculture producers to sell live fish locally. Some of the major species raised are Sunfish/Bluegill, Bass (hybrid striped bass), Tilapia, Yellow perch, and some ornamental fish.*

*The Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant College Program is one of more than 30 National Sea Grant College Programs. Created by Congress in 1966, Sea Grant combines university, government, business and industry expertise to address coastal and Great Lakes needs. Funding is provided by the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U. S. Department of Commerce, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Purdue University at West Lafayette, Indiana. Irene Miles is a media/communications specialist for Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant.*

# Organic Research at the U of I

Researchers at the University of Illinois and their non-university partners are pursuing answers to questions about organic and sustainable agriculture—with “sustainable” practices being defined as socially supportive, commercially competitive, and environmentally sound.

All aspects of production practices and cropping-system management suitable for organic and sustainable agriculture are being studied. The research considers disease, weed and pest control measures, nutrient management, livestock husbandry, and the influence of organic and alternative practices on soil and water quality and greenhouse gas emissions.

Scientists from the Illinois Natural History Survey and the U of I are working, with the advice of experienced organic farmers, on the Windsor Organic Research Trial. The study investigates transition paths and their influences on crops, insects, weeds, disease, and soil ecology. The trial will be certified organic in 2006.

Researchers are also studying the social and economic dimensions of organic and sustainable agriculture. They address, among other things, community issues, marketing and consumer behavior, regulatory policies, and conservation programs.

## Making Connections

The Illinois Organic Production Conference, now an annual event, was developed by the Illinois Organic Task Force (of U of I Extension) in response to the demand for useful information on producing organically ([www.aces.uiuc.edu/asap/orgconf/](http://www.aces.uiuc.edu/asap/orgconf/)).

Agroecology/Sustainable Agriculture Program summer field tours let participants gain practical knowledge from successful farmers and other food entrepreneurs, in real farm settings ([www.aces.uiuc.edu/asap/](http://www.aces.uiuc.edu/asap/)).

The New Agriculture Network is a collaborative project of the University of Illinois and Michigan State, Purdue, and Iowa State universities and organic growers in these states to facilitate information exchange between researchers and growers ([www.ipm.msu.edu/new-ag.htm](http://www.ipm.msu.edu/new-ag.htm)).

Farm Beginnings is an educational training program designed for new and established farmers interested in learning how to farm sustainably ([www.farmbeginnings.uiuc.edu](http://www.farmbeginnings.uiuc.edu)).

Students can pursue related undergraduate and graduate studies in all departments in the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences at the U of I; they can participate in classes during spring and fall semesters or in research and farming efforts in the summer.



*Michelle Wander addresses a group about soil stewardship on a tour of the Windsor Organic Research Trial. Wander is an associate professor of soil fertility and director of the U of I Agroecology Sustainable Agriculture Program.*

*continued on next page*



## What Can the U of I Do For You?

Extension and outreach staff at the U of I can help you find out more about a myriad of topics:

- ✘ Growing plants and raising animals using organic and sustainable methods
- ✘ Weed, insect, and disease diagnosis and control, as well as management of soil nutrients, plants, and animals
- ✘ Reducing the "environmental footprint" of growing/gardening operations
- ✘ Minimizing the negative effects of growing plants and raising animals on air and water quality
- ✘ The economics of organic and sustainable practices
- ✘ How organic and fresh foods can enhance health
- ✘ Where to buy organic and fresh local produce
- ✘ How agricultural practices influence the environment
- ✘ Who to contact for additional information on certification or find suitable inputs

## Organic Illinois

At present there are about 200 certified organic producers in Illinois. Most have small farms and cater to Illinois consumers through direct marketing. Larger farm acreages, historically devoted to cash grains, are increasingly serving organic markets for specialty grains and are reintegrating livestock into their systems. Illinois farmers presently supply only a fraction of the local demand for organic and/or sustainably grown food. Increased access to technical information and suitable processing and distribution channels are needed to help this sector grow.



*The Windsor Organic Research Trial at the U of I will be certified organic this year.*



## What It Takes

To be “organic,” farmers comply with USDA’s National Organic Program guidelines, and government-approved certifiers inspect farms where organic food is grown to make sure farmers are following all the rules. Companies that handle or process organic food, before it gets to a local supermarket or restaurant, must be certified too. Farms that do not comply with the full set of organic standards, including certification when sales exceed \$5,000, are not organic and can be fined if they present themselves as such. Farms using natural or sustainable techniques may or may not be using methods consistent with organic principles. Many smaller farms that market directly to consumers use their personal interactions, instead of certification, to educate their customers about their production practices and product quality.

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# 2006 Sustainable Agr

The Agroecology/Sustainable Agriculture Program at the University of Illinois promotes research and provides outreach opportunities regarding a wide spectrum of alternative farming practices as well as ways to provide adequate and dependable farm income. This diversity of topics is well represented by the six sustainable agriculture tours for 2006.

"These tours provide a rare opportunity for a behind-the-scenes look at Illinois farms and businesses that approach sustainable agriculture creatively," said Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant, University of Illinois research specialist who coordinates the tours. "The owners are passionate about what they do, and that passion really comes across on their faces as they talk to visitors. But they are also quick to share the pros and cons of their operation—the joys and frustrations of trying to run a certified organic farm, for example," she said. Cavanaugh-Grant said that this is the fourth year she has coordinated the tours.

The first tour, on May 4, will be to Oak Hills Organics ([www.oakgroveorganics.com](http://www.oakgroveorganics.com)) in Carthage. The farm and dairy are owned by Tony and Sheila Huls, who raise cows for both grass-fed organic beef and for dairy—naturally, without the use of antibiotics, genetically modified organisms, or added growth hormones.

On June 5 there will be a tour to Heartland Meats ([www.heartlandmeats.com](http://www.heartlandmeats.com)) in Mendota, a farm and business owned by John and Pat Sondergoth. The company specializes in Piedmontese beef that is free of added growth hormones.

The third tour will visit Aqua Ranch in Flanagan on July 12. Aqua Ranch Industries ([www.aquaranch.com](http://www.aquaranch.com)) supplies tanks and tank/pool liners for the growing aquaculture industry and helps develop "aquaponics" systems that yield both fish and culinary herbs in a controlled environment.

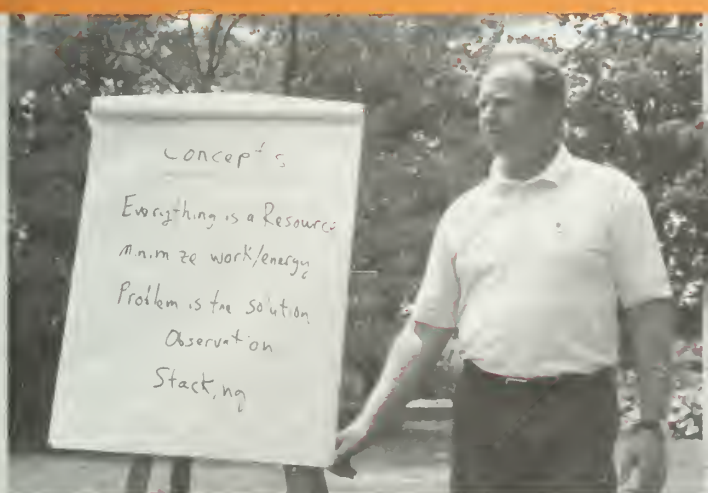
On August 9, tour participants will visit the Green Earth Institute in Naperville, owned and operated by Steve Tiwald. Green Earth Institute ([www.greenearthinstitute.org](http://www.greenearthinstitute.org)) is a nonprofit organization established in 2002 to promote nutritional health and environmental sustainability.

On September 13, a tour will be given of Prairie Fruits Farm in Champaign owned by Leslie Cooperband and Wes Jarrell. Jarrell and Cooperband planted over 300 fruit trees and several hundred berry bushes in 2004 on three and a half acres. Their land is in transition to organic, and is eligible for organic certification this year. Cooperband and Jarrell also have a grade A goat dairy and Illinois' first farmstead cheese making facility. They will provide a tour and information about their orchard, the goat dairy and goat cheese processing. Deirdre Birmingham, network coordinator for the Upper Midwest Organic Tree Fruit Growers Network ([www.moses-organic.org/treefruit/intro.htm](http://www.moses-organic.org/treefruit/intro.htm)) will be there to contribute information about organic tree fruit production on the tour. The network is a project of the Midwest Organic & Sustainable Education Service (MOSES) and a co-sponsor of the tour.

# 2006

Participants gather for instructions before being divided into small groups to tour several stops at the Windsor Organic Research Trial on one of the 2005 sustainable agriculture tours.

## culture Tours Scheduled



Bill Wilson assists during a talk on the basic premises of permaculture during a 2005 tour to Stelle.

One stop on a 2005 tour was to the Stelle telephone company which is run on solar power.

The final tour of the season, on October 5, will stop at several places in southern Illinois: Blue Sky Winery in Makanda, Darn Hot Peppers in Cobden, and Great Boars of Fire in Anna. At the winery ([www.blueskyvineyard.com](http://www.blueskyvineyard.com)), visitors will walk through the vineyards for a close look at the tresseling systems that are used and can participate in a tasting of some of the wine varieties. Darn Hot Peppers ([www.darnhotpeppers.com/](http://www.darnhotpeppers.com/)) boasts growing healthy and flavorful specialty hot peppers, using environmentally safe and pesticide free products while employing natural, time honored aspects of traditional farming. Great Boars of Fire ([www.greatboarsoffire.com/](http://www.greatboarsoffire.com/)) is a lodge and fully mobile catering service that specializes in pulled barbequed pork.

A fee of \$20 per person, which includes lunch, will be charged for each tour. Registration at least one week in advance is required. For more details about the tours, including maps and agendas, or to register, visit [www.aces.uiuc.edu/asap/topics/tours.html](http://www.aces.uiuc.edu/asap/topics/tours.html) or contact Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant (217-968-5512; [cvnghgrn@uiuc.edu](mailto:cvnghgrn@uiuc.edu)).

The tours are sponsored by the Agroecology/Sustainable Agriculture Program in the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences at the University of Illinois, University of Illinois Extension, the North Central

Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Professional Development Program, the Illinois Small Farm Task Force and by the Agriculture Tourism Partners of Illinois ([www.agritourismillinois.com](http://www.agritourismillinois.com)).



Doug Niggar

*Stan Schutte with MOSES executive director Faye Jones; MOSES Board Member and 2003 Organic Farmer of the Year Award winner Linda Halley; and with George Bird of the Rodale Institute. Stan is holding a replica of the \$500 check that comes with the award. Stan plans to donate his monetary award to the Central Illinois Farm Beginnings Program.*

## Stan Schutte Named Organic Farmer of the Year

*by Jody Padgham, MOSES education director*

The board of directors of the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES) has awarded the 2006 Farmer of the Year designation to Stan Schutte of Triple "S" Farms, Stewardson, Illinois.

Schutte owns and manages a diversified organic farm of more than 200 acres, producing dozens of varieties of organic fruits and vegetables along with drug-free free-range poultry and beef. He also grows organic dent corn, sweet corn, popcorn, food and feed grade soybeans, and hard red wheat. He employs six to eight people in the peak of the season, and 100 percent of his income comes from his farm.

Schutte attributes most of his weed management success to using cover crops in the rotation. He tills for several flushes of weeds prior to planting. His five-year crop rotation is wheat underseeded with red clover followed by clover, followed by clover, followed by corn (seeded down to rye or oats over winter), followed by soybeans. The red clover provides a nitrogen plowdown. The rye or oats are disked in prior to seeding soybeans, protecting the soil from erosion, providing green manure crops, and enhancing soil fertility. For Schutte, red clover has proven to provide the healthiest stand with the greatest soil benefit.

For pest and disease management, Schutte has done a lot of on-farm research and variety trials to determine which breeds will best serve his operation. He rotates his animals through his organic paddocks, starting with beef cattle, followed by sheep, hogs, chickens, and ducks. This system utilizes available nutrition, returns nutrients to the soil, and promotes productivity from the forage mixes. Long periods of rest between livestock rotations break the life cycles of any pests deposited on pastures and allow the forage to return to full stand.

Innovative marketing is Schutte's strong suit. He sells directly to consumers at several farmers markets and has created the Triple "S" Farms buying club. For a modest deposit and monthly subscription price, members receive a box of meat and poultry products in one of three sizes. He is currently developing "cow shares," which will allow interested customers to be cooperative owners of a dairy cow that Schutte will care for and milk, then distribute frozen organic milk to the owners. He has been working with University of Illinois Extension to determine the feasibility of a multi-species, value-added processing plant.

## About the Award

The Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service honors an outstanding organic farmer each year at the Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference in LaCrosse, Wisconsin, with its award titled "MOSES Organic Farmer of the Year: An Organic Farmer Practicing Outstanding Land Stewardship."

### *There are four criteria for the award*

1. Innovations in organic farming/livestock management, including crops and crop rotations, weed, pest and disease management strategies, sustainable or renewable energy, and marketing
2. Excellence in enhancing farm resources: soil, water, wildlife and biodiversity
3. Inspiration and education of organic farmers, consumers and others in the organic community.
4. Current organic certification

The winner receives a plaque; a \$500 cash gift; free registration, food and lodging at the Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference; and a \$100 gift certificate for the conference book sales booth.

### *Previous winners have been:*

- Carmen and Sally Fernholz, A Frame Farm, Madison, Minnesota (2005)
- Martin and Atina Diffley, Gardens of Eagan, Eagan, Minnesota (2004)
- Linda Halley and Richard deWilde, Harmony Valley Farm, Viroqua, Wisconsin (2003)

Nominations may be made by anyone. For more information, visit [www.mosesorganic.org](http://www.mosesorganic.org).

Water has been an especially important indicator of the changes in Schutte's farm resources. The increase in soil organic matter under organic practices has vastly increased the water-retaining capacity of his fields. He attributes much of this improvement to his cover-cropping practices. He also has planted buffer strips and fallow land to native prairie. He has seen an explosion in the wildlife on his farm.

Schutte will be the first to claim that he is shy about public speaking, but he has become an educator in many different Illinois forums. He speaks very matter-of-factly about what he does and why. He understands the skepticism of conventional farmers, having been one himself, which allows him to address their concerns with credibility.

Although Schutte first joined the Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA) in 1997, he has been certified by OCIA Illinois Chapter #1 since 2002. The chapter declined from more than 150 members in the late 1990s to just 15 in 2002, when Schutte was elected president. His goal was to revitalize the chapter, and it now has more than 75 members. Schutte thinks OCIA serves small and medium-sized producers very well. He serves as an inspiration and resource for aspiring organic farmers, particularly through the Central Illinois Farm Beginnings program, which provides classes and internships for people who wish to become sustainable farmers.

Schutte feels that part of his success has been "leading by example." He also says that "nothing is truly sustainable if you can't pass it on," so farm succession is a major concern. He is delighted that his son has begun his own organic farming ventures at the home farm while obtaining his college degree. With his son involved, Stan says "farming has become fun again." 🌱

# SWCS Call for Papers

The 2006 workshop being organized by the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) is themed "Managing Agricultural Landscapes for Environmental Quality, Strengthening the Science Base" and will be held on October 11 to 13 at the Westin Crown Center Hotel in Kansas City, Missouri. The deadline for submitting abstracts of oral or poster presentations is June 1. Abstracts can be submitted at [www.swcs.org/en/swcs\\_international\\_conferences/managing\\_agricultural\\_landscapes/](http://www.swcs.org/en/swcs_international_conferences/managing_agricultural_landscapes/).

The workshop seeks to gather information on what we know and what we need to know about the environmental effectiveness of conservation practices on agricultural land on a landscape or watershed scale rather than field by field or farm by farm.

The workshop is part of ongoing activities organized by SWCS in support of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Conservation Effects Assessment Project.

Concurrent, poster, and plenary sessions will be organized around four key workshop topics. Concurrent sessions will be designed to facilitate multidisciplinary content and discussion, and session co-chairs will write a synthesis of the presentations and discussion. Papers will be commissioned for presentation during the plenary sessions, and respondents will be identified to stimulate discussion among participants.

Evening roundtables will foster dialogue among workshop participants and plenary presenters on the four key workshop topics:

*What should we measure, and how, to account for environmental effects?*  
Abstracts in this category address indicators and methods to detect, simulate, or monitor the effects of conservation efforts at landscape and watershed scales.

Methods for environmental management research at landscape and/or watershed scales. Abstracts explore approaches to conducting research at landscape and watershed scales.

Targeting within landscapes and/or watersheds to improve conservation effectiveness. Abstracts discuss approaches to identifying and targeting conservation efforts at sensitive portions of agricultural landscapes and/or particular management decisions by producers.

Realistic expectations for measurable change in environmental quality. Abstracts examine questions regarding geographic scale and the period of time over which environmental effects of conservation practices are likely to be detected.

## Important dates:

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>June 1</b>   | Deadline for submission of oral and poster paper abstracts.                      |
| <b>July 1</b>   | Notification of acceptance or rejection of oral and poster paper abstracts.      |
| <b>July 15</b>  | Deadline for oral and poster paper presenters to indicate intent to participate. |
| <b>August 1</b> | Deadline for submission of final oral and poster paper abstracts.                |

For more information, contact Max Schnepf (515-289-2331, ext. 15; [max.schnepf@swcs.org](mailto:max.schnepf@swcs.org)).

# Dudley Smith Initiative Announces Grant

by Theresa Miller

Teachers and students in central Illinois will have an opportunity to learn more about sustainable agriculture because of programs funded by the Dudley Smith Initiative.

A teacher training program for elementary school teachers in Christian, Shelby, Montgomery and Fayette Counties will raise awareness of the agricultural system and its impact on the community. Named "TCEP," for Teacher Classroom Education Project, the program will encompass a three-day program for elementary school teachers to tour the Dudley Smith Farm in Pana, Watershed Park in Springfield, and learn about available resources in sustainable agriculture for their classroom. The program is scheduled for June 20 to 22.

Sixth grade students in Chris Baugher's science class at Litchfield Middle School will learn about the importance of carbon sequestration in agriculture. The development of the lesson will be funded through a grant funded by the Dudley Smith Initiative announced earlier this year.

The unit on carbon sequestration will introduce students to the importance of carbon release on agriculture, and farming methods employed to reduce carbon release such as no-till and crop rotation. Students will be asked to develop a project on cause of carbon release or benefits of set-aside ground for wildlife.


And seventh grade art students will learn important tasks of field identification of weed and plant species.

The students in Marsha DeWilde's art class will learn about the area weeds and plants specific to central Illinois, and impacts of devastation. They will then go to the Dudley Smith Farm in Pana to learn how to identify weed species through illustration, digital photography, measurement and sampling. A total of 50 students will be involved in the program that will commence in the fall of 2006.

"Through the program, students will become more familiar with agriculture in our area, and will learn the importance of the contribution farms located here make to the larger community and state," said DeWilde.

"We are pleased to offer these educational grants to help further agricultural awareness of the children in the area surrounding the Dudley Smith Farm," said Mary Ann Lila, interim associate dean, College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, University of Illinois. "These grants further the mission set forth by Dudley Smith to rural community impact of agriculture on this Central Illinois area."

The Dudley Smith Farm is a working farm operated by the University of Illinois designed as an innovative research center focused on economic, environmental and social relationships to agriculture. A landowner with family roots in Christian County, Dudley Smith, Jr. donated the farm to this use in order to address the long-term stewardship and sustainability of agricultural practices. The initiative funds innovative and collaborative research efforts, as well as education grants for local elementary and secondary schools to learn more about sustainable agriculture.

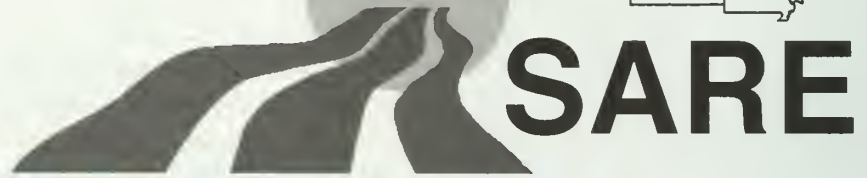
Grants totaling \$7,300.00 were offered to five schools in the Christian County area. For more information, visit [www.aces.uiuc.edu/DSI](http://www.aces.uiuc.edu/DSI). 

*Theresa Miller is a media/communications specialist in the College of ACES at the University of Illinois.*



*Weed scientist Adam Davis and postdoctoral associate Ian Renne collecting data on weed biomass from winter cropland apasture in November 2005 at the Dudley Smith Farm in Pana.*

North Central Region



# University of Minnesota Named Host of NCR-SARE Program

The University of Minnesota has been selected to begin hosting the North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program (NCR-SARE) as it nears its 20th year of activity. The program has been housed at the University of Nebraska since its inception, and some operations will remain there for a few years. Bill Wilcke will continue to coordinate the program and to serve as a University of Minnesota faculty member. After the transition is complete, all staff will be employed by or work under contract with the University of Minnesota. One of Wilcke's goals is to make the transition as seamless as possible so that grant recipients and others contacting NCR-SARE don't need to be concerned about the office location.

The Administrative Council decided in the spring of 2005 to put hosting the program up for bid. "It was prompted when the issue was raised regarding having the coordinator at one location and the office in another," said NCR-SARE administrative council chair

Liz Maynard. "[We] tried for a couple years to have the coordinator at a different location, but it was a difficult thing to do. The main thing was the disconnect between where the coordinator was located and where the host institution was located."

"University of Minnesota administrators were very supportive of submitting a proposal to host NCR-SARE if I was willing to serve as the regional coordinator," said Wilcke. "It's kind of a package deal. The program will be housed in my department and in my building at the University of Minnesota in St. Paul."

"The University of Nebraska has been very gracious letting us try to have the coordinator at a separate location," said Jill Auburn, national SARE director.

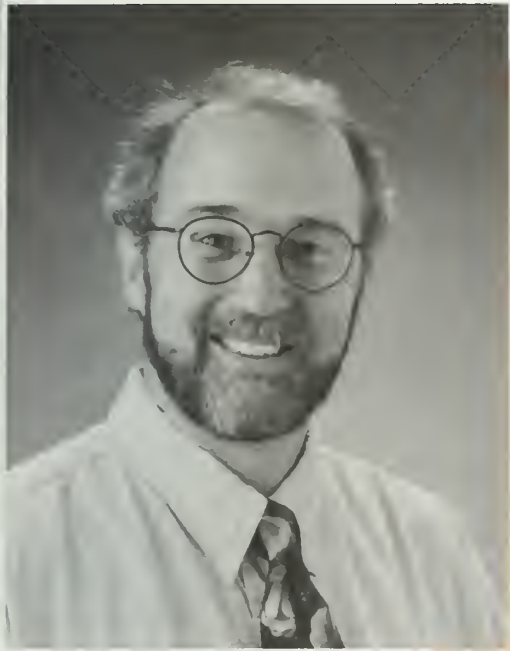
The administrative council established a search committee to issue the call for bids in summer 2005 and to review proposals in the fall. The finalist was invited to make an oral presentation at

the council's fall meeting. Many of the University of Minnesota's attributes were outlined by Wilcke at that meeting, including the Twin Cities' role as a transportation hub, Minnesota's diverse agricultural background, a large work force, and an active sustainable agriculture community. Wilcke also cited the opportunity to retain a more unified staff when the program operates from the same location as the regional coordinator.

Wilcke will spend a year working at 100% capacity for NCR-SARE and then will return to his dual roles with SARE and the University of Minnesota Extension Service.

For more information, contact NCR-SARE (1-800-529-1342; [ncrsare@unl.edu](mailto:ncrsare@unl.edu)) or visit [www.sare.org/ncrsare](http://www.sare.org/ncrsare). 





## *Walter's Council Committee Term Ends*

Gerry Walter's day job is as an academic advisor in the College of ACES at U of I. For the past four years, he has also served as Illinois representative to the NCR-SARE Administrative Council. Some of his responsibilities have been to attend meetings and contribute to the decision-making process about the distribution of funds for grant proposals. "I can't say that I had never read a grant proposal before," said Walters, "but I had never read this large a quantity of proposals and in so many different disciplines. That has been a challenge."

Since joining the committee, Walter has been involved with revamping the grant calendars to make them more friendly to farmers so that the money came at the right time. "We hope we fixed that. We also have worked to time our business meetings at the council so we could make decisions on grants and accommodate farmers' needs." Walter also has served on the council's graduate student grant program committee. "We have to think about the future and plan for it, and these graduate students are going to be the next generation of scientists in the field." Walter said that one of the most satisfying parts of being on the council was getting to meet new people, see what they are doing and being a part of that work. 🍷

## Local Food Directory Online

ATTRA, the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service, has assembled an online database of local food directories useful for producers and consumers alike. The Local Food Directory Resource, at [www.attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/localfood\\_dir.php](http://www.attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/localfood_dir.php), includes national, regional, state and community directory resources for all 50 states, searchable by state.

For example, click on the state of Illinois and these listings are displayed:

### Illinois Fresh

Guide to u-pick farms, roadside markets and farmers' markets, from University of Illinois Extension. Includes southwest Michigan and northwest Indiana.  
[www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/fresh/](http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/fresh/)

### Illinois Farm Direct

A farmer-to-consumer directory of locally produced and locally sold foods, searchable by commodity and radius from a zip code. Contains 600 growers and processors and 200 farmers markets.  
[www.illinoisfarmdirect.org/](http://www.illinoisfarmdirect.org/)

### MarketMaker (University of Illinois)

An interactive mapping system that locates businesses and markets of agricultural products in Illinois, providing an important link between producers and consumers. The online database can be searched by the type of market sought or by the type of business, whether producer, processor, wholesaler, retailer, or farmers' market.  
[www.marketmaker.uiuc.edu/](http://www.marketmaker.uiuc.edu/)

### Illinois Markets Information System: Food and Agribusiness Guide

An online listing from the Illinois Department of Agriculture, searchable by category, of companies that produce, process, package, or are headquartered in Illinois.  
[www.agr.state.il.us/markets/mis/](http://www.agr.state.il.us/markets/mis/)

### Prairie Bounty of Illinois

(Illinois Specialty Growers Association)

A marketing directory for Illinois growers of certain specialty crops, including fruits, vegetables, herbs, and Christmas trees, searchable online by county and type of crop. The directory contains the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of Illinois producers who market through pick-your-own, cut-your-own, and roadside markets and who sell wholesale. Farm community market locations are also listed. Printed copies are available through the Illinois Farm Bureau for the cost of postage.  
[www.specialtygrowers.org/bounty.htm](http://www.specialtygrowers.org/bounty.htm)

### FamilyFarmed.org

A list of midwestern organic producers by state links to online profiles of each operation, with interviews of the producers that describe their production methods and the products they offer. CSA operations for the region are also listed.

<http://www.familyfarmed.org>

To add a listing, contact Tracy Mumma ([tracym@ncat.org](mailto:tracym@ncat.org)).

## Sign up for The Food Project's e-BLAST newsletter

BLAST (Building Local Agricultural Systems Today) is the national program of The Food Project. Each e-BLAST focuses on food, land, and youth and contains opportunities related to these through sustainable agriculture and food system work. To sign up for e-BLAST, send an email to [blast@thefoodproject.org](mailto:blast@thefoodproject.org) with your name, organization, address, phone number, and email address. Each e-newsletter, sent out every six weeks, contains information on sustainable agriculture, conference opportunities for youth and young adults, job and internship openings, funding opportunities, and more.

To learn more about BLAST, visit <http://www.thefoodproject.org/blast/>

# CALENDAR

## **April 21–22**

### **Shirk Center and the Center for Natural Science Bloomington–Normal, Illinois**

The Illinois Sustainable Living Fair and the Illinois Wesleyan Wellness Fair are merging to create The Illinois Sustainable Living and Wellness Expo. This event is the collaboration of the Ecology Action Center and the Illinois Wesleyan University Wellness Program, both of Bloomington–Normal, and the Center for Sustainable Community of Stelle. For more information, visit [www.islwe.org/](http://www.islwe.org/).

## **May 6–9**

### **All Things Organic Conference and Trade Show McCormick Place Chicago, Illinois**

The conference will feature many organic exhibitors and be an opportunity to learn about new products, faces, trends, and companies and to make new contacts with established companies. For conference information, visit [www.organicexpo.com/](http://www.organicexpo.com/).

In conjunction with the conference, the Organic Trade Association in partnership with the National Association of State Organic Programs will host the North American Summit on Organic Production and Marketing. The summit will provide a collaborative forum for legislators, regulators, and industry members from Canada, the United States, and Mexico to establish contacts and create networks. (All attendees registered with a conference and trade show pass may attend any summit sessions.) For more information, visit [www.organicexpo.com/summit.shtml](http://www.organicexpo.com/summit.shtml).

## **June 13**

### **Western Illinois Grazing Conference Macomb, Illinois**

For information, contact Ken Nimrick at Western Illinois University (309-298-1288).

## **June 26–30**

### **4th International Conference on Environmental Management for Sustainable Universities University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point Stevens Point, Wisconsin**

This international conference is hosted by the Global Environmental Management Education Center, a center within the College of Natural Resources at the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point. Building on the work of earlier conferences, participants will focus on transforming ideas into action and building sustainable communities beyond university campuses. The conference is targeted for a broad audience from university, business, government, and non-government organizations. For more information, visit [www.uwsp.edu/cnr/gem/emsu/Home.htm](http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/gem/emsu/Home.htm).

## **July 20–22**

### **Grazing America: The American Grassfed Association's Annual Conference Colorado Springs, Colorado**

Details were not available at the time of publication. Information will be posted at [www.americangrassfed.org/index.html](http://www.americangrassfed.org/index.html).

## **August 15–17**

### **2006 Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) National Conference Oconomowoc, Wisconsin**

"A Midwest Homecoming: Sharing a New Tradition of Sustainability" is the theme of the 2006 biennial USDA/SARE national conference. This 4th SARE national/regional gathering draws university research and extension staff, farmers, ranchers, youth/students, agribusiness representatives, policymakers at all levels of government, and nongovernmental organizations to explore current issues in sustainable agriculture.

The conference will feature oral presentations, poster sessions, workshops, roundtable discussions, and tours designed to recognize and advance sustainable agriculture throughout the nation. For more information, visit [www.sare2006.org](http://www.sare2006.org).

## 2006 SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE TOURS

Mark your calendar and plan to attend one or more of this year's sustainable agriculture tours, highlighting the diversity and creativity of Illinois entrepreneurs.

A fee of \$20 per person, which includes lunch, will be charged for each tour. Registration at least one week in advance is required. For more details about the tours, including maps and agendas, or to register, visit [www.aces.uiuc.edu/asap/topics/tours.html](http://www.aces.uiuc.edu/asap/topics/tours.html) or contact Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant (217-968-5512; [cvnghgrn@uiuc.edu](mailto:cvnghgrn@uiuc.edu)).

### May 4

**Organic Beef & Dairy**  
Oak Hills Organics  
Carthage, Illinois  
[www.oakgroveorganics.com](http://www.oakgroveorganics.com)

### June 5

**Better Beef, Naturally**  
Heartland Meats  
Mendota  
[www.heartlandmeats.com](http://www.heartlandmeats.com)

### July 12

**Making a Splash in Aquaculture**  
AquaRanch  
Flanagan  
[www.aquaranch.com](http://www.aquaranch.com)

### August 9

**Nutrition & Sustainability 101**  
Green Earth Institute  
Naperville  
[www.greenearthinstitute.org](http://www.greenearthinstitute.org)

### September 13

**Goat Cheese and Fruit Trees**  
Prairie Fruits Farm and the Upper Midwest Organic Tree Fruit Growers Network  
Champaign  
[www.mosesorganic.org/treefruit/intro.htm](http://www.mosesorganic.org/treefruit/intro.htm)

### October 5

**Wine, Peppers & BBQ**  
Blue Sky Winery (Makanda), Darn Hot Peppers (Cobden) and Great Boars of Fire (Anna)  
[www.blueskyvineyard.com](http://www.blueskyvineyard.com)  
[www.darnhotpeppers.com](http://www.darnhotpeppers.com)  
[www.greatboarsoffire.com](http://www.greatboarsoffire.com)

AGRO-ECOLOGY 

News and Perspectives

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# Planning the Future of ASAP

FALL 2006

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Twice a year the advisory board for the Agroecology/Sustainable Agriculture Program (ASAP) at the University of Illinois meets to discuss the program and plan for the future. At the board's last meeting on April 20, member Wes Jarrell, head of the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences (NRES), made some opening remarks.

"ASAP shouldn't be considered just an NRES program," he said. "It should be a collegewide and campuswide effort. We're the host, but we want it to speak for the entire state and even nation." Jarrell reported that the South Farms master plan is progressing. The pomology farm will need to be relocated, but there is a need to look at the new location in a wholistic way because the 4,000 to 5,000 acres of land is a massive investment that will give ACES an opportunity to do more.

Jarrell also told of a new grass roots student project called Just Foods. "A student named Rebecca Russell came into my office one day and asked if the students could have an organic farm. She collected 35 names of students who were interested in it. This number has since been reduced to a core of enthusiastic students who want to have some land to learn how to farm and hopefully get that food into the campus food system."

Another program that Jarrell expects to build awareness for ASAP is a community component. "The Center for Land and Food Systems will have multiple locations around the state eventually," he said. "Right now there is a small farm at Allerton that supplies fresh food to some of the events at the park. We hope to establish more like it around the state."

Dan Anderson introduced the advisory board to the recently redesigned ASAP Web site. Although the banner will look similar, the site will have totally new navigation and offer new ability for more people to post information. "When we began redeveloping the ASAP Web site, we wanted to allow people to do more than just download information," Anderson said. "Now it will be a community site where people can participate and add to it."





Agro-Ecology News and Perspectives is published by the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, Agroecology/Sustainable Agriculture Program, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). This newsletter is designed to inform its readers about the well being of human and natural communities through the adoption of agricultural practices and farming systems that are economically viable, environmentally sound, and socially just. This issue was edited by Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant and Debra Levey Larson, designed by Scherer Communications and produced by Roberts Design Company. Copy editing by Molly Bentsen. Photos not credited in this issue were taken by Debra Levey Larson.

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College of Agricultural,  
Consumer and  
Environmental Sciences

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is an affirmative action/equal opportunity institution.

If you would like to receive future issues of Agro-Ecology News and Perspectives, contact Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant (217-968-5512; [cvnghgrn@uiuc.edu](mailto:cvnghgrn@uiuc.edu)).

Acrobat PDF files of this and past issues are available at <http://www.aces.uiuc.edu/asap/news/newspersp.html>.

## Our Apologies

In the last issue of AENP (volume 15, number 1) the author of the article "Stan Schutte Named Organic Farmer of the Year" was listed incorrectly. It was written by Joyce Ford, president of the board of directors of the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES). Ford is also an independent inspector, working with her husband, Jim Riddle, under the name of Organic Independents.



Wes Jarrell, head of the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences (NRES) in the College of ACES at the U of I, made some opening remarks at the board meeting.

## Creating the Future of ASAP (continued)

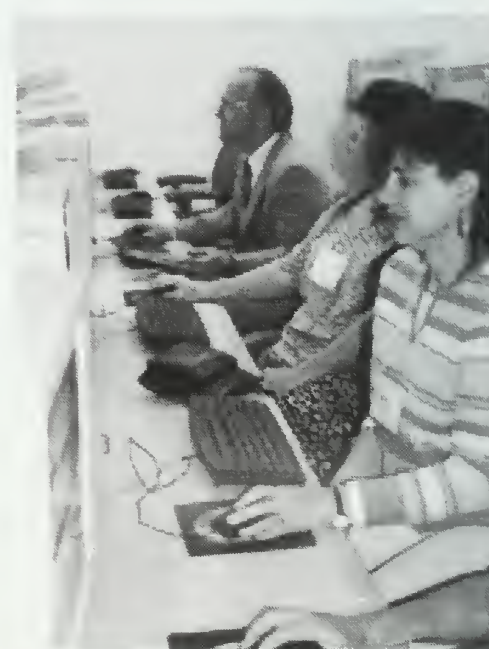
ASAP faculty coordinator Michelle Wander led a brainstorming session on ideas for what the program can do soon, ideas for the future that might need funding, and long-range vision for what the program might look like five or 10 years from now. "Creating a degree program would be a way to generate more faculty involvement at the U of I," Wander said. "Graduate students can work on interdisciplinary projects and be the glue that binds together the program across disciplines and between faculty members."

Leslie Cooperband, who is both on staff at the U of I and the owner of a small farm, said that she hopes to see ASAP taking a leadership role. "ASAP should be front and center as a facilitator of programs on sustainable agriculture," she said.

At the end of the morning, Dick Warner and Dennis Champion from U of I Extension joined the group to present some new ideas relating to Extension and small farms. Warner reported that in the near future, Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant will be taking a new position in Extension as small farms coordinator, working closely with ASAP. "In 2004 there were 73,000 farms in Illinois, but 70 percent of those had less than \$100,000 in sales, so that's a lot of small farms to serve," he said. "Disappointingly, only 36 percent of landowners report that they interact with the University of Illinois Extension, but farmers also say that they need technical information."

Dennis Champion, Extension director, ended by saying, "We need to raise the bar a little and commit some dollars to help the program go forward."

The next meeting of the advisory board will be in October. 🌱



Members of the ASAP advisory board get a sneak preview of the newly designed website.

## A Message from the **ASAP** Director



The University of Illinois College of ACES administrators' decisions about ASAP funding will have immediate and future impacts in the program's staffing and will influence how the program and aligned activities evolve.

The good news is that Extension has successfully created a Small Farms and Sustainable Agriculture Extension Specialist position that was offered to and accepted by Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant. This position is really a dream job for Deborah. We congratulate her and look forward to working with her as she opens new opportunities for Extension programming. Her new responsibilities include providing statewide leadership for educational programming for commercial small farmers, managers and coordinators of various direct and alternative marketing channels, and non-commercial small acreage landowners. She will also provide leadership for the development, educational program design, delivery, and evaluation of the U of I Small Farm Program. As Coordinator, Deborah will work with county and regional Extension personnel to deliver educational programming on a regional and statewide basis and will coordinate the production of small farm publications and web-based and other electronic information systems.

Deborah will also continue in her role as the SARE Coordinator. In her new position, Deborah will be the Extension link to the ASAP program. She will provide Extension personnel with information about ASAP and the related programs and activities and work with County Extension Directors, Specialists, Campus-based Extension faculty and staff to ensure that personnel, programs and activities are included on the ASAP website.

The challenging news for ASAP is that the College of ACES is no longer able to help support the program. We are fortunate that the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences (NRES), which is the program's current administrative home, will continue to support key staff for the following year while we pursue the activities ASAP has already taken on and work to secure new resources. We will do everything we can to find support for critical initiatives including:

- The organic production conference (Dec. 6)
- The launch of the ASAP community web site and Sustainability Server
- The facilitation of task forces on:
  - 1) Campus use of local food
  - 2) Developing and delivering applied outreach
  - 3) Sustainable and organic education.

*Michelle Wander, director, ASAP (217-333-9471; mwander@uiuc.edu).*



*Jen Miller works three days a week as a veterinarian and is able to devote the other days to Rush Creek Farms.*

## *Farm Beginnings' First Graduates: Jen and Andy Miller*

*by Debra Levey Larson*

After living in Chicago for five years, Jen and Andy Miller decided they wanted to buy some land in central Illinois. They both got jobs in the Champaign-Urbana area—Jen works three days a week as a veterinarian at a small animal hospital in Mahomet, while her husband, Andy, works full-time at the Illinois Natural History Survey in Champaign doing research on mushrooms. They found a farmhouse near Sidney. "I always wanted to have a few horses," recalled Jen. Fortunately, the neighboring farmer was willing to sell them 13 adjacent acres. But, that's a lot of land for a few horses.

The solution? Goats.

Jen, being a vet, could bring her professional knowledge to the venture, and working just three days a week meant she would have some time to devote to the joint project with Andy. And because Champaign-Urbana includes the University of Illinois and a large population of international faculty, staff, and students, the Millers felt confident there would be a good market for goat meat.

"We started by purchasing some Nubian bucklings from Prairie Fruits Farm," said Jen. "They raise goats for the milk to make goat cheese, so they sold us the males to raise and slaughter for meat." They also purchased a Kiko Cross doe and two Great Pyrenees dogs from a farm in Kentucky. "The dogs do a great job of guarding the goats, mainly from coyotes."

At that point the Millers realized that they needed some help. "We read about a course called Farm Beginnings in the Agri-News newspaper and



*Jen and Andy Miller purchased Nubian bucklings from Prairie Fruits Farm.*



decided to sign up," said Jen. "We wanted to learn the marketing—the business side of things. We needed help on things like how to take products to a farmers market and the ins and outs of insurance."

The Central Illinois Farm Beginnings course is co-facilitated by Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant and Leslie Cooperband of the University of Illinois and Terra Brockman from The Land Connection, an educational nonprofit organization. "It's a training program for farmers who want to learn more about low-cost, innovative methods of sustainable farming," explained Brockman. The course includes a classroom portion (October through March, covering goal setting, business planning, innovative marketing, and social, environmental and financial monitoring), working field days on local farms, and a mentorship.

Jen pulled out a thick binder filled with handouts from the course. Each session had a topic. The first Saturday began with participants being asked to think about what they want to accomplish. "They asked us what we want out of life and out of a farm," said Jen. "Then we talked about whether it would really work or not. There was a time for dreaming and then for going back to reality. That session helped us talk through the pros and cons of the enterprise," said Jen. "We were further along than most of the others in the class. We had already figured out that we wanted to raise goats."

The first Central Illinois Farm Beginnings course included people from 16 farm families. "Of those in the class, there were two of us in the goat business," said Jen. "The other one has about 40 acres northwest of Springfield. Most of the others were organic vegetable farmers. Some were looking for land. Some had land but didn't know what they wanted to do with it. One man was working at rebuilding the family farm, and one man had been raising organic poultry for about eight years. Another one of the participants was a chef who wanted to raise vegetables to use in his restaurant."

Although the classes were held in Bloomington, which wasn't too far for Jen and Andy to travel, other participants drove from LaGrange, Peoria, Quincy, Evanston, and Stelle.

Each week the class featured a different guest presenter. "Each speaker gave a different perspective," said Jen. "For instance, Bruce Condill from the Great Pumpkin Patch in Arthur, Illinois, talked a lot about public relations and keeping ideas fresh. Another week Rich Schell, a Chicago-based lawyer who knows a lot about legal aspects of direct market farming enterprises, came to answer legal questions." The speakers were coordinated by Cavanaugh-Grant, Extension specialist in small farms and sustainable agriculture. "The Central Illinois Farm Beginnings started as a pilot program that was developed through a grant from the North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program," said Cavanaugh-Grant. "The Land Stewardship Project (a Minnesota nonprofit organi-



*Two Great Pyrenees dogs and a Kiko Cross doe were purchased at a farm in Kentucky. The dogs guard the goats, primarily from coyotes.*

zation dedicated to sustainable agriculture) developed a beginning farmer training program about 10 years ago. We were able to draw from their materials and developed a program that included farmers and resource persons from several university, government, and nonprofit organizations in Illinois."

One unique aspect of Central Illinois Farm Beginnings is that the program has been developed and guided by a local steering committee. Member Stan Schutte, a farmer from Shelbyville, said the course is important because "we aren't reproducing farmers anymore." Schutte sees Farm Beginnings launching a new generation of farmers in the region.

At the end of the classroom portion of the course, each of the farmers did a final presentation of their "Whole Farm Plan" and received feedback from the facilitators and fellow students. "The class helped us look at our operation carefully," said Jen. "We know what quality of life we want. We want to raise meat goats with a minimum of time and input but still be financially sustainable. We want to utilize the pastures, so we can feed them less grain and allow the manure to fertilize the pasture."

Was the investment of time and the \$800 course fee worth it? "I learned that I need to treat this as a business, not a hobby, and that planning is extremely important. We bought a computer program to help us keep track of everything, like feed and medical expenses," said Jen. She is working at developing a Web site to help market the business she and Andy call Rush Creek Farms, named for the creek that runs through their property ([www.rushcreek-farms.com](http://www.rushcreek-farms.com)).

Jen said that although the binder of materials and literature was helpful, it's the connections made with other people in the program that were most valuable. "I know that I now have at least six people I can call on when I need help. I already e-mail the other meat goat farmer in the group once or twice a month with questions."

*Continued on page 9*



## Growth of Packaged Organic Food Products Requires Multiyear Contracts



*by Michael A. Mazzocco*

Supporting growth in retail sales of organic packaged foods requires food manufacturers to have reliable, consistent supplies of ingredients.

These are exciting times for organic farmers. The growth of organic food sales in the U.S. and elsewhere has been well documented. The largest food retailer in the U.S. has announced its intention to expand organic product offerings. The success of organic products becoming mainstream and part of many grocery shoppers' baskets offers vast opportunities for those willing to be part of the organic supply system.

Various authors and researchers attribute this growth to a broad range of factors, and they have placed the growth rate of retail sales of organic grocery products at about 20 percent per year (rounded) over the past few years. The Food Institute reports that the market for organic and natural products together increased 15.7 percent in 2005 to \$51 billion. Recent evidence and testimony indicates that this growth rate is constrained by supply limitations, implying that the realizable growth rate in organic food sales is approximately somewhere between 20 and 40 percent per year, depending upon product category and retail channel. Of course, it is difficult to precisely ascertain lost sales from insufficient product volume.

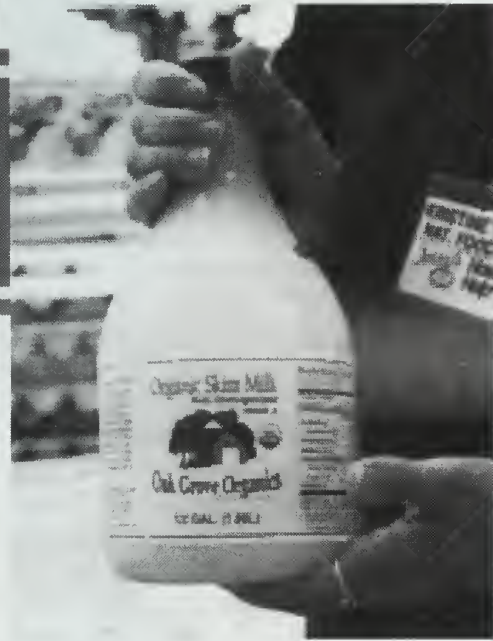
The recent push by retailers to expand their organic product offerings can be accomplished only in two primary categories: fresh and packaged. If we look at the broadly defined packaged food category, new products are introduced at a rate of thousands per year (down from nearly 20,000 per year in the mid-1990s, according to the USDA, 2002). Although the market is experiencing a broad array of product introductions designed to take advantage of whole-grain formulations and trans-fat labeling requirements,

Now let us introduce two hypothetical products into the consumer channel. Both are owned by multinational companies whose brand value is closely guarded and will not be sacrificed for the sake of gambles. All of the following data is fictitious, used for illustrative purposes only. However, to get a feel for the magnitude of commitment, one actual product was recently reported to be introduced with a \$50-million marketing campaign.

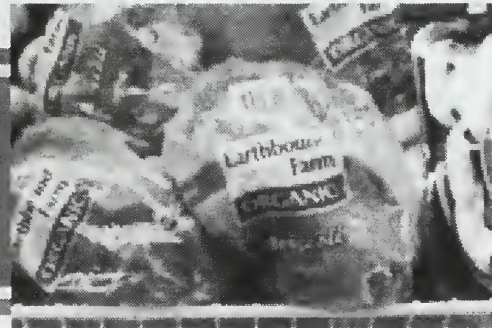
organic corn acreage. More importantly, this corn acreage is likely to be already spoken for, indicating the company is going to need to buy out existing contracts or find new acreage. Developing new acreage means the company has to find at least three times as much acreage among farmers, or 22,000 new organic acres, because of crop rotation constraints.

The next hurdle facing the company is the development of a commitment from the farmers of these 22,000 acres

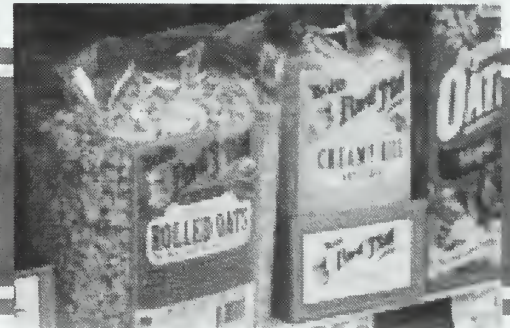
The first fictitious product in our



*Kristine Masley, natural foods manager at Jerry's IGA store in Champaign, holds a bottle of organic milk – one of several brands IGA carries.*



*Masley says that the organic produce also looks good. "People don't even realize that they picked up a head of organic broccoli until it gets rung up at the cash register when they check-out," she said.*



*Today Masley encounters more people who are educated about the health benefits of pesticide-free foods and are concerned about what they are feeding their children.*

many food manufacturers are wisely hesitant to introduce organic versions of their products due to concerns over the reliability of ingredient quantity and quality. In short, food companies cannot commit to the public and retail channels until farmers are willing to commit to food companies (or their aggregation channels).

Consider the following facts. In November 2005, the USDA reported that there were 122,500 acres of organic soybeans in the United States. We must assume all of those soybeans found a market. Furthermore, the same report indicates that there were 105,500 acres of organic corn the same year, all of which we can assume found a market.

example is being developed by a snack food company that wishes to introduce an organic corn snack. The company has chosen the corn variety that works for both its process and flavor needs. Average yield on irrigated acreage is 115 bushels per acre. The economics of product introduction indicate that to make it worthwhile, the company needs to market 30 million pounds of the product annually (which is a very low estimate for a new product). Further assume that cleaning, shipping, and drying result in a shrink of approximately 20 percent, indicating that the company can sell 80 pounds of product for every 100 pounds of corn it purchases from farmers. In addition, the company is reluctant to rely on the average yield and wants to grow 25 percent more acres than the average yield indicates, in order to not run out of the corn variety upon which the product is based.

So how many acres does the company need to contract? About 7,300 acres of corn, which is 7 percent of all U.S.

to supply the company with the specified variety for many years into the future. Why would the company spend \$50 million or more on a product rollout with only a one-year assurance of supply? Imagine what failure to deliver on the second year's production would do to the company's brand image? This company needs a one-third commitment (one third of the acreage) from farmers of 22,000 organic acres for multiple years. But what farmer wants to put an entire corn crop in one variety? That complication causes even more multiplication, implying the need for accessing more farmers that can commit less than 100 percent of a larger acreage.

Now consider the second product. Let's assume it is an organic product that uses soy as an ingredient. However, instead of having an 80 percent process yield like the corn snack, it has a 20 percent process yield (one pound of finished product per five pounds of uncleaned soybeans). With every-



IGA natural foods manager Kristine Masley, who has been a vegetarian for 19 years, says that the population of people who want organic foods is getting considerably more diverse. It's a smaller market, but it's also a growing market.



Masley says that more people are expecting organic food sections in grocery stores. She gets daily requests for organic products.

#### Organic Supply and Demand (Continued)

thing else being equal, this product requires slightly more than 27,000 acres of soybeans, which is 22 percent (more than one-fifth) of all the organic soybean acres in the U.S. Again, due to the expected three-year minimum crop rotation, the company needs to contract with growers who control three times that amount of acreage, or more than 80,000 organic acres. And without multiyear commitments from these growers, the company cannot be assured that it will have enough raw material to meet its needs in the years ahead.

In the current environment, the retailers have indicated that they expect food companies to develop and introduce more organic product offerings, either through new labels, product line extensions, or other means. The challenge to food manufacturing companies is to solve the problem of ingredient supply reliability in the years ahead.

The most effective mechanism for lining up supply commitments is multiyear contracts. Multiyear con-

tracts can be advantageous for both parties. First, they line up supply chain participants behind the products. Second, they provide a mechanism for farmers to learn from repeated crops the aspects of quality and service for which they can expect to be paid in future years. Third, they can allow for increasing the volume of repeat purchases from supply chain customers in the future as farmers and processors learn how to compete for valuable business in these markets.

So what does this imply for growers? Get to know your customers' needs. Have more than one channel and more than one customer. Find out how committed the participants in the supply chain are to the new volumes that are to support the new products. Take advantage of contracting acres with payment based on production. And understand that competition from external production markets may affect prices from year to year. Organic feed grade soybeans that were at \$18 a few years ago have been about \$11 this past winter. But \$4 organic feed grade corn of a few years ago is now

about \$5.50. Multiyear contracts will likely provide for price fluctuations, so be prepared.

The growth of organic packaged products and livestock products will require creativity in developing expanded volumes in supply chains. While there are some risks, there are likely to be substantial rewards. ☞

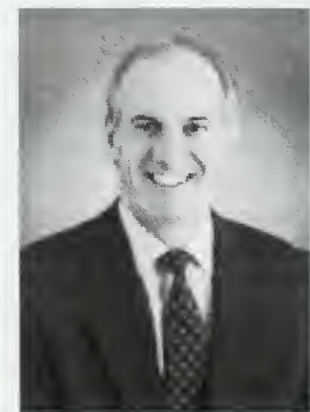


Photo by David Riecks

Michael A. Mazzocco is associate professor in food and agribusiness management in the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences and director of the Office of Corporate Relations at the University of Illinois.

Cooperband agrees that the benefits of Farm Beginnings extend well beyond the traditional classroom style of learning. "The mentorship part of the program, in which participants are paired with a farmer who is already engaged in a similar enterprise, is extremely valuable," she said. "Since networking is such an important element to success in alternative farming enterprises, having people that Farm Beginnings students can turn to for advice cannot be underestimated. The mentorships range from periodic phone conversations to actual work days on the mentors' farms."

In May, the Millers sold their first goat. "We don't want to get involved with raising a large number of goats and selling them at auction, so finding customers is one of our biggest hurdles right now," said Jen. "We hope that in two to three years, the pastures will be in better shape and we can continue to increase the number of goats we keep. We are focusing on the Kiko goat breed. We recently added two 100 percent New Zealand Kiko does and one 100 percent New Zealand Kiko buck to the herd. They'll be the start of our purebred breeding stock line. We need hearty goats that don't need to be pampered. The course made us take a hard look at what we want. We want low input and high profit," she said with a laugh. 🌿

*Debra Levey Larson is a writer for the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences at the University of Illinois.*

#### Central Illinois Farm Beginnings 2006 Graduates

**Back (L to R):** Tim Childs, O'Fallon; Craig Cheatham, Bloomington; James McManus, Downs; Linda Connelly, Athens; Floyd Johnson, Raymond; Colin Riley, Normal; Andrew Miller, Sidney.

**Middle:** Maria Cheatham, Bloomington; Cassandra Ireland, Stelle; Rebecca Fischer, Quincy; Karen Woods and Steve Woods, Springfield; Jennifer Miller, Sidney; Bill Wilson, Stelle

**Front:** Mitchell Renner, Canton, Sara Riley Normal; Hai Walker, O'Fallon; Kathy Corso, Peoria; Tina Arapolu, LaGrange; Kamal Rashid, Chicago.

**Not pictured:** Angela Corso, Peoria; Eli Silins, Evanston.

## Registration Open for Central Illinois Farm Beginnings

Central Illinois Farm Beginnings will begin its second year in October with five months of twice-monthly seminars taught by central Illinois farmers and business people. The course will focus on the business behind farming. Topics will include planning for profit, multiple marketing strategies, and building a business plan.

During the farming season, April through October, participants go through a mentorship program and participate in field-day workshops on local farms. "There is absolutely nothing like talking to the very people who have walked the path of sustainable farming," said Bill Wilson, who participated in the first course this past year. "I learned so much hearing the success stories, and even the failures, from the wide variety of farmers that presented, one class after another. Farm Beginnings will likely save me thousands of dollars in mistakes!"

The fee for the full-year program is \$800, which includes course books and materials, eight classroom sessions, working field days, refreshments, and mentorships. Some scholarship funding is available for those in need of financial assistance. The \$800 fee does not even cover half of the real costs of the program, according to co-facilitator Terra

Brockman. The other portion was provided by a generous lead grant from The Liberty Prairie Foundation. Other funders include Farm Aid, Heifer International, the Illinois Department of Agriculture, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and the USDA Risk Management Education. Additional funding comes from the University of Illinois Dudley Smith Initiative and The Land Connection.

Central Illinois Farm Beginnings will offer more Saturday classes in the second year, allowing more time for interaction between students and presenters. For the course syllabus and additional information, visit the Central Illinois Farm Beginnings Website at [www.farmbeginnings.uiuc.edu](http://www.farmbeginnings.uiuc.edu).

For more information on the program, contact Terra Brockman (847-570-0701; [info@thelandconnection.org](mailto:info@thelandconnection.org)) or Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant (217-968-5512; [cvnghgrn@uiuc.edu](mailto:cvnghgrn@uiuc.edu)). Applications for year 2 are now being accepted.

For the Stateline Farm Beginnings, which is the program for northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin, contact Parker Forsell, CSA Learning Center at Angelic Organics (815-389-8455; [CRAFT@CSALearningCenter.org](mailto:CRAFT@CSALearningCenter.org)).



Photo by Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant

# Grants Awarded For INNOVATION



North Central Region SARE


by Roger Simonsen

Despite tough economic times in agriculture, there is a growing wave of farmers and ranchers setting themselves up for success by turning to sustainable agriculture as a new way of doing business. Many of these agriculture innovators are in the current crop of farmer rancher grant recipients. The grants are made available through the North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCR-SARE) Program.

NCR-SARE recently announced that 47 farmer rancher grant proposals have been selected for funding. A total of \$414,489 will be disbursed in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. Every farmer and rancher will use the funding to implement a sustainable farm project.

In Illinois, Michael Vincent of Hull was funded \$5,850 for "Okra—An Oilseed for Stressful Conditions of the Midwest."

The USDA-funded NCR-SARE program provides competitive grants to farmers, educators, graduate students, and researchers furthering economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable agriculture. Once a year, NCR-SARE calls for grant proposals from farmers and ranchers, then forwards those proposals to a review committee, made up of agricultural producers and other experts. After all the proposals have been reviewed, the NCR-SARE administrative council selects projects to be funded.

For more information on NCR-SARE and its competitive grant programs, to be notified of NCR-SARE's call for grant proposals, and for a complete listing of the 2005 grants, visit [www.sare.org/ncrsare/](http://www.sare.org/ncrsare/). 

## Mini-Grants Awarded

The following 12 proposals have been selected to receive NCR-SARE funding totaling \$11,916. Congratulations!

**Locally Grown Food Fest—**  
Carrie Edgar, Quincy

**Using Distributed Multimedia for Educational Outreach—**  
Lawrence Mate, Champaign

**Farm Fresh Newsletter—**  
Jim Hall, Mt. Zion

**Christian, Fayette, Montgomery, and Shelby County Teacher/Classroom Education Program—**  
Kelli Bassett, Hillsboro

**Growing the Future—**  
Jennifer Schultz, Decatur

**Building a Successful Farmers Market: Training for UI Extension and Market Managers—**Pam Rossman, Freeport

**Pumpkin Production and Incorporation of a Sustainable Agriculture Program into the Curriculum—**  
Susan Thoren, Waukegan

**Keeping It Local, Buying It Fresh—**  
Jennifer Russell, Hardin

**Disease-Resistant Apples for Sustainable and Organic Production Systems—**Jeff Kindhart, Simpson

**Hunger Prevention Through Community Partnerships—**  
Kasey Murphy, Woodstock

**Bi-State Sheep and Meat Goat Seminar—**Lisa Ellis, Paris

**Demonstration of Mating Disruption for Oriental Fruit Moth Management in Sustainable Peach Production—**  
Richard Weinzierl, Urbana

## New Publication on Natural Enemies

There is a new entry in the Michigan State University pocket-guide series: *Identifying Natural Enemies in Field Crops*, developed by Mary Gardiner with assistance from Christina DiFonzo, Michael Brewer, Takuji Noma, and the MSU Integrated Pest Management Program.

The guide is divided by major groups of natural enemies and spiders: beetles, true bugs, lacewings, predatory flies, parasitoids, spiders, and ants. It is particularly useful for those working with soybean aphid, but is also relevant for use in other field crops as well as vegetable crops and around the home to identify common insects. The plastic-coated pages make the booklet durable in the field.

To preview sample pages, get more information, or order, visit <http://www.ipm.msu.edu/pubs-natural.htm> (you can also get more information or order by phone: 517-353-6740).

## Ag Network Provides Organic Growing Information

Organic farmers and those considering a transition to organic practices have a new reference tool, also from Michigan State University (MSU)—*The New Agriculture Network*. Located at [www.new-ag.msu.edu](http://www.new-ag.msu.edu), the network publishes a newsletter twice monthly throughout the growing season.

Dale Mutch, MSU Extension specialist who headed the network's development, said, "The purpose of the site is to provide biological, nonchemical, and long-term, science-based, research information to organic farmers." *The New Agriculture Network* was created and is maintained by a tri-state Extension team of specialists from Michigan State University, Purdue University, and the University of Illinois.

Nine organic growers will share crop updates and advice with Extension personnel from the three universities to generate information for the site. University specialists will also write articles about a variety of practices and new findings useful for organic growers or those wishing to transition to organic practices.

Initially, the site will include only information related to field crops and vegetables, but it may later expand to include other commodities. Funding was provided by the American Farmland Trust and the Environmental Protection Agency.

## Report Offers Direction for Farm Conservation Program

In May 2006, a Blue Ribbon Panel of experts released a report that offers direction for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to ensure the nation's conservation programs are efficient and effective outlets for taxpayers' money. The panel has been analyzing a USDA project, at the request of USDA, since 2004 in an external policy-level review. The Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP), is a multiagency effort to quantify the environmental benefits of conservation practices used by private landowners participating in selected USDA conservation programs.

The panel, organized by the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS), believes CEAP creates a window of opportunity for a strategic approach to conservation. The group concluded, however, that USDA must change CEAP's direction and emphasis and outlines a blueprint in *Conservation Effects Assessment Project: A Final Report*.

Four key points stand out in the panel's recommendations. First, using computer models to report how government programs are performing cannot—and must not—substitute for on-the-ground monitoring. "The Blue Ribbon Panel recommends Congress mandate 1 percent of all conservation program funding to support on-the-ground monitoring of the benefits those programs are producing," said Craig Cox, executive director of SWCS.

The second take-home message of the report is that Congress should update and reauthorize the Soil and Water Conservation Act of 1977. Cox said that "the panel thinks the updated Act should authorize sufficient appropriations and provide the authority for multiagency and stakeholder collaborative effort needed to assess and evaluate effectively conservation programs as producing the environmental benefits taxpayers expect."

Third, USDA must focus CEAP on a handful of critical and explicitly stated environmental goals that are expected to drive conservation efforts over the coming decades and look more to assessments at the regional—rather than national—level.

And finally, the panel recommends that building the science base to support environmental management on working should be a primary purpose of CEAP. The panel envisions a network of watershed studies that would document the most effective means of producing environmental benefits on agricultural land.

To view the additional recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Panel in the full report, go to [www.swcs.org](http://www.swcs.org).

*Founded in 1945, the Soil and Water Conservation Society is a nonprofit, professional organization that serves as an advocate for the conservation professions and for science-based conservation policy. The society has chapters in all 50 states and about 5,000 members worldwide.*

## **Food Alliance: Sustainable, Local Foods Made Easy** *by Ray Kirsch*

Food Alliance is a certification program for sustainable, local foods. The proposition is simple: to put great taste, local investment, and conservation of natural resources into a certification seal that's easy to identify.

From its humble beginnings in Portland, Oregon, in 1997, Food Alliance now has over 225 farms certified for environmental and social responsibility, with regional designations of origin, and distributing to regional grocers, restaurants, college campuses, and corporate cafeterias.

In 2000, Food Alliance partnered with two midwestern non-profits, Cooperative Development Services and Land Stewardship Project, to open a regional affiliate in St. Paul, Minnesota. As a result, there are now Food Alliance-certified farms in Minnesota, Nebraska, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Michigan. There are also partnerships with food companies, from regional grocers to national marketers, to source and promote Food Alliance-certified foods.

Food Alliance certification is based on best management practices for environmental and social responsibility. It's built on ideas that all farmers and food businesses are familiar with—the research of universities, extension, and government agencies. For example, the soil and water conservation criteria in the Food Alliance program are the same as those the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) recommends. Midwest vegetable growers will find integrated pest management (IPM) criteria taken directly from the Midwest Vegetable Production Guide. Illinois graziers will find grazing criteria that reflect NRCS suggestions in *Grazing in Illinois*. The key is that most of the time the only way that farmers get paid for conservation is through government programs. Food Alliance certification helps farmers and food businesses get paid through the marketplace.



Food Alliance is also building market partnerships to ensure that certified foods make it onto every plate. This means searching out new opportunities and venues, such as food services at companies, restaurants and universities, and working with distributors and grocers of all sizes.

The identification of local foods is made easy for marketers and consumers by using one certification for all foods.

When the label says "Food Alliance certified, Midwest Grown," consumers know they're getting sustainable, local foods, whether the label is on green beans or pork chops. There's no need for multiple certifications or labels indicating traits such as IPM-grown, wildlife-friendly, clean water-promoting, fairly treated farm workers, or humanely raised animals. All of these attributes are contained in Food Alliance certification.

In 2005, Food Alliance started working with Illinois organizations, extension educators, and producers. In 2006 the group began partnering with the Healthy Schools Campaign in Chicago to initiate a program that will give students access to certified sustainable foods from Illinois. Food Alliance is working with regional distributors to make transporting certified foods in the upper Midwest easier. The program is also working with farmers and processors to introduce certification, walk them through the process, and help them integrate Food Alliance certification into their businesses.

Illinois producers and food businesses interested in Food Alliance certification can download applications from the Web site, [www.foodalliance.org](http://www.foodalliance.org). To get assistance from Food Alliance's Midwest staff, contact Ray Kirsch, Midwest certification coordinator (651-653-0618; [ray@foodalliance.org](mailto:ray@foodalliance.org)) or Bob Olson, Midwest business development manager (651-265-3682; [bob@foodalliance.org](mailto:bob@foodalliance.org)). 





# CALENDAR

## November

				3	4
				10	11
12			15	12	13
14	20	21	22	23	
		28	29	30	

### October 16

#### World Food Day

For the past 25 years, World Food Day has been observed to increase awareness of the persistent problems associated with a shortage of food in many areas of the world. This annual event, observed worldwide, also coincides with TeleFood — a campaign to raise awareness about the plight of the world's hungry people and mobilize resources to help them.

The University of Illinois College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences is at the forefront in using science to address the problems of hunger and malnutrition. Researchers in the college continue to produce new varieties of crops and pioneer new ways of raising and managing livestock to increase and improve the food supply. In an increasingly complex world, food safety and efficient distribution are issues of growing importance. Land and water issues are becoming a major challenge, as we look to the long-term sustainability of agricultural and food systems. To learn more, visit [www.worldfood-dayusa.org/](http://www.worldfood-dayusa.org/).

### October 18

#### World Water Monitoring Day

This world monitoring effort is coordinated by America's Clean Water Foundation, International Water Association in cooperation with several other environmental groups and government agencies to create awareness on water quality issues throughout the world. Over time, the data collected will help develop a better understanding of water quality throughout the world.

Monitoring test kits are \$18.35 and include supplies for up to 50 tests. The test kits measure dissolved oxygen, pH, turbidity/clarity, and temperature.

For more details or to order monitoring kits, visit [www.worldwatermonitoringday.org](http://www.worldwatermonitoringday.org).

### November 3 - 4

#### Hydroponic & Organic Growers Conference Orlando, Florida

Expert and prospective growers who want to learn more about Commercial Hydroponic Greenhouse Gardening — also referred to as the Soilless Controlled Environment Agriculture, or S/CEA — will be gathering at the 23rd Annual Hydroponic and Organic Grower's Conference.

The conference features two days of back-to-back seminars with world-renowned experts on the current developments and technologies used in producing high quality produce without soil or pesticides in computer-automated, controlled-environment greenhouses.

Energy costs continue to climb and this year there is a special focus on energy costs, energy efficiency in the greenhouse, and alternative energy sources.

Among the other topics to be featured during the seminar tracks are: steps to improving yields and quality, lighting, water and nutrient management, organic growing, marketing your product, the latest on safe insect and disease control and many more.

For more information, visit [www.cropking.com](http://www.cropking.com) or contact CropKing (800-321-5656; [cropking@cropking.com](mailto:cropking@cropking.com)).

### November 10-12

#### The Future of Farming: Tilth Producers of Washington Annual Conference Vancouver, Washington

The conference keynote speaker is Helena Norberg-Hodge — founder of the International Society for Ecology and Culture (<http://www.isec.org.uk>) and co-author of *Bringing the Food Economy Home: Local Alternatives to Global Agribusiness*. For information, visit [www.tilthproducers.org/](http://www.tilthproducers.org/).

# CALENDAR

*December*

6 7

## **November 15**

### **America Recycles Day**

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity has a selection of free, educational bookmarks about recycling and a hands-on recycling activity kit for youth audiences, called Investigating the 4 R's, which is available at no charge, on a loan basis. To order, contact Rebecca Enrietto (Rebecca.Enrietto@illinois.gov) or visit [www.istep.org](http://www.istep.org). Contact Mike Mitchell, Director of the Illinois Recycling Association, for free posters and other materials to help promote America Recycles Day (708-358-0050; or visit [www.illinoisrecycles.org](http://www.illinoisrecycles.org)).

## **November 17-23**

### **Farm-City Week**

The National Farm-City Council was organized in 1955. This annual event is dedicated to enhancing linkages between farm families and urban residents and providing local organizations with educational programs and materials about the people who grow food.

For more information about how you can enhance Farm-City Week in your community, visit [www.farmcity.org](http://www.farmcity.org), or call 847-685-8764.

## **November 28-30**

### **National Non-Point Pollution Conference Radisson Hotel City Centre Indianapolis, Indiana**

At this conference, more than 60 authors from 12 states, China, and New Zealand will speak about new methods, programs, and measurement efforts pertaining to non-point source pollution. The focus area of this 2.5-day conference includes Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky, but many presenters will describe non-point source pollution efforts in other states and countries. In addition, many vendors will exhibit the goods and services they offer to reduce non-point source pollution, measure water quality impacts, and evaluate the success of pollution reduction efforts.

For more information and detailed conference agenda contact Dennis Wichelns, Conference Coordinator at the Rivers Institute at Hanover College (812-866-6846 or visit [www.riversinstitute.org](http://www.riversinstitute.org)).

## **November 28-30**

### **Greater Peoria Farm Show, Peoria Civic Center Peoria, Illinois**

This year there will be more than 300 companies exhibiting their products and services in more than 700 booths and exhibits at this annual, free indoor event.

Extension Educators and Unit Staff from throughout central Illinois will be present at the University of Illinois Extension booth to share new research ideas for the farm and home and provide information on up-coming winter Extension meetings.

For a complete listing of exhibitors, activities, and features, visit [www.farmshowsusa.com](http://www.farmshowsusa.com).

## **December 6 - 7**

### **Illinois Organic Conference The Interstate Center Bloomington, Illinois**

See article on page 16 for details.

## Third Statewide Organic Conference Planned for Illinois

The University of Illinois sustainable agriculture program in the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Science and U of I Extension are planning the third statewide conference on organic production and marketing. The conference is scheduled for December 6 and 7 at The Interstate Center in Bloomington, Illinois.



"These two meetings have a substantial overlap of audience," said Kim Tack of the IDEA program. "By combining the two conferences we'll save farmers and entrepreneurs the expense of traveling to two different events." Attenders will have the option of signing up for either day alone or both days together for a discounted rate.

"We are doing things a little differently this year," said Dan Anderson, planning committee chair. Anderson explains that two formerly distinct meetings will be combined to bring the best, most complete research- and farmer-based production and marketing information available to those interested in organic farming and consumer-driven marketing.

On the first day, registrants will have access to cutting-edge organic production and certification information on grain crops, specialty crops, and livestock. On day two, registrants will attend a separate conference: Marketing Strategies for Consumer-Driven Agriculture, sponsored and organized by Extension's IDEA and Market Maker programs.

An organic and marketing trade show featuring over 50 exhibitors will span both days. A taste-of-organic reception on the evening of December 6 will feature local and organic food prepared by area chefs, with cooking demonstrations and entertainment. The reception will be open to the public.

For more information, contact Dan Anderson (217-333-1588; [aslan@uiuc.edu](mailto:aslan@uiuc.edu)) or Kim Tack (309-792-2500; [kimtack@extension.uiuc.edu](mailto:kimtack@extension.uiuc.edu)).

The registration deadline is November 15. Visit the conference website at [asap.aces.uiuc.edu/orgconf/](http://asap.aces.uiuc.edu/orgconf/).

### AGRO-ECOLOGY

News and Perspectives

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