

The Transition Into Farming

After examining your situation and identifying your own vision, values, and resources, you may or may not decide to enter into farming. Or you may decide to begin farming part-time, with a plan to gradually expand your farming operation to full-time. If you have answered all of the questions posed throughout this publication, you now have a thorough assessment of your situation. You should have an idea of where you are currently and where you want to go. Now it is time to begin deciding what steps you need to take to reach your goals.

Remember that planning and maintaining a farm business is an evolving process. It requires constant evaluation and adjustment. This means not only monitoring your financial well-being, but also paying attention to the health and well-being of your family, community and the landscape—all vital aspects of a sustainable farming system and business.

Some practical suggestions from those who have gone before you:

- **Don't be afraid to try something new.**
- **Most established farmers will tell you that when trying something new, it is better to phase it in slowly instead of making one big shift.**
- **It is better to start gradually and build your experience level.**
- **Start small and refine your skills as you grow.**
- **Consider starting small enough to allow for changes.**
- **Learn when to back off and evaluate.**
- **Plan on having some outside income as you begin and prepare for farming failures. They will happen.**
- **If you cannot get the price you need, don't produce it.**
- **There are many farm enterprises that you can do on a part-time basis.**
- **Remember, it is important to farm as hard with your head as with your hands.**

Publications

ACRES U.S.A. Book Catalog

This is a broad listing of books that covers a variety of topics, including production techniques, animal health, marketing, soil health, and many more. It includes over 240 titles as well as many hard to find books. To order, contact Acres U.S.A. • P.O. Box 91299

- Austin, TX 78709-1299 • phone: (800) 355-5313 • fax: (512) 892-4448
- e-mail: orders@acresusa.com
- website: www.acresusa.com

Farmers' Guide to the Internet, Henry James, 1996, TVA Rural Studies, 334 pages.

This comprehensive text provides an overview of the Internet, including basic information, requirements, e-mail, software, etc., and hundreds of pages of website addresses for the following categories: general farming resources, crops, livestock, state-by-state listings, and rural life. It is a valuable tool for navigating the Web. Available from UK Rural Studies

- 407 Agricultural Engineering Building
- The University of Kentucky • Lexington, KY 40546 • phone: (606) 257-1872 or (888) 885-9800
- website: www.rural.org/Farmers_Guide (follow links to a list of helpful websites).

MISA Database of Resources, Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture.

This on-line, searchable database includes listings of over 1,200 documents, videos, organizations, and websites on sustainable agriculture and related topics. More materials are continually added. The database is searchable by title, author, and keyword. Reach it from MISA's home page at www.misa.umn.edu; click on "Database of Resources."

The Monitoring Tool Box, Julia Alhers Ness (editor), 1998, Land Stewardship Project and the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture, 115 pages.

This interactive guide is for farmers interested in learning easy-to-use techniques for monitoring the impact of management decisions on their land, finances, and family. The Tool Box covers monitoring: quality of life, finances, birds, frogs, soils, and streams. It includes the *Close to the Ground* video. Available from the Land Stewardship Project • 180 East Main

Street • P.O. Box 130 • Lewiston, MN 55952

- phone: (507) 523-3366 • fax: (507) 523-2729
- e-mail: lpse@landstewardshipproject.org
- website: www.landstewardshipproject.org/mtb/lsp_toolbox.html

Source Book of Sustainable Agriculture for Educators, Producers and Other Agricultural Professionals: A Guide to Books, Newsletters, Conference Proceedings, Bulletins, Videos, and More, Valerie Berton (editor), 1997, Sustainable Agriculture Network, 136 pages.

This guide features 559 entries about sustainable agriculture information materials, organized alphabetically by state, U.S. territory, and foreign country. The index allows you to find entries according to subject, organization, author, and videos. Two appendices list sustainable agriculture centers at universities and sustainable agriculture websites nationwide.

Available from Sustainable Agriculture Publications, Hills Building • University of Vermont • Burlington, VT 05405 • phone: (802) 656-0484 • e-mail: sanpubs@uvm.edu

- or see the full text on-line: www.sare.org/sourcebook/

Storey Books

Storey publishes practical how-to guides on a wide range of activities relevant to country living. Categories include livestock, gardening, building, and more. For more information on specific titles and subjects, contact Storey Publishing • 210 MASS MoCa Way • North Adams, MA 01247 • phone: (413) 346-2100

- e-mail: webmaster@storey.com
- website: www.storey.com

Sustainable Agriculture Directory of Expertise, Sustainable Agriculture Network, 239 contacts.

This guide features researchers, farmers, ranchers, Extension personnel, and consultants ready to share their knowledge. Profiles of each person help you determine where to start building bridges, asking questions, and finding answers. The Directory is online, searchable by subject area and region. • website:

www.sare.org/expertise

Sustainable Agriculture Newsletter, Jack Sperbeck (editor), College of Agricultural, Food, and Environmental Sciences, University of Minnesota Extension Service, and the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture

This free bi-monthly newsletter is designed to bring people together to influence the future of agriculture and rural communities and to achieve socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable farms and communities. The newsletter presents short informational pieces from a variety of viewpoints, new and recent resources, and a calendar of upcoming events. Available from MISA • 411 Borlaug Hall • 1991 Upper Buford Circle • St. Paul, MN 55108 • phone: (612) 6258235 or (800) 909-6472 • fax: (612) 6251268 • email: misamail@umn.edu • or view the full text on-line: www.misa.umn.edu/sanews

Sustainable Agriculture Resource and Information Directory, Alison Fish (compiler), 2001, Minnesota Department of Agriculture Energy and Sustainable Agriculture Program (ESAP), 32 pages.

This is a very thorough guide to sustainable agricultural organizations, publications, audio tapes, videotapes, websites, and other resources. It includes organizations in Minnesota and beyond. Available from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, ESAP, as a print copy or online as a PDF file. • 90 West

Plato Boulevard • St. Paul, MN 55107
 • phone: (651) 296-7673
 • fax: (651) 297-7678
 • e-mail: Alison.Fish@state.mn.us
 • online version: www.mda.state.mn.us/esap/esapdirectory.pdf

Upper Midwest Organic Resource Directory, Faye Jones (editor), 2001, Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Services, 40 pages.

This directory provides a comprehensive listing of resources and organizations that deal with sustainable and organic agriculture in the Upper Midwest. The Directory identifies farmer cooperatives and networks, processors and buyers, suppliers, certification agencies, websites, and publications in six states: Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. Available from Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Services (MOSES) • P.O. Box 339, N7834 Cty Rd B • Spring Valley, WI, 54767 • phone: (715) 772-3153 • e-mail: moses@mosesorganic.org • website: www.mosesorganic.org;



Dave and Erin Varney (2001 Farm Beginnings™ students) with Sam and Daisy on their farm.

Organizations

Alternative Farming Systems Information Center (AFSIC)

The Alternative Farming Systems Information Center (AFSIC) was established by Congress to encourage research, education, and information delivery about farming systems that preserve the natural resource base while maintaining economic viability. The Center contains a vast amount of resources and information,

including scientific and popular press literature on all types of alternative farming practices. For more information contact Alternative Farming Systems Information Center (AFSIC) National Agriculture Library • Room 304, 10301 Baltimore Boulevard • Beltsville, MD 20705 • phone: (301) 504-6559 • fax: (301) 504-6409 • e-mail: afsic@nal.usda.gov • website: www.nal.usda.gov/afsic

ATTRA

ATTRA is a national sustainable farming information center that provides technical assistance information free of charge to farmers and farm support groups. They have a number of excellent up-to-date publications on alternative crops, livestock, and sustainable farming practices. We encourage you to check their listing of available publications on-line, or for more information, contact ATTRA • P.O. Box 3657 • Fayetteville, AR 72702 • phone: (800) 346-9140 (English); (800) 411-3222 (Spanish) • fax: (479) 442-9842 • website: attra.ncat.org

Center for Rural Affairs, Beginning Farmer Sustainable Agriculture Project

The Center for Rural Affairs is a nonprofit, farm advocacy and support information provider. The Beginning Farmer Sustainable Agriculture Project exposes beginning farmers to low-input, low capital, alternative, and knowledge-based farming systems that are environmentally sustainable. The Center has numerous publications and information about sustainable agriculture. For more information, contact Center for Rural Affairs • 101 S Tallman St. • P.O. Box 406 • Walthill, NE 68067 • phone: (402) 846-5428 • fax: (402) 846-5420 • e-mail: info@cfra.org • website: www.cfra.org

**Land Stewardship Project (LSP)**

The Land Stewardship Project (LSP) is a non-profit education organization working for the development of a sound stewardship ethic towards the nation's farmland and for public policy changes that will lead to the development of a sustainable agricultural system. They have numerous publications and information available. The three state offices offer various field days, seminars, and workshops about sustainable farming and sustainable community development. The southeast and western offices have Farm Beginnings™ programs that work extensively with beginning farmers. For a publications list or more information, contact Land Stewardship Project:

Twin Cities Area Office • 2200 4th Street • White Bear Lake, MN 55110 • phone: (651) 653-0618 • fax: (651) 653-0589 • e-mail: lsfwbl@landstewardshipproject.org • website: www.landstewardshipproject.org
 or Southeast Minnesota Office • P.O. Box 130 • 180 East Main Street • Lewiston, MN 55952 • phone: (507) 523-3366 • fax: (507) 523-2729 • e-mail: lsfwse@landstewardshipproject.org
 or Western Minnesota Office • 103 West Nichols • Montevideo, MN 56265 • phone: (320) 269-2105 • fax: (320) 269-2190 • e-mail: lsfwest@landstewardshipproject.org

Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Energy and Sustainable Agriculture Program (ESAP)

The purpose of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Energy and Sustainable Agriculture Program (ESAP) is to demonstrate and promote alternative agricultural practices that are energy efficient, environmentally sound, and enhance the self-sufficiency of Minnesota farmers. ESAP sponsors a loan program, on-farm research, workshops, and speakers. For more information, contact Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Energy and Sustainable Agriculture Program (ESAP) • 90 West Plato Boulevard • St. Paul, MN 55107 • phone: (651) 296-7673 • fax: (651) 297-7678 • e-mail: Alison.Fish@state.mn.us • website: www.mda.state.mn.us/esap/

Minnesota Food Association (MFA)

The Minnesota Food Association (MFA) works to inform, connect, and activate urban and rural citizens committed to developing an environmentally sound, socially responsible food and agriculture system in Minnesota. They publish a quarterly newsletter and have a Future Farmer project that helps identify the needs of beginning farmers. For more information, contact Minnesota Food Association (MFA) • 14220 Ostlund Trail North • Marine on St. Croix, MN 55047

- phone: (651) 433-3676 • fax: (612) 788-4344
- email: cmorton@mnfoodassociation.org
- website: www.mnfoodassociation.org

Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA)

The Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) is a partnership between the University of Minnesota's College of Agriculture, Food, and Environmental Sciences and the Sustainers' Coalition—a group of individuals and community-based, nonprofit organizations. MISA's purpose is to bring together the agricultural community and the University in a cooperative effort to develop and promote sustainable agriculture in Minnesota and beyond. The Information Exchange program provides the public with fast, easy access to sustainable agriculture information and resources. For more information, contact the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA), University

of Minnesota • 411 Borlaug Hall • 1991 Buford Circle • St. Paul, MN 55108
 • phone: (612) 625-8235 or (800) 909-MISA
 • e-mail: misamail@umn.edu • website: www.misa.umn.edu

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE)

The Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program is a U.S. Department of Agriculture-funded initiative that sponsors competitive grants for sustainable agriculture research and education in a regional process nationwide. SARE works to increase knowledge about and help farmers and ranchers to adopt practices that are economically viable, environmentally sound, and socially responsible. Nationally, SARE devotes significant resources to ongoing outreach projects. SARE's Professional Development Program offers learning opportunities to a variety of agricultural extension and other field

agency personnel. SARE's Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN) disseminates information relevant to SARE and sustainable agriculture through electronic and print publications. For more information, contact North Central SARE, Bill Wilcke, Regional Coordinator, University of Nebraska-Lincoln • 13-A Activities Bldg. • Lincoln, NE 68583-0840
 • phone: (402) 472-7081 • fax: (402) 472-0280
 • e-mail: wilck001@umn.edu • website: www.sare.org/ncrsare/

Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota, Regional chapters throughout the state

The Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota (SFA) provides a support network for farmers and networks with other organizations and agencies. The SFA facilitates educational opportunities for both members and the public about economically and environmentally sound agriculture practices. Each chapter plans and organizes various field days and workshops. For more information contact the SFA of Minnesota • c/o Mary Jo Forbord • 29731 302 Street • Starbuck, MN 56381
 • phone: (320) 760-8732 or (866) 760-8732 (toll free in MN)
 • e-mail: sustainablefarming@hcinet.net
 • website: www.sfa-mn.org

University of Minnesota Extension Service

The University of Minnesota Extension Service is the University's educational outreach arm with offices in every Minnesota county. They offer educational programs through meetings, demonstrations, workshops, publications, and electronic delivery methods. Programs range from water quality to sustainable agriculture, from urban horticulture to youth development, from natural resource management to tourism development. They have hundreds of agriculture-related publications covering a wide breadth of topics. The publication catalog is available in print or on-line. For your local county Extension office, look under the "County Government" section of the white pages or contact the University of Minnesota Extension Service • 20 Coffey Hall • 1420 Eckles Ave. • St. Paul, MN 55108-6069
 • phone: (612) 624-4900 or (800) 876-8636
 • fax: (612) 625-6281 • website: www.extension.umn.edu

