



SD Local Foods Conference Nov. 6-7

BROOKINGS — The fifth annual South Dakota Local Foods Conference is scheduled for Nov. 6-7 at Cadillac Jack's Resort in Deadwood (360 Main St.).

"The local foods movement is gaining momentum around the nation and this conference offers timely information on business, marketing and production," said Chris Zdorovtsov, SDSU Extension Community Development Field Specialist.

Other components of the event include local food meals, a local food panel of successful stories, a vendor show, and producer and resource provider networking.

Friday, Nov. 6 will consist of a number of sessions focused on marketing topics including: utilizing the fresh fruit and vegetable program for school sales, a marketplace panel and community supported agriculture (CSA) as well as production topics, such as growing healthy berries, season extension, permaculture, honey bees and organic production.

In-depth sessions will also be held Nov. 6 on specialty crops and traditional foods on the reservations as well as business tools and analysis for farm enterprises.

Nov. 7 a discussion will be held on "Getting to the State of Local Foods," presented by keynote speaker, Marty Travis from Stewards of the Land Food Hub out of Illinois.

In-depth sessions on Nov. 7 will include the topics of food hubs with focus for both producers and buyers, food safety and developing GAP plans, and estate planning and farm transitions.

The Local Foods Conference is sponsored by a collaboration of partners including: SDSU Extension, South Dakota Specialty Producers Association, South Dakota USDA Rural Development, Dakota Rural Action, the South Dakota Small Business Administration and the South Dakota Department of Agriculture.

The conference is meant to continue the dialogue on local foods among producers, growers, consumers, school nutrition programs, grocers, restaurants and resource providers.

Registration information can be obtained by visiting <http://www.iGrow/events> or contact Chris Zdorovtsov at christina.zdorovtsov@sdstate.edu or at 605-782-3290 for more information. The deadline to register is Oct. 20.

Farm Beginnings Training Program Set

ST. LOUIS — After six successful years training new farmers, Dakota Rural Action's Farm Beginnings® course will be offered in St. Louis this year. Farm Beginnings is a farmer and rancher-led training and support program that provides participants the opportunity to learn first-hand about low-cost, sustainable methods of farming and ranching and the tools to successfully launch a profitable enterprise.

Farm Beginnings classes are held December to April and focus on topics such as whole farm planning, financial and business planning, marketing, and connecting with resources and mentors. All classes are led by established farmers and ranchers and agricultural professionals. There are opportunities for students to further their skills by participating in mentorships with local farmers and 4-6 field days are offered through DRA's Farmer Network in the summer. More than 80 percent of course graduates participate in these on-farm activities after finishing the course.

Prospective participants should contact Dakota Rural Action at (605) 697-5204 or email Matthew.West@mwest@dakotarural.org. Class size is limited and early application is encouraged. Application deadline for the 2015 St. Louis class is Oct. 31. There are a limited amount of scholarships available to help with tuition costs. Course information and online application can be found at www.dakotarural.org/grow.

Dakota Rural Action is a grassroots family agriculture and conservation group that organizes South Dakotans to protect our family farmers and ranchers, natural resources and unique way of life.

Renewable Energy Loans, Grants Offered

WASHINGTON — Agriculture Under Secretary Lisa Mensah encouraged rural small businesses to apply for loans and grants to support renewable energy and energy efficiency projects.

USDA is accepting Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) applications for: 1) loans and grants for renewable energy systems and energy efficiency improvements, and 2) grants for energy audits and renewable energy development assistance.

Eligible agricultural producers and rural small businesses may use REAP funds to purchase and install renewable energy systems and make energy efficiency improvements. Eligible renewable energy systems include energy from wind, solar, renewable biomass (including anaerobic digesters), small hydro-electric, ocean, geothermal or hydrogen derived from these renewable resources.

For application deadlines and details on how to apply in South Dakota, contact Darlene Bresson, USDA Rural Development Energy Coordinator, darlene.bresson@sd.usda.gov; (605) 886-8202, Ext. 120, or see Page 60349 of the Oct. 6 Federal Register.

Brhel

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I was hoping they'd do was to decimate the squash bug population. Turns out, our ducks don't care for squash bugs.

Our chickens do, though. Next year, I'm going to make a run from the chicken house to the garden and try the chickens in the garden. This year, though, we resorted to hand-picking the squash bugs off the pumpkin vines and throwing handfuls into the chicken flight pen. Our three-kid, two-adult family spent an evening doing this. We'll still have them next year, but maybe not as many.

Since we're so ahead of winter-preparation activities this year, we've already started brainstorming changes for next spring. We plan on putting in several new fruit trees, expanding the vegetable garden and trying out raised beds. I would like to also begin a container herb garden on the back porch and put a pollinator garden in the yard, but I am weary of adding too much work too quickly, so I'm glad to have

the winter to think it over.

Usually, this time of the year, we get our grow light set up in the basement of our house and plant some lettuce seed. But when I inspected it a few weeks ago, the electrical outlet looked like it needed some updates to be safe. So I guess, our winter lettuce project will have to wait a little while until my husband is able to rewire the room. Instead, a friend of mine invited me to join a food coop called Bountiful Baskets. I have yet to get my first order, but I was able to partake in a salad of butter lettuce with my friend and see her bounty, and I'm excited to get my first shipment.

Fall is a hard season for me. I enjoy the warm, but not too hot, days and the changing colors. There's usually a lot of work to get ready for winter, and the very thought of winter gives me chills. I don't relish the idea of staying inside and trying to stay warm all winter, but I like the feeling of accomplishment when the growing season ends and we're ready for winter, with time to spare. I hope all of your winter preparations are coming along smoothly, too!

Commentary

CRP Critical To The Future Of SD Pheasant Hunting

BY SEN. JOHN THUNE
R-South Dakota

If you asked someone to name their favorite time of year, you might hear Christmas, Thanksgiving, or the Fourth of July. Don't be surprised, though, if you posed the same question to a South Dakotan and they tell you it's the third weekend in October — the traditional opening of pheasant season. For many South Dakotans, opening weekend truly is a holiday that brings friends and families together for fun and fellowship, as well as the anticipation of bagging a few pheasants.

To prepare for all that comes with pheasant season, hotels, cafes, hardware and sporting goods stores plan months in advance to accommodate all who come to South Dakota to experience hunting in the "pheasant capital of the world." After all, pheasant hunting contributes \$250 million to South Dakota's economy. That boost to the economy is important, but without



Thune

the pheasants, there's no pheasant hunting, and nothing contributes more to South Dakota's pheasant population than the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). First authorized during the Reagan presidency in the 1985 farm bill, CRP was created primarily to discourage overproduction of grain and protect marginal land by offering farmers ten-year easements on highly erodible land planted to permanent vegetative cover. Thirty years later, CRP has evolved into a 20-plus million acre program that saves millions of tons of soil from erosion and improves water quality every year. I believe South Dakota pheasants would agree that CRP provides some of the best habitat to nest in and raise their young; and South Dakota pheasant hunters would agree that CRP can be one of the best places to flush a wily rooster.

Dairy Outreach Consortium Tours Set For Oct. 29

BROOKINGS — Dairy producers and heifer growers are invited to attend a dairy tour sponsored by the 1-29 Dairy Outreach Consortium Oct. 29.

Registration for the tour is due by Oct. 26. The cost includes transportation, lunch, and refreshments on vans. Vans will be filled on a first come, first served basis when registration is received for Van-carpooling.

A \$60 per person registration fee is available to those who travel on their own.

To register, visit <http://iGrow.org/livestock/dairy>.

"Here's your opportunity to see excellent heifer-growing facilities firsthand and learn what has worked, as well as what producers have changed along the way," said Tracey Erickson, SDSU Extension Dairy Field Specialist.

TOUR DETAILS:

* **Newalta Dairy Farm (1125 71st St. Pipestone, Minn., 56164) 8:30 - 9:30 a.m.**

John and Berlinda VanderWal own and operate Newalta Dairy. The drive to improve their dairy farm and provide better opportunities for their family led the VanderWal Family from the Netherlands to Canada and to Pipestone, Minn., in 2005 where they built their current operation and

milk 1,600 cows.

With each move or new project they implemented new management practices or technologies to be more productive and provide better care for their herd. They currently raise their own pre-weaned calves.

They utilize Urban Automatic Calf Feeding systems in group housing which can handle up to 300 of the dairy's heifer calves.

* **VanEss Dairy, LLC (2996 Sorrel Ave, Sanborn, Iowa 51248) 10:45 - 11:45 a.m.**

After relocating from Washington to Idaho and then to Iowa, Harvey and Lisa VanEss and their sons, Joshua, Jeremy, Chad, Tyler and Todd are successfully milking 4,000 cows at their Sanborn Dairy.

The VanEss Dairy operation is a cross-ventilated, sand-bedded free stall barn which spans 9.8 acres.

In 2014, they built a new on site calf raising facility. This unique group housing and headlock feeding system supports 650 heifers from birth to weaning.

VanEss Dairy embraces change and encourages other dairy farmers to do the same — especially on multi-generation farms.

* **11:50 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Lunch: Jay's Restaurant and**

Lounge - Buffet Lunch (120 W 7th St. Sanborn, Iowa 51248)

* **City View Farms (4135 Yellow Ave, Sutherland, Iowa 51058) 1 - 2 p.m.**

Ken and Vickie Franken operate City View Farms of Sutherland and Sioux Center, Iowa. They have specialized in the heifer growing business for more than 30 years. The Franken's heifer raising facilities consists of two sites which they operate with their children: Jody, Jamie, Jake, and Jess. They raise dairy heifers from post-weaning age to pre-freshening for as many as 12 different dairies locally and across the Midwest.

Their facilities hold up to 16,000 head. City View works closely with dairy producers, veterinarians, and AI technicians to effectively manage the heifers.

Franken's belong to the Professional Dairy Heifer Growers Association (PDHGA) which helps them learn and network with other dairy heifer growers across the nation making them the successful operation they are today.

* **Dykstra Dairy (40671 110th St., Remsen, Iowa 51050) 3:15 - 4:15 p.m.**

Darin and Linda Dykstra Dairy began milking cows at their current location near Maurice, Iowa, in February

2003 after moving their dairy from Chino, California.

They milk 3,000 cows on the dairy in Maurice along with growing their own heifer calves at a facility off-site from the dairy in Ramsen, Iowa. The calf raising facility has 14 GEA WestfaliaSurge Automatic Calf Feeding Systems, which raise all of the dairy's replacement heifers through weaning

* **4:15 p.m. Return Home**

TRANSPORTATION DETAILS:

Vans are provided for transportation. Below are pickup details.

Location and times from which you will depart from:

* **SOUTH DAKOTA:**

Departure Location: Brookings & Sioux Falls. Departing Thursday Oct. 29 at 6:45 a.m. Contact is Tracey Erickson, tracey.erickson@sdstate.edu

* **NEBRASKA:** Departure Location: Norfolk & Sioux City, Neb. Departing from Norfolk, Wednesday Oct. 28 at 6 p.m. stay over in Sioux City. Departing from Sioux City on Thursday Oct. 29 at 6 a.m. Contact for both departure locations is Kim Clark, kimclark@unl.edu, 402-350-5003.

For those staying overnight in Brookings or Sioux City you will be responsible for your own hotel expenses, please coordinate with the person you are traveling with.

Zone

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"It's for cities and industry as well as agriculture, so all contributors to nutrient loss has a role in this," Benning said. "No single practice will achieve the goal."

The list of runoff control strategies is long, but some examples include adjusting nitrogen application timing, weighing nutrient source options, extending crop rotations, establishing wetlands or other edge-of-field buffers, using cover crops, minimizing tillage and creating terraces. The best strategies are those that target reduction in nitrogen and phosphorus runoff, Benning said.

"It's a culture change to adapt many of these strategies," she added, but the upside is that nutrient-reduction approaches can also increase crop yields by retaining more nutrients in the field.

A local university

Extension office or Natural Resources Conservation Service can help customize strategies to a specific property.

Kellie Blair, coordinator of the Boone River Watershed Coordinator in Dayton, Iowa, joined the webinar to describe how she has incorporated runoff-reducing strategies on her conventional crop and livestock operation.

"On our farm, we don't just have one overall practice," she said.

The daughter of a conservation-minded crop and livestock farmer and college graduate with degrees in forestry and agronomy, Blair worked as an agronomist before joining her husband's family farming operation. They produce corn, soybeans, pigs and beef cattle.

"Continual improvement on our farm is very important on our farm," she said.

Blair's farm incorporates several strategies to reduce runoff, including taking out non-producing areas to cre-

ate wetlands, creating and using a nutrient management plan, sourcing manure in place of commercial fertilizers, side-dressing manure in the spring, and reducing conventional tillage by doing strip tillage and no-till in fields as allowed by the weather.

In addition to reducing nutrient runoff, Blair has experienced an added perk to reduced tillage: "We've found there is no yield difference between tillage and no-till, so obviously we save our labor."

She is also experimenting with cover crops. In previous years, she's planted rye into standing soybeans and corn, allowing it to grow through the fall and then to overwinter. She's also planted radishes and turnips as cover crops, but since they don't overwinter, she grazed the cattle on them. This year, she planted triticale and plans to bale it. Overall, she found cover crops to be high cost as far as inputs, but they have also greatly

reduced erosion.

"We have to adapt, depending on what the years brings to us," she said. "Anything we do today is a candidate for change."

The changes Blair has made to her farm are also evidence-based and are explored thoroughly before implementation. The strategies are based on the latest data she collects on the farm, combined with the self-education she has done for herself on the watershed and consultation with local agronomists and university Extension educators. For example, she regularly samples water out of their field tile to test for nitrates and dissolved phosphorus in the runoff.

"We want to know what changes are happening to our water," Blair said. "We need to prepare for wet years and when water is high. We need to find a way to keep our nutrients from flowing off our farm."

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