



(218) 393-3276 • www.lssfa.org • info@lakesuperiorfarming.org

Lake Superior Farming Conference - March 5-6, 2010!

The first Lake Superior Farming Conference is set for March 5 and 6 at Barker's Island Inn in Superior, Wisconsin. The conference, co-sponsored by LSSFA, CORET (Chequamegon Organic Research, Education and Training Group) and Bayfield County UW-Extension, is offered as a lower cost, less distant alternative to the high profile Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference in Lacrosse.

This year's conference represents a significant expansion of the event held in Ashland for the past two years. Supported by a Sow the Seeds Season Extension grant from the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP), the conference will offer half-day intensive sessions on Friday, a local foods lunch, expert presentations, and a Farm Beginnings networking dinner on Saturday. The grant includes focus on traditional season extension technologies as well as less obvious approaches like soil fertility and seasonally targeted marketing.

Look inside this newsletter for the conference brochure insert which includes conference details, a registration form as well as a scholarship form. We hope to see you there.

Conference Registration

A complete Lake Superior Conference Registration Form is enclosed.

You can also download a registration form at

www.lssfa.org/events

Conference Scholarships

The Lake Superior Farming conference is offering up to \$500 in scholarships to attend the Lake Superior Conference to resource-limited participants. Please see enclosed scholarship flyer and conference registration materials.

Lake Superior Farm Beginnings Networking Dinner

Free! Saturday, March 6 from 5:00 – 6:30 pm after the Conference at Barkers Island Inn, 300 Marina Drive, Superior, WI. We encourage all current and graduate LSFBS participants to attend, as well as anyone interested in supporting or serving as an educator for the program. Please RSVP to Cree Bradley, 218.834.0846 or cree@lakesuperiorfarming.org or indicate your dinner attendance on the conference registration form.



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2009 LSSFA

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LSSFA MISSION

The Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association is a 501(c)3 non profit that supports the development and enhancement of sustainable farming systems through innovation, demonstration, education, and farmer-to-farmer networking.

LS-SFA Annual Business Meeting

The Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association held its annual business meeting on Tuesday, January 26, 2010 at the Peace Church in Duluth. The LS-SFA annual meeting has typically featured education workshops, a local foods dinner, and the annual business meeting open to all members of the Chapter. This year LS-SFA changed the format in order to provide members with greater opportunity to network and increase their farm knowledge. The annual business meeting was held on January 26.

Members approved a \$40,496.41 LS-SFA 2010 annual operation budget as well as the slate of board members - Kelly Smith (2013), Loren Nelson (2013) and Karola Dalen (2013).

The educational component usually affiliated with the meeting was moved to March 5 & 6 in conjunction with the Lake Superior Farming Conference. This exciting conference features a half-day 'organic university-style' intensive training and a full-day program with presentations and workshops covering a myriad of relevant farming topics. Please see page one article and conference brochure insert for more information.

LS-SFA's New Website—Check it Out

Thanks to a generous grant from the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation, the Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association has been able to finance the redevelopment of our website. If you haven't visited LS-SFA's website recently, we encourage you to do so. Annual meeting minutes, newsletters, event announcements, online membership renewal/donation forms, and a complete Harvest Festival website have been updated or added. You can use our new web address www.lssfa.org to access the site, but our old address—www.lakesuperiorfarming.org—will continue to work as well. We welcome your website feedback and ideas—send to info@lakesuperiorfarming.org

Farm Beginnings Receives Scholarship Funding



Rotary Club Duluth #25

Thanks to a \$10,000 donation from **Curt Bush**, retired owner and operator of Blueberry Bush's Farm, additional scholarship funding will be available to LSFBS students with demonstrated financial need. LSFBS will work with Curt to find matching funds. When sufficient funding is secured, the principal will be large enough to provide scholarships in perpetuity funded by the annual interest.

Duluth Rotary Club # 25, donors of \$2,000 last year, recently confirmed their commitment to continue support for student scholarships for Farm Beginnings. With a proven track record of support for local foods, sustainable farming, and LSSFA, Duluth Rotary #25 has donated an additional \$3,000 for this year's scholarship needs. Over the two-year period, ten LSFBS participants have been helped by partial scholarships.

Additional money is still needed. Contact Cree Bradley at 218.834.0846 or cree@lakesuperiorfarming.org for information about making a LSFBS scholarship donation. **Thanks again to Curt Bush and Duluth Rotary Club # 25!**

Green Jobs Action Planning in Duluth

By Randel Hanson



Randel Hanson, Chair of the Food Systems committee

A 'Green Jobs Action Planning Process' is underway in Duluth, integrating community leaders and citizens in developing green job opportunities in the western Lake Superior region.

The project is a collaboration between the City of Duluth, the Ordean Foundation, the A.H. Zeppa Family Foundation, the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation, and Duluth's Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). The process involves area citizens representing many sectors of the region serving on Steering Committee teams assembled around the Built Environment, Energy Production, Resource Protection, Transportation Systems, and Food Systems.

Overall goals for the project include exploring ways to 1) encourage the development of new green jobs and recruitment of sustainable businesses, 2) assist in the retention of existing green jobs and support for our current industries and producers, and 3) create opportunities for our workforce to become both environmentally and financially more sustainable.

The Steering Committee is chaired by Duluth Mayor Don Ness, Zeppa Family Foundation Policy Director Tony Cuneo, and LISC Executive Director Pam Kramer. Jodi Slick, Executive Director of Common Ground Construction, is facilitating the overall process. In total some 120 business, farming, union, university, and community representatives within the teams are providing input from their background.

The respective teams are charged with first brainstorming the meaning and possibilities for sustainable development within their particular area, and then through a series of steps and meetings, creating Action Plans that speak to the overall goals. The Steering Committee will use these combined

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Become a Member...or Renew Your Membership Today!

By becoming a member of the Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association (LSSFA) you will be supporting the work of the Association to create a more sustainable food and farming system for our region. You will receive the *Farm & Market News*—a quarterly newsletter of LSSFA to “keep you posted” about sustainable agriculture events and happenings in our region. You will also receive the State of MN Sustainable Farming Association Newsletter, *The CornerPost*.

One Year Membership - \$30

CONSIDER A TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATION

Already a member and want to further help build LSSFA's capacity—consider giving a tax-deductible contribution of \$250, \$100, \$50, \$25 to help LSSFA fulfill its mission.

Gifts of any size are welcome and appreciated.

Name

Farm/Business/Organization (please list products produced if applicable)

Address

City/State/Zip

Phone

Email

Annual Membership (\$30)	\$	30
Tax Deductible Donation	\$	_____
Farm Beginnings Donation	\$	_____
Total Support	\$	_____

*Please send a check payable to
Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association
310 Chestnut Ave—PO Box 307
Carlton, MN 55718*

Action Plans to develop a broader green jobs vision, provide guidance and support, and explore partnership and policies that could further green job opportunities.

This Duluth-based project piggybacks on the work of the MN Green Jobs Task Force, which was established by law in 2008. That statute defined green jobs as relating to or involving actions for protecting the natural environment that have career growth potential and a living wage. Green jobs are the employment and entrepreneurial opportunities that are part of the green economy, including the four industry sectors of green products, renewable energy, green services and environmental conservation.

The goals of a green economy stand in contrast to a black economy (based on fossil fuels such as coal, petroleum, and natural gas) or a red economy (based on credit card debt, over-leveraged hedge funds, banks, etc.), both of which are ultimately unsustainable. Hence, the 'green' economic development model addresses the interdependence of human economies and communities and the natural ecosystems which undergird all life on Earth. A common theme involves regionalization of the infrastructure for core needs in energy, transportation, housing, and food.

Chaired by Randel Hanson, the Food Systems Committee has about 20 active contributors, including SFA members David Abazs, Cree Bradley, Dave Dumke, John Fisher- Merritt, Kelly Smith, and Nicole Wilde.

After initial brainstorming, the Food Systems Committee organized their approach around three focal points: local food supply; local food demand; and middle infrastructure (processing, aggregating and distributing) as it concerns increasing the availability and consumption of locally harvested food. Action planning in these areas will be complete by late February, 2010.

As it is in most regions, the task of rebuilding regional food systems is a multi-decade venture for the western Lake Superior bioregion. If successful, we will enable many more people to enjoy produce from local sustainable farmers, enhancing our food and community security.

Lake Superior Farm Beginnings Update

By Cree Bradley

Fourteen farm units (individuals, spouses, and partners) with interests in livestock, vegetables, hazelnuts, and poultry comprise this year's Lake Superior Farm Beginnings student body. The first five of nine winter sessions are complete, with an upcoming February session on Financial Management and Planning for Profit. This session will explore Gross Margin Analysis, a financial concept introduced in Session Two by Holistic Resource Management educator Doug Gunnink. Students will also focus on the record-keeping skills and techniques used by Landis and Steven Spickerman of Hermit Creek Farm in High Bridge, WI.

In its first two years, LSFBS classes have been based at Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College in Cloquet. Cooperative planning is underway to move the site for next year to the Agricultural Station in Ashland, with the home base alternating between these two sites on an annual basis. The additional work and funding necessary to alternate sites should be more than offset by the expansion of offering to a larger, more diverse group of potential farmers.

Several students have been driving more than 100 miles to the Cloquet site. For purposes of comparison, distance from the state line to Ashland is well under 100 miles. Successful farmers Rick and Karola Dalen can give testimony to the value of the program even for those who live a considerable distance away. They drove south of the Twin Cities to attend Farm Beginnings classes before the program expanded north.

The More Things Change the More They Stay the Same Department

See how magnificent the courts have become
The women dress in colorful gowns
The men carry well-crafted swords
Food and drink overflow
Wealth and finery abound
Yet in the shadow of all this splendor
The fields grow barren
The granaries are all but empty
I say this pomp at the expense of others
Is like the boasting of thieves after a looting.

Lao-Tzu, circa 500 BCE

It's a Calling, Not a Job

Featured Farmers: Mary Dragich & John Pastor

By Barb Adams

On a small 50-foot lot in the Chester Creek neighborhood of Duluth, Mary Dragich and John Pastor have carved out a veritable treasure. Their effort, named Honey Creek Apiary and Gardens, is enormously productive (but with no small amount of hard work!). They say “We take pride in producing as much of our own food as possible; in doing so, we have markedly reduced our food-print and our participation in the packaged food trade.”

Between home and community gardens, Mary and John grow greens, garlic, onions, root vegetables, tomatoes, peppers, squash, cabbage family vegetables, and herbs. New in 2009 were popcorn and amaranth. “We estimate that we have well over 100 species of plants in our yard, including vegetables, fruits, and wildflowers,” says John. “In 2003, we created a permaculture food forest garden around our fruit trees.” Fruits they grow include apples, plums, pears, raspberries, grapes, currants, blueberries, and lingonberries. They have two mushroom logs and one beehive. Mary thinks chickens are in their future.

Sustainability is very important to both: “We water sparingly, using water from rain barrels as much as possible. We use companion planting and other techniques that save space and let plants do some of the work, such as covering the ground and discouraging weed growth. We compost kitchen scraps and plant material. The bees are for pollination as much as they are for honey. For them (and us) we have wildflower beds amongst our food crop gardens.” “We do things this way because, in part, it’s the way we learned and we’re honoring tradition. It doesn’t make sense

to bring in outside inputs, especially because of the importance of eating what came from our land. Besides, the gardens look nicer.”

Planning for the future: In 2009 they “finished knocking down our old garage and designing and building a garage with gardens on the roof (see picture), racks for 3 cords of firewood under the eaves on one side, and a 300 gallon rain barrel to catch and recycle rainwater from the roof.” For 2010, they plan to build a combination large composting bin – workbench under the eaves on the other side of the garage. John says “it’s more than a garage but less than a barn.” For the future,



John and Mary in their bee suits.

they are beginning to think about a greenhouse attached to their house for growing greens and to help heat the basement in the winter. “We sometimes talk about getting a larger place (10 acres) outside of Duluth where we could have livestock like goats and chickens and maybe a milk cow besides bees, but then our carbon footprint would increase because John is a professor at the University and he would have to drive in. Right now we live on Skyline Parkway up against the forests of Chester Park and an easy walk from UMD and downtown. It’s a real dilemma.”

Bees: Neither John nor Mary has taken a formal course in growing. But when it was time to get some bees, they took the University Bee Lab’s two-day workshop and would highly recommend it to anyone interested in beekeeping.

They haven’t harvested much honey yet, “but the bees survived the first winter and are amazingly interesting to watch and to learn about.” They hope



The rooftop garden on the “more than a garage but less than a barn”

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University of MN Duluth Farmers Market

The Sustainable Farming Association's Farmers Market at the University of Minnesota Duluth was a huge success this past year, and looks to keep flourishing for the upcoming season. We had a ton of really wonderful growers join us for the 2009 season - in total, 43 different sellers and an average of 14 at every market! Combined with the many talented crafters, artisans and of course musicians who came to share their gifts each week it made for a very colorful and vibrant market, with regular attendance by our little dancing visitors from the UMD Children's Place.

The UMD Market is located right at the bustling Kirby Plaza Bus Hub, which makes riding the bus there very easy. Free parking is available in some campus lots during the summer months. A nice rain venue is always available just inside the doors. New vendors are always welcome and are encouraged to contact the manager for more details. Weekly product lists and reminders are e-mailed to customer requests. We are expanding the time of the market slightly - in 2010 we will open Wednesdays at 1:30 and close at 4:30. The first market of the season will be Wednesday, May 19 and we will run through September.

We are looking forward to another great, sunny season. See you there! -- Leah Nelson, market manager: 218.940.2138

The Sustainable Agriculture Project at the University of Minnesota - Duluth (SAP@UMD)

The Sustainable Agriculture Project at UMD (SAP@UMD) is bringing an agriculture focus on the UMD farm for education, demonstration and production.

SAP@UMD is a collaborative effort on the part of UMD students, faculty, staff and area farmers. Planning is underway for laying out a ten acre field that will contain vegetable fields, irrigation ponds, wildlife corridors, and student gardens. Conceptualization for Spring, 2010 planting is underway. We are also surveying the partial renovation of what was once the largest apple orchard in Northeast Minnesota on the former grounds of the Northeast Branch Experiment Station.

SAP@UMD is an experiential field site to educate students, the university community, and the broader region about sustainable agriculture. Participants can work with biophysical, socio-cultural and political economic problems and solutions related to food, farm and gardening, integrating participatory and action oriented scholarship, learning, and teaching.

The applied social skills, cultural knowledge, and biophysical understanding around food, farm and gardening are more important than ever. While most of today's students won't be farmers, many will be gardeners, and all are eaters. Indeed,

'foodskills' are liberal arts skills, in the sense that they are foundational for healthy individual lives, communities, and our society as a whole. Student interest in food, farming, and gardening is very high. We see this project as one of many ways for UMD to become an institutional leader in the necessary social transformations ahead of us as we move toward sustainable communities.

SAP@UMD has many facets. Coursework integration is underway, examining the botanical history of the area and plotting out sustainable methods for integrating agriculture with wildlife. Seeds and student hands will be in the ground by Spring, 2010. We are exploring methods for renovating a four acre abandoned apple orchard. We seek to create a student-centered social enterprise that integrates collaborate learning with vegetable and fruit production and processing, bringing fresh local food and food knowledge to campus. A 'wiki' will be used to document student and faculty activities surrounding SAP@UMD, communicating information about the project. And we plan to seek USDA and other grants to grow the project.

If you are interested in participating in this project, email rhanson2@d.umn.edu. Let us know what you think.

Superior Grown Food Summit

The Superior Grown Food Summit moved us a little further towards a sustainable future. Held November 14th at UMD, the summit was a public conversation about the future of our regional food system. The program included panel presentations on the local foods movement, the capacity of our western Lake Superior region to produce more food, the role of family farms in a regional economy, and examples of how regions are rebuilding distribution and processing centers for locally produced food. An excellent local foods meal preceded the afternoon sessions, which solicited public input in breakout sessions on community food needs and priorities. The Summit was organized by representatives of farming, food, and gardening organizations in the Western Lake Superior bioregion. It was cosponsored by Whole Foods Coop, SFA, and the UMD Offices of Sustainability and Civic Engagement, and funded by the U of M Northeast Minnesota Regional Sustainable Development Partnership and Whole Foods Coop.

Most of our food is produced by a global, indus-

trial food system that is widely recognized as unsustainable and unhealthy. We are told this food is cheap. However, the industrial food system does not account for costs such as fossil fuels used in machinery, fertilizers, pesticides, and for transportation. It also fails to account for human and planetary health risks. Food security, the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods grown in sustainable ways, is compromised by the prevalence of an unsustainable food system. By locally producing more of the food we eat, we will improve the health of our communities and our land.

Since the Summit, a group has been crafting the input of citizen-participants into a *Vision Document for Food in the Western Lake Superior Bioregion* to help educate policymakers, politicians, and other interested stakeholders in our food system. Locally producing 25% of our food by 2025 is the current benchmark under consideration. The Green Jobs in Minnesota effort might be a large part of the next step. More information can be found at www.SuperiorGrown.org

Featured Farmers Pastor and Dragich (Continued from page 5)

to divide the hive this year. So far, they've had much more success with the bees than they expected.

Advice? "It's a calling, not a job. It's not romantic, it's a lot of hard work and you have to love it. Many days will just be hot and hard, but in the long haul it is worth doing. Don't think about how many dollars

per hour you earn or how much money you save growing your own food. You do the work it takes to live a certain way no matter how long it takes."

Mary and John were on the urban garden tour last year, and Mary sometimes sells extra produce at the farmer's market at UMD. Otherwise, you can reach them at mdragich@d.umn.edu—jpastor@d.umn.edu.

State of MN SFA—19th Annual Conference

Sustainable Farming 2020: What does it look like? How do we get there?

Saturday, February 20, 2010—St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN

Join SFA MN for the 19th Annual Conference on Saturday, February 20 at St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN. The day will revolve around: **"Sustainable Farming 2020: What Does it look like? How do we get there?"**

The conference will also feature a variety of breakout sessions, speakers and exhibits on the future of sustainable farming in the face of climate change and rising input costs, practical skills sessions, sessions on local foods and youth, and the debut of the sustainable farming movie, "Farm Forward."

Visit www.sfa-mn.org to learn more.

Resources, Scholarships and Grant Announcements

High Tunnel Funding for Farmers in our Area—USDA Study

The USDA has announced a 3-year, 38-state study to verify if high tunnels – also known as hoop houses – are effective in reducing pesticide use, keeping vital nutrients in the soil, extending the growing season, increasing yields, and providing other benefits to growers. High tunnels are used year-round in warmer parts of the country, providing steady incomes to farmers – a significant advantage to owners of small farms, limited-resource farmers and organic producers. High Tunnels in Northern Minnesota will extend the growing season both in the spring and fall by several weeks. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will provide financial assistance for the project through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the EQIP Organic Initiative, and the Agricultural Management Assistance program. NRCS will fund one high tunnel per farm. To be eligible for the program you need to have produced and/or sold \$1000 worth of agricultural products prior to applying. **For more information on eligibility and the program, contact the Duluth NRCS Field Office at 218-720-5209 ext 3. For producers in Carlton County, contact Karola Dalen, NRCS Soil Conservation Technician, at the Carlton County Soil & Water Conservation District, 218-384-3891.**

USDA Launches Toll-free Help Desk for Small Meat and Poultry Processors

Help is now available for small meat, poultry and egg processors who have been pondering the complexities of USDA requirements. The USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) has opened a new small plant help-desk with direct access to knowledgeable staff specialists. The help-desk will also provide assistance to state and local food regulatory agencies - FSIS' partners in keeping meat, poultry and egg products safe for consumers. The new help-desk is designed to support USDA's "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" initiative (www.usda.gov/knowyourfarmer). FSIS' small plant help-desk will serve as a "one-stop shop" for plant owners and operators with questions. In cases where the answer is not readily available, staff will research the issue and follow-up with the caller. Inquiries can be made to the small plant help-desk by toll-free telephone or by email. The help-desk is open from 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. EST, Monday through Friday, excluding Federal holidays.

Phone 1-877-FSIS-HELP (374-7435) or email infosource@fsis.usda.gov

Farm Business Management Scholarships for Minnesota Specialty Crop Growers and Organic Farmers

Minnesota growers of several specialty crops may qualify for scholarships to offset the cost of farm business management classes through a program administered by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture . Applications are now being accepted for 2010. In 2010, eligible specialty crops are apples, berries, grapes, pumpkins, sweet corn, and vegetables (fresh market only; canning crops do not qualify). A related program offers scholarships to all certified organic farmers (including cash crop, specialty crop, dairy, other livestock, etc.) The scholarships defray the cost of enrollment in farm business management education programs offered by schools in the Minnesota State College and University (MnSCU) system. Growers work one-on-one with management instructors in a program specifically tailored to their operation—learning to keep and use quality records to make sound business management decisions. Program participants receive comprehensive year-end analyses that can be used for enterprise planning, tax preparation, and discussions with lenders. Strict confidentiality measures protect the privacy of the participants. **To learn more about the scholarship program and how to contact an instructor in your area, see the brochure at www.mda.state.mn.us/fbm or call Meg Moynihan at 651-201-6616.** The number of scholarships is limited, so it's best to apply early. Scholarship funds are provided by United States Department of Agriculture Specialty Crop Block Grant program.



Newly elected State Lake Superior -SFA Representative, Karola Dalen pictured with husband Rick and new baby Lila Marie.

Karola Dalen Elected State Representative for LS-SFA

Karola Dalen has just completed a 3-year board term of the Lake Superior Chapter and was recently re-elected for another term. She will be taking over as SFA state board representative for Joel Rosen. Joel has been serving on the SFA state board since 1995 (7 terms) and feels it is time for someone new to have crack at it. Karola is looking forward to learning more about the statewide functions of the SFA and being a proud representative of all the cool local farming and food things happening in the Lake Superior region. Karola owns and operates Northern Harvest Farm CSA in Wrenshall, MN with her husband Rick Dalen.

Presenting Lila Marie Dalen

Born November 10 to farmers Karola and Rick Dalen of Wrenshall, Lila Marie spends most of her time sleeping, eating, staring, wiggling, and entertaining her parents. Karola says she seems to have Rick’s red hair. On their first family outing in early December, Rick and Karola noticed it takes a bit longer to get out the door than in pre-Lila days.

Although she doesn’t like the car seat , once the motor starts, she falls asleep. According to Rick, Lila hasn’t been much help with farm chores yet, but....there’s always next year.

Karola recommends The Happiest Baby on the Block for expecting parents. Rick and Karola do not plan further expansion of the farm this year -- although “We need a new tractor”, says Rick, “And a new washing machine.” adds Karola.

Interns Needed for the 2010 Growing Season @ Food Farm!

Food Farm is a diversified organic farm specializing in vegetables, primarily for our CSA members. In addition, we wholesale vegetables to the Whole Foods Co-op and some restaurants, and provide poultry and eggs for our CSA members.

Interns participate in all aspects of the operation, including propagation of bedding plants, care of poultry, vegetable production in high tunnels, organic weed and insect control, harvesting and marketing.

The variety of agricultural activities, volume of production and diversity of products makes our internship program a unique learning experience.

A stipend is available, based on experience and availability.

**For more information call
John Fisher-Merritt at 218-384-3356.
Visit: www.foodfarm.us**



Local View: Can our Region Feed Itself?

By David Abazs

When last year's fall harvest ended, my research on food systems began. I joined Stacey Stark and David Syring, researchers at the University of Minnesota Duluth, and we were awarded a university-sponsored Healthy Foods, Healthy Lives grant to assess a locally adapted food system for the western Lake Superior region.

Our research was driven by key questions: Can we feed ourselves within this region? Do we have enough land to grow the food we need? What would a healthy local diet look like? What would a local food system mean for our economy, health, the environment? What would a local food system mean for our western Lake Superior communities?

Western Lake Superior consists of eight Northeastern Minnesota and seven Northwestern Wisconsin counties. The region covers 13.4 million acres, an area larger than nine states. Its population is 479,856, according to the 2008 census. And it spends more than \$1.26 billion on food every year. As of 2007, total farmland covered more than 1.2 million of its acres; there were 5,602 farms, a loss of 974 farms since the last agriculture census in 2002. The loss represents a continuing downward trend in farm numbers.

Farm products sold in 2007 totaled more than \$193 million, making farming a significant regional economic engine with numerous community benefits. However, according to 2007 census data, the difference between the products sold and the cost of production averaged only \$3,417 of income per farm (excluding government subsidies). This economic reality led our research to include interviews with a variety of farmers throughout the region to get a "soil"-level perspective into the future of food production and its potential for greater profitability.

Despite the best efforts of farmers, almost all of the food we eat in our region comes from somewhere else. Therefore, nearly all of the \$1.26 billion spent on food here leaves our region. The potential

for job growth as a result of building a local food system is huge. In just one example, the Standard American Diet (SAD) reveals that, on average, each person eats 243 pounds of meat per year. The greatest share of this total is 63 pounds of beef. In looking at production estimates, we would need about 68,291 beef cows to meet our local beef consumption. At 440 pounds of usable meat per animal, we would need 683 beef farms, each producing 100 head per year, which is far beyond what we currently have in this region.

Looking further into the Standard American Diet, it is obvious we cannot grow some of the foods we normally eat: bananas and other warm-weather crops, for example. If we were going to envision a local food system, what fruits would provide daily-recommended consumption level? As part of this Healthy Lives grant project, a group of doctors, nutritionists and dietitians are developing a healthy local diet. In comparison to the global sourcing and excessive caloric intake of a SAD diet, a local diet would provide a healthy, balanced and locally grown option. This doesn't mean we would have to give up bananas or coffee (people have traded for these specialty crops for centuries,) but how much land would be needed to locally grow 25 percent, 50 percent or 75 percent of our food? What would the total economic benefit be? How would the environment be affected? What would it mean to health-care costs and quality of life?

Answering these questions and building a local food system would translate into welcomed economic and ecological benefits.

David & Lise Abazs have farmed along the North Shore of Lake Superior, near Finland, since 1989. The Abazs also teach at Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center, at North House Folk School, at Split Rock Lighthouse, and run a renewable energy business.

Farmers Wanted for Research Assessment Project

Locally Adopted Food System research project is looking for a group of farmers to meet in early March to provide their expertise on economic issues related to farming. The group will meet with the UMD economic team to provide information for their economic modeling of our "food shed." Stipends are available.

Interested? Please contact David Abazs 218-353-7736 or abazs@round-river.com

Farmers a Key to Local Economy

Reprinted from the *Biosolids Digest*, Vol. 12, No. 1, Spring 2009, of the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District

Agriculture is important to the economies of Carlton, St. Louis and Douglas counties and is one of the largest family-owned, small business sectors of the local economy.

Farmers in these three counties sold \$27.7 million of livestock and crops in 2007, according to the recently released Census of Agriculture. Cattle and dairies are the most important component in our region with \$17.3 million of total sales.

Part-time Farmers

While there are fewer farms now, the average farm size is larger and has higher sales. In Carlton County, for example, the number of farms went down from 607 in 2002 to 485 in 2007. The average size increased from 188 acres to 202 acres and sales per farm increased from \$13,337 to \$16,578, in part because of higher prices.

About 40 percent of the farmers in this region are lifestyle farmers, which the USDA classified as operators with less than \$250,000 in sales and another occupation as their main source of income. Nationally, lifestyle farmers make up 36 percent of farmers.

The number of retired farmers here was nearly identical with the United States at 20 percent.

The lack of bigger farms is the major difference here. Large family farms account for 9 percent of farms and 63 percent of production in the United States. In this area, only 1 percent are large family operations.

Room to Grow

There also is potential to increase productivity here.

About one third of the farmland in this region was fertilized or had manure applied in 2007, and hay fields averaged about 1.5 tons per acre.

Nationwide, more than two thirds of cropland was fertilized (although that includes row crops) and hay fields were about 2.5 tons per acre – even in other parts of Minnesota and Wisconsin, with a similar climate.

Farming: A \$27.7 million business

	Farms	Sales
Carlton	485	Total: \$8 million
Crops:		\$2.2 million
Livestock:		\$5.8 million
St. Louis	761	Total: \$13.5 million
Crops:		\$6.3 million
Livestock:		\$7.2 million
Douglas	333	Total: \$6.1 million
Crops:		\$1.8 million
Livestock:		\$4.3 million

How Does Agriculture Stack Up?

Large businesses with employees usually dominate local economies. But farming is one of the bigger sources of income for self-employed business owners in this region.

In Carlton County, for example, farmers sold \$8 million of produce in 2007.

Only self-employed construction firms, with \$14 million of sales, and real estate, with \$8.2 million in sales, were larger.

What About the Future?

It's likely that agriculture in regions like the Northland will be even more important in the future.

The United States currently has an abundance of cropland – about 1.4 acres per person in 2007. But that's down about 10 percent since 1997, and our population continues to grow.

The U. S. Census Bureau projects a population of 439 million people in 2050, leaving only one acre of cropland per person – even if none of our current cropland is converted to other uses.

That'll mean our current cropland, the Northland included, will be even more important to our nation's agricultural economy and to feed our growing country.

Farmer's Take the Stove Raises \$1,700 for LS-SFA

LS-SFA held another successful Farmer's Take the Stove annual fundraiser November 17th in Duluth at the Peace Church. The event has earned a reputation as a great place to get a remarkably delicious, diverse, and nutritious meal of local foods prepared by area farmers and their families. Additional funds were raised with a silent auction, and live music by the Carmody's Irish Setters added to the festive atmosphere, demonstrating once again that good food and good times are not hard to find despite the onset of winter.

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**See PAGE 3 for a
membership &
donation form.**

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membership & make a
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ONLINE @**

www.lssfa.org/membership

**A Special THANK YOU to Our Members &
Supporters that Contributed to the 2009 Fund Drive.
Your Support is Needed and Valued. Thank You!**

Mark Your Calendar—Upcoming Events

**19TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE SFA –MN
FEBRUARY 20, 2010—NORTHFIELD, MN**

See Page 7 for Details. Pre-registration Required.
www.sfa-mn.org for more information

**LAKE SUPERIOR FARMING CONFERENCE
MARCH 5 & 6, 2010—SUPERIOR, WI**

The Chequamegon Organic Research Education and Training Group and Lake Superior Farming Association are pleased to bring you the Lake Superior Farming Conference. This conference offers intensive training workshops on Friday and a full range of excellent presentations on Saturday. **See Front Page and Conference Brochure Insert for Details. Pre-registration Required. Scholarships available—see enclosed scholarship form!** www.lssfa.org/events

**Farmers Take the Stage—8th Annual
MRCH 26, 2010—AMAZING GRACE CAFÉ—CANAL
PARK, DULUTH, MN—7PM-10PM.**

Don't miss this stupendous show of marvelous wonders by local farmers and eaters. This bizarre and exceptional evening of talent is a fundraiser for LS-SFA. Suggested donation \$15. Interested talent willing to perform call Joel at 218-389-3306 or joel@lakesuperiorfarming.org.

**2010 HARVEST FESTIVAL & ENERGY FAIR
SEPT. 11, 2010—DULUTH, MN**

The 2010 Harvest Festival & Energy Fair is a one day outdoor-oriented event that attracts thousands of families and visitors to Duluth to feast on locally produced food, stock-up on fresh produce and other homegrown goods at the farmer's market, and learn about the latest renewable and clean energy technologies and initiatives.
www.theharvestfestival.org