

In early 2005 the MISA Board of Directors began discussions to renew the MISA by-laws as set out in the sunset clause. A committee was formed that included staff and board members.

The review committee met with survey experts and also contacted each of the Executive Directors for the Sustainers' Coalition and College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences Dean Chuck Muscoplat to ask if they are in favor of MISA continuing and all said "yes". The Dean requested that MISA worry less about documenting accomplishments of the past five years and concentrate on what we'd like to accomplish in the next five years.

The committee proposed the following process:

- 2 months prior to event distribute survey to seek info from all participants addressing MISA's challenges and ideas for new program directions. (Participants will include board members, sustainers coalition members, regional partnerships, etc).
- The surveys will be sent to a group to synthesize and that report will be sent back to the survey participants.
- A event will follow (probably in late Fall) that will bring together all the survey participants to examine challenges and address the following questions:
- The event will end with a dinner and signing ceremony.

May 10, 2005 meeting with Dick Krueger, UofM Extension evaluation specialist, Mary Anne Casey, an evaluation consultant, Dale Hennen, Beth Nelson and Helene Murray

Dale explained that this is a MISA sunset review—at the end of the day the question to be answered is whether MISA should continue. Dale shared summaries of the Sunset Review Committee's discussions and thoughts about the review.

Helene told them we had been charged by the Dean to worry less about documenting accomplishments of the past five years and concentrate on what we'd like to accomplish in the next five years.

Summary of our brainstorming and their suggestions:

We discussed the importance of getting feedback from multiple stakeholders, and that for this group, an in-person meeting with discussion might work best. Interactive, dynamic, builds on relationships. But in order to do this in a timely manner, prep for meeting with pre-meeting homework.

A suggested process might be to:

- 1) Identify participants and invite to participate: possible list of groups: five Sustainers' organizations, 5 regions of RSDP, 5 faculty, 15 current MISA Board members, 6 staff members, past Board members, students, specific program participants (past Endowed Chairs, alternative swine systems task force, information exchange advisory committee members)
- 2) Prepare brief background material about MISA and review, and distribute with questions by email to each participant or participating organization. Questions could be a combination of those suggested in the previous meeting's minutes, but with emphasis on future direction. Participants can answer on their own, or convene their own group to answer questions. Participants have set time (a month?) to answer questions and email back.
- 3) A team synthesizes responses. Composition of this team up for discussion. Pros and cons to using an outsider versus an insider. Mary Anne and Dick both felt it was important to have someone who knows the organization well at least be a part of the team. Team could include a staff member, a rep from Sustainers' Coalition, a faculty member and a farmer.
- 4) Synthesized report sent to all participants for review and reflection, discussions within their organizations/constituencies. (one month?)
- 5) All participants meet. Late afternoon start with break for dinner and work into evening. Facilitated small group discussions about MISA's impact, MISA's challenges, and MISA possible future direction. Small group reports, large group

discussion and attempt to reach some consensus about some possible future direction and emphasis areas.

- 6) If agreement that MISA should continue, then arrange a celebration event for signing of document (to be held at a later date).

Consider videotaping discussion. Can later edit into short piece about MISA mission, stakeholders and future direction.

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. The eight areas were grouped together where applicable.

**All groups were asked to consider this theme:**

**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?

**Group One: *Diverse audiences and Marketing:***

**Themes to consider:**

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

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

- 1) Diverse customers
- 2) Translate publications
- 3) Diversity: consumers, farmers, diverse ways to do agriculture. "old traditional" ag methods.
- 4) 4 million in MN, 500,000 are immigrants (permanent residents)
- 5) New immigrants have good skills and backgrounds, but lack information.
- 6) Best way to reach them? Not traditional classroom instruction. Many not literate.
- 7) On-farm tours? SFA has discussed. Translators needed? Maybe not.
- 8) Mentoring program might be good. help and production and also marketing techniques. 2-way learning.
- 9) Basic info in own language is necessary.
- 10) Could transmit info to older immigrants through the education of their kids.
- 11) Hands-on education, demonstrations
- 12) Outreach to rural people and low socio-economic status, some have same issues as immigrants.
- 13) Marketing, individual farmers diversifying their operations
- 14) Many immigrant farmers are cautious about new marketing methods.
- 15) Work to make marketing options more secure, verbal versus written contracts
- 16) Cooperatives for marketing a value-added product
- 17) Lots of farmers facing these issues, how do we create space for immigrant/ethnic farmers to connect and get established, anglo-farmers?
- 18) What can MISA do? Round table to bring people together. Field days, workshops.
- 19) Marketing studies, demand for new crops? White corn, goats.
- 20) How to conduct own market research?
- 21) Special event/social event with educational component. Ask groups what model they would like to use.
- 22) Branding products, face on the product
- 23) Growth of organic
- 24) Relate to values, rural life, family farmers, some co-opting by corporations
- 25) MISA: Wayne, integrated livestock
- 26) SARE: MN grants to travel programs

- 27) Demand is there, how can sustain fill it? Production needs to increase, processing/handling bottleneck, infrastructure is expensive.
- 28) MISA: problem solving/discussion group to discuss above issues and disseminate existing and new info.

## **Group Two: *Science & Sustainability***

### **Themes to consider:**

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

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

- 1) Build/convene partners to ID around common interests
- 2) ID sustainable indicators on: devise tests, justify new paradigms, energy issues scenario-building
- 3) Define principle criteria of moving toward sustainability.
- 4) Networker/Broker (not necessarily an implementer)
- 5) Leadership on topics around which to build teams: ex, some would like to see MISA deliver practical applications. Help gather and analyze data. Energy costs rising, create scenarios for change.
- 6) Climate change: perennial cropping, carbon sequestration, CSP and other rewards for good stewardship, and flood protection of land/cities
- 7) Market agriculture to new audience, potential ecosystems services delivery.
- 8) 3 degrees: principal criteria, 4 big topics:
  - a. energy
  - b. Climate change
  - c. Water quality
  - d. Health
- 9) We need: what is MISA's stake in all this? Other groups and what do they do? RSDPs, H2O quality center
- 10) Need MISA to focus on sustainable ag. How does our work fit in relations to other groups' work?
- 11) Tert:prine
- 12) Secondary: BROK, NET, scenario
- 13) Primary: works does not
- 14) Policy aspects of all of these topics need to be considered
- 15) Policy makers need this type of information
- 16) Three upcoming issues: expensive energy, climate change, declining economy. We have access to researchers and data. But avoid only looking back to determine where to go. Tipping point has been reached on these 3 things
- 17) Avoid using the rear-view window for these things

### **Group Three: *Students***

#### **Themes to consider:**

***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

- 1) Livestock production, new class?
- 2) Organic production, student farm planning classes
- 3) Sustag minor, links to grad program's websites
- 4) New internship sites, businesses, coops...
- 5) Interact with students from other colleges?
- 6) Bureaucratic hoops: get more students outside grad school into minor program. School of public health, public policy...
- 7) Track graduates: where do they go? Future internship sites, exit interviews with graduates.
- 8) Open MISA channel into sustainer's organizations to get experience in sustainable agriculture
- 9) Career options in sustainability through internships, courses?
- 10) Applied economics connected to markets. "Changing infrastructure toward a more local emphasis
- 11) New course? Existing conventional course. Growing demand for local/organic foods.
- 12) Slow process of sustainability being integrated into all courses. Student pressure, MISA pressure.
- 13) Engage faculty. Actively solicit faculty to create new courses, engage in sustainability.

### **Group Four: *MISA within U of M***

#### **Themes to consider:**

***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?

***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.

- 1) Promote and perform. Sort through research that supports benefits of foods raised in certain sustainable ways. eg CLA, Omega-3, what are the exact health benefits? Research to quantify and put a monetary value on the environmental services farmers provide. Better link between specific practices and environmental results, consequences.
- 2) Promote current activities within all parts of the university.
- 3) Bring back the "Joint Seminar." See MISA by-laws. Between researchers, producers, and sustainable coalitions.
- 4) See sustainability being moved to other areas of the university, eg city, regional planners must know about organic practices, multifunctional landscapes, and ag educators.
- 5) Ag-ed student should be required to take a sustag course
- 6) How do we stay visible to be heard even when speaking out?
- 7) How do we bring the "systems" focus to areas that have traditionally focused on the individual? Help to mesh sustag and nutrition, public health, etc.
- 8) MN Institute for Sustainable Living. Name change? But stay connected to Ag.
- 9) With NUCO? Making a greater link with environmental sci/studies programs.

- 10) Bringing/linking MISA to the other U campuses. Eg UMM has Pride of the Prairie has local meals, and a growing interest in sustag. Visible connection to regional partnerships.
- 11) Workshop on Student farms at MOSES conference.
- 12) Does extension have a role with MISA? Are they using MISA? What does this mean to us and sustag? Is sustainability a part of extension? Is extension responding to the needs of farmers? Is extension top-down or bottom-up?
- 13) Educate future extension agents about sustainability, or at least introduce them to the concept.
- 14) Bring organics/sustainability to master gardener program.
- 15) Have a basic biology class taught with organics. Have them grow an organic garden as a lab component. Can start with greenhouse/ hoop houses in spring semester.
- 16) Send all U depts. a survey: "What can MISA do for you?"
- 17) How does MISA coordinate expertise within the university?
- 18) Elementary education: bring basic sustag/growing plants/gardening curriculum to classroom.
- 19) Connect with other centers within the U. MISA doesn't have a formal relationship with them.

Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture  
Office: 612/625-8235; toll free – 800/909-MISA (6472); fax: 612/625-1268  
email: [misamail@umn.edu](mailto:misamail@umn.edu)  
Draft date: November 4, 2005

## **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

---

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.