

Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture  
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## **DRAFT REPORT**

### **Overview**

The Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) is a joint venture of the University of Minnesota's College of Agricultural, Food, and Environmental Sciences, and the Sustainers' Coalition, a group of individuals and organizations which in 2005 includes: Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Land Stewardship Project, Minnesota Food Association, The Minnesota Project, and the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota.

The purpose of MISA is to bring together the interests of the agricultural community in a cooperative effort to develop and promote sustainable agriculture. MISA promotes dynamic agricultural systems which integrate the ecological, economic, and social aspects of life.

MISA began in 1987 when five community organizations joined forces to develop the Sustainers' Coalition, which, at that time, included the Minnesota Food Association, Joint Religious Legislative Coalition, Land Stewardship Project, Organic Growers and Buyers Association, and The Minnesota Project. The Sustainers' were united by their interest in strengthening the University's role in sustainable agriculture research and education.

A series of meetings between Sustainers' and University representatives were held over the next few years. In July 1990 representatives of the Sustainers' Coalition and the University of Minnesota agreed to form the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture. The institute would be housed at the University and governed by a board of community and University representatives.

The first Board meeting was convened in February 1992, with bylaws developed and adopted in 1993. In addition to annual review and reporting, a comprehensive review of the entire organization was conducted in 1997. The decision to continue MISA was affirmed and the bylaws have since been amended in 1999, and again in 2001.

MISA continues today as a hard-working, friendly, and productive partnership based on the desire to enhance communications and building of mutual purpose. Today we have agreement from all parties to renew their commitment to be a part of MISA for another five years. This report briefly outlines the accomplishments of the past five years and outlines opportunities and ideas for future program direction and development. Details of all MISA's programs and publication can be found at [www.misa.umn.edu](http://www.misa.umn.edu).

**Accomplishments** Will refer to the interest, positive growth (publications, regional partnerships, GLBW, etc.) and opportunities in sustainable agriculture. Information on MISA's accomplishments of the past five years MISA's challenges

Promoted interdisciplinary initiatives  
Integrated programs to strengthen all

## Survey Results about the future of MISA

Please let us know who you are, by marking your affiliation with one or more of our partners. You are not required to be involved with any of these groups to participate in this survey.

			<b>Response Total</b>
Student			13
<b>University of Minnesota Faculty, Extension Educ. or Staff</b>			<b>25</b>
Farmer			8
Sustainers' Organizations			19
Other (please specify)			16
<b>Total Respondents</b>			<b>62</b>
(skipped this question)			<b>1</b>

1. What do you think are the biggest challenges currently facing MISA?						
	<b>strongly agree</b>	<b>agree</b>	<b>neutral</b>	<b>disagree</b>	<b>strongly disagree</b>	<b>Response Average</b>
<b>Funding for expanded or new programs</b>	40% (23)	<b>50% (29)</b>	9% (5)	2% (1)	0% (0)	<b>1.72</b>
<b>Increasing MISA's influence at the University</b>	<b>44% (26)</b>	42% (23)	15% (8)	0% (0)	0% (0)	<b>1.68</b>
<b>Building and strengthening partnerships</b>	28% (16)	<b>42% (24)</b>	21% (12)	9% (5)	0% (0)	<b>2.09</b>
<b>Increasing MISA's visibility within the state</b>	33% (19)	<b>53% (30)</b>	12% (7)	2% (1)	0% (0)	<b>1.84</b>
<b>Total Respondents</b>						<b>58</b>
(skipped this question)						<b>5</b>

18 comments received

2. What ideas for program development or new direction do you think MISA should pursue in the next five years?

	<b>high priority</b>	<b>moderate priority</b>	<b>low priority</b>	<b>don't do this</b>	<b>Response Average</b>
<b>Establish discussion roundtables for various topics</b>	15% (8)	<b>65% (36)</b>	20% (11)	0% (0)	<b>2.05</b>
<b>Develop new information on sustainable practices</b>	<b>56% (31)</b>	29% (16)	15% (8)	0% (0)	<b>1.58</b>
<b>Support for student programs at University</b>	<b>54% (31)</b>	40% (23)	5% (3)	0% (0)	<b>1.51</b>
<b>Get existing information out to farmers, others</b>	<b>56% (32)</b>	37% (21)	7% (4)	0% (0)	<b>1.49</b>
<b>Promote sustainable ag research at the University</b>	<b>77% (45)</b>	21% (12)	2% (1)	0% (0)	<b>1.24</b>
<b>Total Respondents</b>					<b>58</b>
(skipped this question)					<b>5</b>

19 comments received

3. How might we work together to advance the interests of the sustainable agriculture movement in the next five years?	
<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>(skipped this question)</b>	<b>18</b>

45 responses received

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After reviewing all of the responses It was determined that the following eight areas were worth further discussion by the group on November 16, 2005. Beth Waterhouse will facilitate the discussion around these topics:

**I. Students:** Increased focus on students, new classes, new links to internships at Sustainers' organizations, expand the Sustainable Agriculture minor, market MISA to students across the campuses and in recruitment

**II. Science and Sustainability:** Quantifying the environmental consequences of land use practices, identifying environmental benefits of sustainable agriculture

**III. Should MISA become more multicultural?** relating to sustainable agriculture and new constituencies, old traditions, new languages, cross cultures

**IV. MISA and Consumer Marketing** - look at national models, systems. Marketing beyond personal niche and direct marketing. Finding profitable mainstream markets.

**V. Sustainable Agriculture and energy, energy use, weather.**

**VI. Tipping Points:** more research on those points where farmers decide to change their farming operations. What are the tipping points? increased energy or input costs? need to maintain soil quality?

**VII. MISA within the University of Minnesota:** how does MISA fit in the New College design (merger of COAFES and CNR?) How to broaden and strengthen faculty involvement in MISA? Learn from other colleges nationwide, learn from other campuses statewide?

**VIII. MISA and the School of Public Health:** Sustainability and research or practices on health-related issues, plants/food as medicine, ties with the Nursing School, etc.