



# MINNESOTA INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

## PROGRAM UPDATE 1992-2011

*A partnership of the University of Minnesota's College of Food,  
Agriculture, and Natural Resource Sciences, University of Minnesota  
Extension, and the Sustainers' Coalition*



## A Message From the Staff

MISA was created nearly twenty years ago to bring the agricultural and University communities together in a cooperative effort to develop and promote sustainable agriculture in Minnesota and beyond. This publication was designed to share and celebrate the accomplishments produced by this University-Community partnership and to describe MISA's intended direction for the future.

### **There have been significant accomplishments:**

- Creation of the Sustainable Agriculture Information Exchange.
- Development of the Sustainable Agriculture Graduate Minor.
- Selection and management of five rounds of School of Agriculture Endowed Chairs in Agricultural Systems.
- Initiation of the Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships.
- Development and support of numerous interdisciplinary research and education teams comprised of University-Community partnerships
- Development of the Alternative Livestock Production Systems Program.
- Creation of the Green Lands, Blue Waters Initiative
- Development of the Minnesota North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program.

None of these accomplishments would have been possible without the commitment, collaboration, and hard work of many people. Key players have changed, and MISA's Bylaws will be renegotiated in June 2011. Thanks to the broad support of many friends, MISA managed to remain faithful to its purpose and goals.

There is more to be done. MISA will continue to support the above efforts while exploring new opportunities to develop and promote sustainable agriculture. We are excited to be a partner in this work and to continue the University-Community dialog. MISA's future is bright, and we invite you to be a part of it.

—*MISA Staff*



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# HISTORY

MISA is a collaborative effort of the University of Minnesota's College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS,) University of Minnesota Extension, and the Sustainers' Coalition. MISA's cornerstone was laid in 1987 when a group of sustainable agriculture community individuals and organizations expressed concern about the level of sustainable agriculture work in the University's research, education, and extension initiatives. A series of discussions followed, and from these beginnings, a model to organize and expand the University-Community dialogue on sustainable agriculture was created. MISA came into formal existence in 1992 with CFANS and Extension funding currently playing a crucial role in this dialogue. University of Minnesota became an official partner in 2006.

## STRUCTURE

**Board of Directors.** MISA's Board of Directors consists of twelve to fifteen members. Membership on the Board represents a 1/3 balance among University representatives, sustainable agriculture practitioners (e.g., farmers, ranchers), and representatives of the sustainable agriculture community (e.g., non-governmental organizations, business, government, citizen representatives). We welcome Board of Director nominations on an annual basis.

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1987-Sustainers' Coalition forms to explore a joint venture with the University of Minnesota

Feb. 1990-Feasibility study completed  
July 1990-Sustainers' Coalition and University agree to form MISA

Feb. 17-First MISA Board meeting

1987 1988 1989 1990 1991 1992 1993

# PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

## Sustainers' Coalition Membership:

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, 1996-  
Land Stewardship Project, 1987-  
Minnesota Food Association, 1987-  
Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota, 1994-  
The Minnesota Project, 1987-

University of Minnesota's College of Food, Agricultural and  
Natural Resource Sciences 1992-

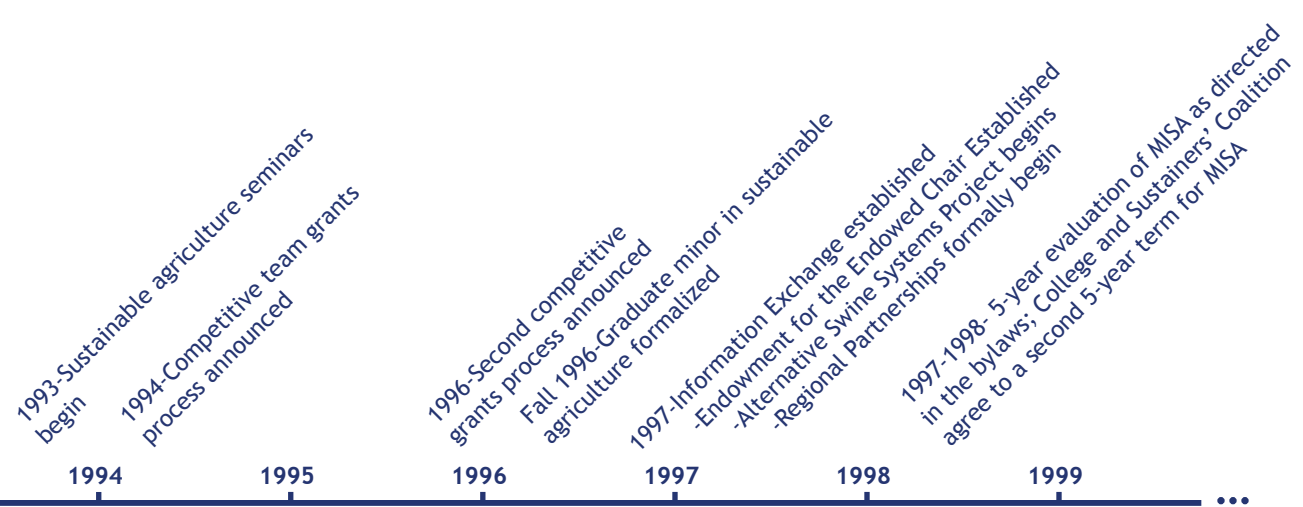
University of Minnesota Extension 2006-

## Former Sustainers' Coalition Members:

Joint Religious Legislative Coalition, 1987-1993  
Organic Growers & Buyers Association, 1987-2001

“Misa is based on a **partnership** between the University and citizens of Minnesota who are interested in sustainable agriculture. This partnership has helped foster continuing, meaningful interactions among people from these two communities.”

-Robert King, Professor,  
Department of Applied  
Economics



## PURPOSE & GOALS

“We’ve used MISA many times to link up to people at the University that can help us find the **answers** that we need, and if the answers aren’t there, to encourage someone to start looking for them.”

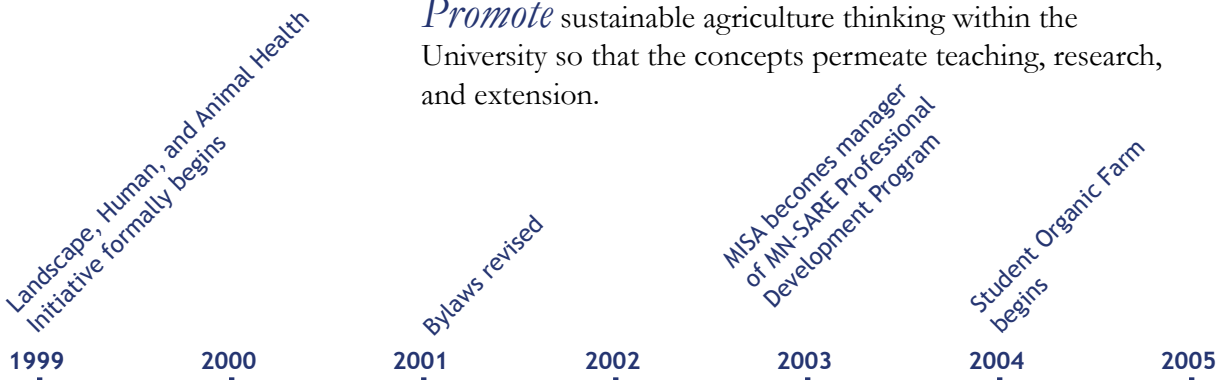
-David and Muriel French,  
Dairy Farmers, Dodge City  
Center, MN

MISA’s purpose is to bring together the agricultural community and the University community in a cooperative effort to develop and promote sustainable agriculture in Minnesota and beyond. MISA promotes dynamic agricultural systems that integrate the ecological, economic, and social aspects of life. MISA’s goals and objectives are to:

*Increase* the University’s response to the needs of the sustainable agriculture community and increase practitioners’ influence on the University. MISA serves as a door to the University’s resources.

- Increase communication and mutual exchange between the University and sustainable agriculture practitioners.
- Increase the influence of farmers and their practical knowledge on the faculty, staff and students of the University.
- Increase practitioners’ access to information, literature and access to faculty, staff and students.
- Identify gaps in knowledge of farmers and of the University faculty.

*Promote* sustainable agriculture thinking within the University so that the concepts permeate teaching, research, and extension.



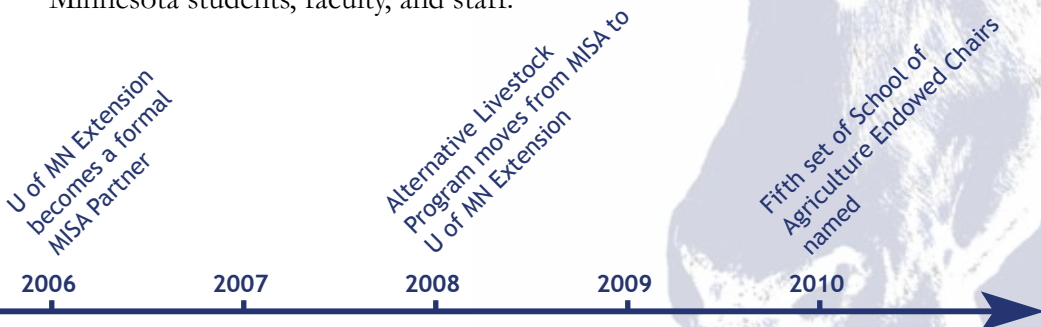


- Influence the movement of funds to researchers for sustainable agriculture.
- Foster teamwork on sustainable agriculture by funding interdisciplinary research projects, supporting undergraduate and graduate academic programs, and fostering partnerships.
- Oversee an endowed rotating Chair in sustainable agriculture.
- Create a climate of political support for sustainable agriculture among Minnesotans.
- Increase the opportunities for students, faculty and staff to be exposed to sustainable agriculture issues and discussions both on and off campus.

*Work* with rural communities in discovering and implementing the values of sustainability.


- Develop a method for defining the sustainability of agricultural systems and for assessing their impacts on rural communities.
- Promote sustainable community development principles throughout the State.

MISA works to achieve these goals and objectives through various programs in an effort to better serve Minnesota farmers and non-farming citizens, as well as University of Minnesota students, faculty, and staff.



## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Four core principles guide all MISA projects and programs.



“When we try to pick up anything by itself, we find it is attached to everything in the universe.”

-John Muir, Naturalist

*Systems Approach:* MISA believes that agriculture is a system in which the land, people, and production of food are interwoven. One aspect of the system cannot be changed without influencing all of it. MISA believes that all efforts to improve agriculture should take care to balance the long-term economic, ecological, and social effects.

*Synergy:* MISA believes that people of diverse interests working together cooperatively can produce a positive effect greater than the sum of their individual efforts. MISA’s intention is to create opportunities for people to work cooperatively on issues of sustainable agriculture in a way that promotes synergy.

*Healthy Debate:* It is MISA’s intention to promote sustainable agriculture through all of its various activities. In doing so, MISA welcomes input from any interested parties and will encourage healthy and vigorous debate.

*Balance of Power:* MISA is founded upon a balance of power between the Sustainers’ Coalition and the University of Minnesota. This balance is reflected in the composition of MISA’s Board of Directors and other governance structures. In addition to this internal balance, MISA seeks to achieve an appropriate balance of influence on the University between sustainable and conventional agricultural interests.

## **SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE INFORMATION EXCHANGE**

**Purpose.** The Information Exchange is a clearinghouse of information on sustainable agriculture and a collaborative effort of multiple stakeholders and information providers. From 1995 through 2003, the Minnesota State Legislature allocated money for MISA to work with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Energy and Sustainable Agriculture Program to develop and disseminate sustainable agriculture information. Beginning in 2005, the State Legislature allocated funding to MISA through the Higher Education budget to the University of Minnesota for the work of the Information Exchange.

**Accomplishments.** Two primary activities have been the development of the MISA website and educational materials.

**Website.** The Information Exchange maintains a popular website, which is constantly evolving to meet new needs. It currently contains:

- Electronic versions of our educational materials
- "Ask MISA" (where people can submit questions about sustainable agriculture.) In addition to the website's "Ask MISA" section, the Information Exchange also answers sustainable agriculture questions via e-mail, fax, and a toll-free telephone number.
- Calendar of sustainable agriculture events
- Announcements
- Database of resources (searchable by keyword)
- Links to partner organization websites as well as other websites related to sustainable agriculture
- Forum section which contains news articles and opinion pieces

**Educational Materials.** Development of the Information Exchange’s educational materials is a collaborative effort. Input from farmers, students, faculty, and community groups is used at all stages of development (to identify and prioritize topics, identify project team members, and to write, review, and disseminate the materials.) MISA staff directs this process and facilitates the writing and production of the materials.

**MISA News Blog, established July, 2010.**

This blog contains notices in ten categories: Awards, Calls for Presentations, Comment Periods & Signups, Courses & Workshops, Farmland Available, Grants & Scholarships, Internships, Jobs, Volunteer, and Sustainable Agriculture Newsletter.

The blog is updated weekly with new notices submitted directly to MISA by individuals and organizations; as well as items gleaned from the Sustag listserv, other listservs and newsletters.

**Sustag listserv, established in new format in March, 2008.** MISA’s intent for the Sustag listserve is to provide a way for people with an interest in sustainable agriculture to keep each other informed about events, research, learning opportunities, books, articles, or other pieces of knowledge relevant to sustainable agriculture. Sustag is not a debate forum.

NEWS BLOG VISITS	Month	# visits
	July 2010	365
	August 2010	1,151
	September 2010	1,282
	October 2010	986
	November 2010	1,030
	December 2010	1,329
	January 2011	1,671
	February 2011	1,808
	March 2011	1,942
	<b>Total</b>	<b>11,564</b>

Sustag has 778 subscribers as of March 29, 2011. Net gain is about 8 subscribers per month.

Month	New Subscriptions
August 2010	15
September 2010	9
October 2010	14
November 2010	11
December 2010	5
January 2011	8
February 2011	15
March 2011	18

SUSTAG LISTSERV  
SUBSCRIPTIONS

*Other listservs:*

Healthy Debate, established in March, 2010. 60 subscribers.  
Healthy Debate is a forum for the discussion and debate that is prohibited on Sustag.

SustAgMarket, established in August, 2010. 46 subscribers.  
SustAgMarket is a venue for the business advertising that is prohibited on Sustag.

*Online publications:*

All of MISA's publications are available in full text online. Print copies are also available for some of the publications.

Number of online views per year are estimates in some cases, as data were occasionally missing for a month. Estimates were made by averaging views for remaining months.

Hogs Your Way was released in 2001 but was in the Extension system, so we did not begin tracking it until it returned to our system in 2009.

ONLINE VIEWS PER YEAR OF  
MISA PUBLICATIONS

Publication (date published)	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Sustainable Agriculture Newsletter	6,705	6,070	5,968	5,441	5,860
Building a Sustainable Business (2003)	6,597	6,923	9,993	14,799	14,725
Resources for Beginning Farmers (2004)	1,625	3,800	5,296	10,323	12,899
Poultry Your Way (2005)	11,663	11,060	11,804	14,962	19,823
Local Food Guide (2005)	2,352	2,983	4,839	6,221	7,176
Dairy Your Way (March 2006)	3,323	4,363	2,786	4,149	7,759
Minnesota Guide to Organic Certification (March 2007)		4,712	3,357	2,434	1,399
Marketing Local Food (April 2007)		16,844	19,567	22,248	33,456
Hogs Your Way (moved from Extension, Dec. 2009)				332	8,641
Directory of Organic Buyers (January 2010)					6,026

We have established or helped establish several other websites, which are tracked through Google Analytics:

Website <i>(date launched)</i>	2009	2010	Jan-Mar 2011
Farm to School Toolkit (Mar. 2009) <i>www.mn-farmtoschool.umn.edu</i>	3,798	7,457	981
Green Lands Blue Waters (Dec. 2009) <i>www.greenlandsbluwaters.org</i>		1,279	221
Midwest Season Extension (January 2010) <i>www.midwestseasonextension.org</i>		1,511	304
Loon Organics CSA Case Study (May 2010) <i>sustagprofiles.info</i>		978	789
Organic Risk Management (January 2011) <i>www.organicriskmanagement.umn.edu</i>			1,602

VISITS TO MISA WEBSITES

- The Farm to School Toolkit has been turned over to University of Minnesota Extension as of Feb. 24, 2011.
- Midwest Season Extension is now managed by MOSES (Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service), but MISA hosts the site on our independent server.
- Organic Risk Management is a manual that was written by Agronomy & Plant Genetics faculty and staff as part of a large grant-funded project, but MISA put the manual online.

**Current & Future Efforts.** In addition to maintaining and updating the MISA website, we have several publications in development.

# STUDENT PROGRAMS

**Purpose.** Helping students develop the capacity to address increasingly complex and trans-disciplinary societal and ecological challenges is critical for the future of agriculture.

**Accomplishments.** MISA is actively involved with the University's graduate and undergraduate minors in sustainable agriculture, WUSA seminars, Theodora and Arnold Johnson Undergraduate Research Internship Program, and Cornercopia, The Student Organic Farm.

**Graduate/Undergraduate Minors in Sustainable Agriculture.** The graduate and undergraduate minors in sustainable agriculture were created in 1995 and in 1992, respectively. A MISA team-building grant led to the development of the graduate minor. The minors place strong emphasis on systemic approaches to analyzing current agricultural production systems in the U.S., as well as environmental, economic, and social conditions that influence changes in agriculture. Courses designed specifically for this program integrate biology, ecology, agriculture, sociology, history, philosophy, and economics.

An internship with agricultural producers, non-profit organizations, or government agencies working on sustainable agriculture issues is required for the graduate minor and is highly recommended for the undergraduate minor. The internship offers students an opportunity to gain practical experience in an area that complements their studies, broadens their understanding of food production, and develops learning and thinking skills that will serve them in a variety of settings.

**WUSA Seminars.** WUSA, or What's Up in Sustainable Agriculture seminars, is a student-run seminar series that

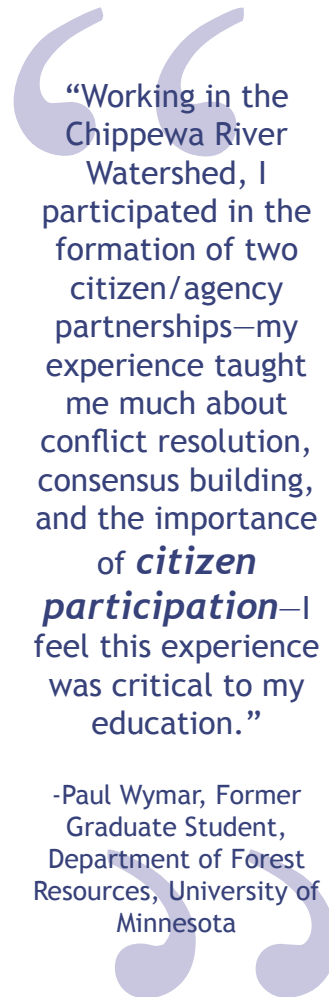


deals with sustainable agriculture issues. MISA co-sponsors the series each year with the Sustainable Agriculture Study Group. Seminars are informal, lunchtime gatherings open to all. Seminars address a wide range of topics, including alternative swine production systems, urban agriculture and community gardens, cultural diversity in agriculture, human health and agriculture, applied ecology, and marketing strategies. Guest speakers are from diverse backgrounds—academic, nonprofit, business, and farming communities. These weekly seminars consistently attract 20 to 50 participants.

**Theodora and Arnold Johnson Undergraduate Research Internship Program.** This program is designed to provide undergraduate students with a paid internship opportunity to work with a faculty mentor on a research topic pertaining to sustainable agriculture. It is funded by a private endowment and is managed by MISA staff. Twenty six students have benefitted from this program to date.

**Cornercopia, the Student Organic Farm.** This program began on a small garden plot on the Saint Paul Campus in 2004, and in 2005 about 2 acres of land at the corner of Larpentur and Cleveland Avenues was identified as the permanent home for the student farm.

**Current & Future Efforts.** MISA plans to continue strengthening the graduate and undergraduate minors in sustainable agriculture. Specific goals include expanding the activities available for students through the minors, and increasing funding for internships.



“Working in the Chippewa River Watershed, I participated in the formation of two citizen/agency partnerships—my experience taught me much about conflict resolution, consensus building, and the importance of *citizen participation*—I feel this experience was critical to my education.”

-Paul Wymar, Former Graduate Student, Department of Forest Resources, University of Minnesota

# GREEN LANDS, BLUE WATERS INITIATIVE

**Purpose.** The mission of Green Lands, Blue Waters (GLBW) is to support development of and transition to a new generation of agricultural systems that integrate more perennial plants and other continuous living cover in the agricultural landscape. Perennial food, fiber, and energy crops, pastures and forests, strategically located on the landscape, maintain productivity of the land, contribute to clean water, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and increase resilience to potential impacts from climate change. The deep roots of perennial plants stabilize erodible soils and hold significant moisture and nutrients that might otherwise move into waterways or groundwater, while fewer tractor passes reduce costs and contribute less of the greenhouse gases that are a factor in our changing climate. The agriculture systems promoted by GLBW will achieve these environmental improvements, while maintaining production and farm profitability, increasing food security, and enhancing human and animal health.

GLBW is a consortium of five land grant universities and more than a dozen non-profit organizations that represent scientists, policy experts, farmers, and community organizers embracing the Green Lands Blue Waters vision and who implement programs that advance the consortium's strategies and goals in the Mississippi River Basin.

**Accomplishments.** Working groups were formed for three of the five GLBW strategies for innovative agricultural systems. The Midwest Cover Crop Council was formed in 2006 and has since raised more than \$1,000,000 for research, training and implementation. In 2009, our partner in Iowa State University formed working groups for agroforestry and grass-based livestock. In 2010, the University of Minnesota secured leadership grants from the Walton Family Foundation

and the McKnight Foundation sufficient to hire a regional Director for GLBW; Richard Warner was recruited for that position and began work in the fall of 2010. Consortium researchers have published dozens of papers citing GLBW and promoting the virtues and methods of farming with continuous living cover.

**Current & Future Efforts.** We are strengthening the three existing working groups and are launching two additional working groups for perennial grains and biomass. These five working groups will expand greatly research and extension capacity of the GLBW partnership in the region. Our university and non-profit partners, particularly in Minnesota, Illinois and Iowa are already using the skills and knowledge of the working groups to train and assist farmers to implement innovative agricultural systems.

We will expand the GLBW partnership to include additional land grant schools in Middle-America and include more non-profit organizations to help implement programs at scales where the environmental impacts are measurable in watersheds and socio-economic progress is recognized by farmers, and business and community leaders. Through expanded publications, presentation, and Web presence will increase recognition of the importance of continuous living cover in the future of agriculture.

## SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE ENDOWED CHAIR IN AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS

“I have been pleased and sometimes amazed at the reception I get at the University, and how, when I have explained the endowment to faculty in a wide variety of disciplines, they become animated and interested. Many folks at the University appear to be interested in *systems thought* and research...I think this position is an idea whose time has come.”

-James Van Der Pol,  
former endowed chair

**Purpose.** The Endowed Chair is dedicated to stimulating interdisciplinary discussions, new ideas, and leadership in agriculture. It seeks to promote a healthy environment, vital communities, and economic profitability over the long term. Rotating appointments are filled by agricultural leaders not only in academics, but also from private and public arenas. Individuals or project teams serve flexible, varying length terms as appropriate. MISA manages the Chair, which is funded by a \$1.9 million endowment from School of Agriculture alumni, the Minnesota Legislature, and the University of Minnesota.

**Accomplishments.** Eighteen individuals have completed tenure as Endowed Chairs.

### *Current Endowed Chair Members:*

David Abazs, farmer, Finland, Minnesota

Using research-based information to develop more viable local food systems throughout the state

January-December 2011

Will Allen and Seitu Jones

Cultural Connections: Agricultural Philosophies and Culture

April 2011-May 2012

Lee DeHaan, The Land Institute

Research on perennial grains, partnering with university faculty, students, farmers and professionals in order to advance perennial grains, July 2010-November 2011

Bernhard Freyer, Professor, University of Natural Resources & Applied Life Sciences (BOKU) Vienna, Austria

Teaching and research on European/Austrian organic

systems and adapt those practices to U.S. and Minnesota organic agriculture, September 2010-July 2011

Jan Joannides, co-founder of Renewing the Countryside  
Addressing barriers and opportunities in developing value added products in our local food systems, September 2010-August 2011

Kris Johnson, University of Minnesota  
Research on the potential for perennial cropping systems to enhance water quality, climate change mitigation and other ecosystems services, January-December 2011

*Previous Endowed Chair Members:*

Patricia Henderson, agribusiness marketing consultant

Carmen Fernholz, farmer, Madison, MN

Robert von Bernuth, Michigan State University

Current Socioeconomic Issues Related to Livestock Expansion and the Structure of Agriculture May 1997-May 1998

James Van Der Pol, farmer, Kerkhoven, Minnesota

Alternative Swine Systems, January 1999-January 2000

Karen Lehman, Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy

Julie Ristau, Utne Reader Magazine

A Sustainable Food System in Southeast Minnesota (July 1999-May 2000)

Cornelia Flora and Jan Flora, Iowa State University

Intersection between Agriculture and Community Sustainability, July 1999-June 2000

Douglas Tiffany, University of Minnesota

Agricultural Energy Issues, August 2001-August 2002

Luanne Lohr, University of Georgia

Prospects for Regionalization of Organic Food Systems in Minnesota, August 2001-May 2002

Debra Elias Morse and Steve Morse, consultants

Green Lands, Blue Waters Initiative, May 2003-May 2004

James A. Riddle, consultant

Organic Livestock Research Survey, May 2003-April 2004

Beth Waterhouse, author and consultant  
Time, Soil and Children: Conversations with the second  
generation of sustainable farm families in Minnesota,  
May 2003-August 2003

Gigi DiGiacomo, Economic Consultant  
Development of an organic commodity price reporting  
service, October 2006-October 2007

Larry Lev, Oregon State University  
Innovative Marketing Alternatives, March  
2007-September 2008

Katherine L. Clancy, Food Systems Consultant  
Collaborative Approaches to Sustainable Agriculture,  
June-December 2007

Gary Holthaus, Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture  
Society  
Conversations on the New Agrarianism, January-June  
2007




## ALTERNATIVE LIVESTOCK PROGRAM

The purpose of this program is to conduct research and outreach on livestock production and marketing systems that are considered environmentally friendly, profitable, and that help support rural communities in Minnesota. The program was created in 1997 by the Minnesota Legislature, with encouragement from a coalition of sustainable agriculture organizations. It originally focused on swine production systems that used pasture and/or bedding for finishing pigs, for group farrowing and nursery settings, and for group gestation of sows. This approach was developed by program supporters who were interested in finding alternative production systems.

In 2005, we expanded the program to include research and outreach on all domestic livestock, including sheep, goats, dairy, and poultry. An advisory task force comprised of farmers, University faculty, and others connected to animal agriculture, oversees the program. In 2007 University of Minnesota Extension and MISA shared equally the funding of the Coordinator position. In 2008 the Coordinator became fully funded by Minnesota Extension.

**Accomplishments.** Activities of the past include:

- Increased communication among producers through the formation of the AltSwine Listserv, the Alternative Swine Newsletter, the Program's website, a database of individuals interested in alternative swine production, and articles about alternative swine practices in industry magazines.
- Increased educational activities for those interested in alternative and production and marketing of swine, goats, sheep, poultry, including field days, workshops,



“Through this **leading edge work**, we now have several state producers exporting alternatively produced, value added pork to high-end markets across the country... This is giving state producers a return on their production as well as benefiting the environment through the use of low-impact production systems.”

-Prescott Bergh, former outreach coordinator, Energy and Sustainable Agriculture Program, Minnesota Department of Agriculture

roundtable discussion groups, and the publication of the Swine Source Book.

- Secured legislative funds for research activities including the construction of alternative swine production research facilities at the West Central Research and Outreach Center in Morris and a full time researcher to investigate priority issues identified by the Swine Task Force.
- Established interdisciplinary connections within the University including faculty in Agronomy & Plant Genetics; Animal Science; Biosystems & Agricultural Engineering; Soil, Water & Climate; and the College of Veterinary Medicine.

### **Current & Future Efforts**

We have created listservs for small scale sheep, poultry, pork and meat goat producers. These networks provide a way to share information on production and marketing, with an emphasis on marketing options for pork, poultry, goats, sheep, and beef produced in alternative systems and help farmers organize marketing cooperatives or other entities.

Seek and secure funds for research and educational activities.

Continue to build connections by linking researchers to producers for on farm alternative livestock systems research.

Continue educational activities, facilitate networking, upgrade the existing website, and develop publications on alternative livestock systems.



# REGIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

**Purpose.** The Regional Partnerships bring citizens and University faculty, staff, and students together to identify and address issues affecting the sustainability of natural resource-based industries, including agriculture and tourism. In five regions across the state, citizen-University boards of directors fund projects that promote the long-term social, economic, and environmental health of their communities.

MISA helped secure legislative funding for the Partnerships in 1997 to establish three pilot regions. MISA helped coordinate the development of the regional boards and staffing structures. Before additional funding for the program was obtained in the 1999 legislative session, MISA provided staff support to the Partnerships' Statewide Coordinating Committee.

**Accomplishments.** To date, the Partnerships have funded over 300 research, education, and outreach projects for a total of roughly \$6,500,000. The Statewide Coordinating Committee has staff and directs a statewide project on the feasibility of local energy generation and distribution.

**Current & Future Efforts.** MISA continues to share staff with the Partnerships through the split positions of the MISA office administrator and the Partnerships' Statewide Director who also participates in the Green Lands, Blue Waters Initiative. MISA staff are active on the Statewide Coordinating Committee, and in local food systems working efforts. MISA's networking experience has helped the Partnerships develop relationships with University faculty, staff, and students and other organizations working to promote sustainability. MISA plans to maintain its relationship with the Regional Partnerships and to continue to explore connections between MISA programs and Partnerships projects.



“MISA played a key role in developing the concept and in securing support from the Minnesota Legislature for the Regional Partnerships... They've begun to develop an educational model that blurs the boundary between **University and community** and creates the opportunity for questions of sustainability to be at the center of applied University research...”



-Karen Lehman,  
Former Endowed Chair

## SUSTAINABLE FARMING SYSTEMS TEAM (1997-2001)

“Four years of painstaking research proved that these sustainable farms simultaneously benefit the environment and economically benefit the farm family. The dual goal of sustaining the land and *sustaining the farmer* is proven to work.”

-Sustainable Farming  
Systems Team Report:  
“Demonstrating  
Environmental and  
Economic Performance”

**Purpose.** This team researched the impacts of alternative farming systems on soil and water quality. The project focused on the collaborative efforts of participants from the Department of Soil, Water, and Climate, the Southwest and West Central Research and Outreach Centers at Lamberton and Morris, Extension, and non-profit organizations. Funding for this work was provided by the Minnesota Future Resources Fund as recommended by the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources.

**Accomplishments.** The results of the four-year study were published in July 2001. The report discusses the water quality and economic profile data from three grazing farms in the study.

## FARMER'S SUMMIT (1998-2000)

**Purpose.** A farmer-led network was developed that sought alternatives for current farm policies. MISA, the Kellogg-funded Visions for Change program, and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy sponsored the Farmers' Summit--which included farmers from Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

**Accomplishments.** The Farmers' Summit developed a policy platform focusing on long-term alternatives that would support farmers in gaining economic and political power, improve labor conditions for farm workers, and offer consumers choices in the market place. The Summit was also responsible for laying the foundation for the Red River Valley Project, an educational publication being developed by the Information Exchange.

## TEAM GRANTS (1993-2000)

**Purpose.** This program provided competitive grant funding for interdisciplinary research and education teams to address key issues affecting community and agricultural sustainability. MISA developed a competitive grant process to encourage interdisciplinary teams consisting of faculty, staff, students, non-profit organization representatives, and farmers.

**Accomplishments.** MISA funded 14 team grant projects over the course of seven years. Several teams went on to secure additional funding from other organizations.

Woody Agriculture Team (1993);

Biological, Financial, and Social Monitoring Team (1993-1995);

Integrated Farm Planning Team (1993);

Sustainable Dairy Systems Team (1993-1995);

Graduate School Team (1993-1995);

Integrated Approaches in Natural Resources and Agricultural Management: Establishing a Research and Educational Agenda for Minnesota (1997);

Farm Beginnings (1996-1998);

Team Building to Promote Visioning, Whole Farm Planning, and Alternative Economic Uses of Environmentally Sensitive Areas in the Chippewa River Basin (1996-1998);

Evaluating Approaches in Comprehensive Farm Planning (1996-1997);

Integrated Cropping Systems Team: Southern Minnesota Cropping Systems (1996);

Assessing the Nutritional Impact of Sustainable Food Systems: Urban and Rural Linkages (1999-2001);

Farm Sustainability and Survivability in Minnesota's Red River Valley: Lessons from Adaptive Production and Business Management Strategies of Farmers (1999);

PastureLand: Marketing Antibiotics and Hormone Free Grass Based Milk Products (1999-2000);

Medicinal Herbs: Creating a Network of Growers and Herbalist Health Care Providers (1999-2000);



“MISA has been a lot of help to us as we’ve tried to put together a sound ***economical, biological, and social*** system that fits our needs in today’s competitive agriculture environment... Because of our involvement in those two projects (Social, Biological and Economic Monitoring Project and The Dairy Team Project), we’ve been able to move much more quickly to the sustainable system we are trying to achieve.”

-Dan and Muriel French,  
Dairy farmers,  
Dodge Center, MN

## *PRESENT BOARD OF DIRECTORS*

Todd Arnold, 2008-  
Phillip Batalden, 2010  
Jolene Beisang, 2008-  
Attina Diffley, 2009-  
Gigi DiGiacomo, 2005-  
Glen Hill, 2010-  
Kris Johnson, 2008-  
Loretta Jaus, 2010-

Rob King, 2006-  
Derric Pennington, 2010-  
Julie Ristau, 2010-  
Lisa Smiley, 2009-  
Tony Thompson, 2005-  
Okechukwu Ukaga, 2005  
\*Dale Woodbeck, 2009-

## *PAST BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEMBERS*

Nancy Adams, 2004-2006  
\*JoAnne Berkenkamp, 2001-2005  
DeEtta Bilek, 1998-2004  
\*R. Kent Crookston, 1992-1996  
Mary Doerr, 1993-1997  
\*Wayne Edgerton, 2004-2009  
Carol Ekarius, 1996-1999  
Jon Evert, 1992-1998  
\*Carmen Fernholz, 1992-1998; 2003-2009  
Muriel French, 1997-2003  
Doug Gunnink, 1992-1995  
Dale Hennen, 2002-2008  
Ralph Hilgendorf, 1992-1999  
Bill Hutchison, 2007-2009  
Dana Jackson, 1994-2000  
Jacqueline Jacob, 2002-2008  
Gregg Johnson, 1998-2001  
\*Loni Kemp, 1992-1998  
Tim King, 1992-1996  
Chuck Knierim, 2003-2009  
Rebecca Knittle, 1992-1995  
Philip O. Larsen, 1993-1995  
Richard Levins, 1996-1999  
Bernadette Longo, 2002-2005  
Lynn Mader, 1999-2005

Albert Markhart III, 2000-2006  
Randy Meyer, 1996-1997  
Dave Minar, 1999-2005  
Roger Moon, 1992-1997  
Joan Nassauer, 1992-1994  
\*Jan O'Donnell, 2000-2006  
Rick Olson, 2005-2008  
Jerry Perkins, 1992-1998  
Paul Porter, 2003-2009  
Greg Reynolds, 1999-2005  
Mark Ritchie, 1998-2004  
Alvaro Rivera, 2005-2009  
William Rois, 1999-2005  
Michael Russelle, 1992-1995  
Vernon Ruttan, 1992-1995  
Charles Schmidt, 1993-1996  
Dave Serfling, 1992-1993  
Jim Stordahl, 2002-2008  
Deon Stuthman, 1995-1998  
\*Mary M. Tacheny, 1995-2001  
Mark Thell, 1995-2001  
Terry VanDerPol, 2003-2009  
\*Bruce Vondracek, 1995-2001  
Michael White, 2000-2003  
William F. Wilcke, 1994-2000

## PRESENT STAFF MEMBERS

Bridgette Bethke, *Student worker*, 2011-

Taylor Hundig, *part-time Information Exchange Assistant*, 2010-

Jane Grimsbo Jewett, *Web Site Coordinator*, 1999-

Helene Murray, *MISA Coordinator*, 1993-2002; *Executive Director*, 2002-

Kate Seager, *Program Associate and MN SARE Co-coordinator*, 2000-

Courtney Tchida, *Student Programs Coordinator*, 2003-

Elizabeth Wieland, *MN SARE Co-coordinator*, 2011-

## PAST STAFF MEMBERS

Derek Braaten, *Intern*, 2004

Charlotte Conn, *Senior Secretary*, 1995-1998

Debra Elias Morse, *Associate Program Director*, 1995-1999

Emily Green, *Regional Partnerships Coordinator*, 2000-2001

Julie Grossman, *Minor in Sustainable Agriculture Coordinator*, 1997-1999

Sara Hartman, *Principal Secretary*, 1992-1994

Melinda Hooker, *Minor in Sustainable Agriculture Coordinator*, 1999-2002

Wayne Martin, *Alternative Livestock Coordinator*, 1999-2007

Caitrin Mullan, *Intern*, 2001-2002

Beth Nelson, *Information Exchange Associate Director*, 1999-2010

Cody Schultz, *Student worker*, 2007-2010

Monica Siems, *Regional Partnerships Coordinator*, 1999 and 2001-2003

Julie Tranquilla, *Alternative Swine Task Force Coordinator*, 1998-1999

Daniel Ungier, *Intern*, 2004

Ken Virnig, *Intern*, 2000

Bill Wilcke, *Acting Administrator*, 2000-2002

Don Wyse, *Executive Director*, 1992-2000

# CONTACT Us!

We welcome your questions and comments. For more information regarding MISA, sustainable agriculture questions, or to provide financial support for MISA's endeavors, please contact the MISA office at any time.

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