



"Building healthy land, people, communities and quality of life, for present and future generations."

Executive Director's Report "My Family Farm Idea"

March 2009
Number 120

In This Issue

eXtension Webinar Series Planned	2
Pasture Logic	4
Healthy Farm Index	6
Sourcing Organic Seed...	7
Meet Your New Board Members	8
Nebraska Food Cooperative Update	10
Events.....	12

The NSAS Newsletter is a bimonthly publication of Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society, a private, non-profit organization. Our mission is to promote agriculture & food systems that build healthy land, people, communities & quality of life, for present & future generations. The purpose of this newsletter is to inform its readers about sustainable agriculture issues, resources & activities. Members receive this newsletter as a benefit.

Growing up on a small farm near Plain City, Ohio, I always envisioned myself attending the University of Nebraska - Lincoln, earning a degree and returning back to our family farm. However I openly questioned that as I saw more and more farms going under and the decline in the health of our family's own farm. During my freshman year of college several things occurred that led me to believe that Nebraska was where I wanted to carry on my family farm idea. The most important was meeting my wife Crystal. Our shared values of stewardship and collaboration of the land and the family farm has lead to an immensely rewarding relationship and that will continue to be the strength and foundation for our farm.

The second was the landscape and the geology of the state of Nebraska. Both the land and the people lend themselves to a culture of progress, of stewardship and of unwavering values. I was not altogether unfamiliar with Nebraska. My father was born and raised in Silver Creek, and I still have quite a bit of family here. I see these same values in my family as I see in Nebraska and I believe that it is a great resource to grow as stewards of the land and of our farms.

I firmly believe in the mission of NSAS, which states: NSAS promotes agriculture and food systems that build healthy land, people, communities and quality of life, for present and future generations. Growing up I was very active in FFA. One event I did was the Creed Speaking Contest, in which freshman recite the FFA Creed. The opening line of the creed is "I believe in the future of agriculture with a faith born not of words, but of deeds." This has always stuck with me and I believe it is essential for the future of NSAS. Farm Tours, Farmer to Consumer connections, conferences, annual meetings, farmer's markets, and youth camps are all ways to further this mission.

We must continue to foster and facilitate the growth of sustainable agriculture and increase the viability of the family farm in order to ensure this way of life and I believe NSAS can be a leader in this movement, both in Nebraska and the Midwest but also nationwide!

Thank you and I look forward to meeting everyone! I am completely accessible, so feel free to call or send me an email. And if you are in the Lincoln area stop by!

William A. Powers

Support NSAS on the Web. There are several ways you can support NSAS through the World Wide Web

- <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Nebraska-Sustainable-Agriculture-Society/44321132807>; The Social Media movement collides with the NSAS movement!
- www.maatiam.com; Donates a portion of your online shopping to NSAS!
- <http://www.goodsearch.com/?charityid=899957>; Use this toolbar to do your internet research and support NSAS at the same time!
- <http://healthyfarmsnebraska.blogspot.com>; The unofficial blog for NSAS!

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eXtension Webinar Series Planned!

Please feel free to join us at 1:00 p.m. CST or 12:00 p.m. MST.

- April 8- Tips and Tricks for Successful Farmers Markets
- May 13- Finding your target market using MarketMaker
- June 10- Youth Entrepreneurship

A part of eXtension has created a series of Webinars to help entrepreneurs and communities think more in entrepreneurial terms as well as provide tips on various advantages of being a wise entrepreneur. eXtension is an interactive learning environment delivering the best, most researched knowledge from the smartest land-grant university minds across America. eXtension connects knowledge consumers with knowledge provider - experts who know their subject matter inside out.

Here are the instructions on how to connect to this free service:

No pre-registration is required and there is no fee to participate. About 10 minutes prior to the start time simply go the Adobe Connect Pro meeting room at <http://connect.extension.iastate.edu/ecop/>. You will be presented with a login screen that has an "Enter as Guest" option. Enter your first name, last name and state, then click "Enter Room" to join the conference. To hear the audio of the workshop and participate in the Q&A portion of the workshop we will be using a built-in teleconferencing capability of Adobe Connect Pro conferencing software. Once you log into the meeting you will be presented with the option to enter your call-back number OR there will be a toll-free number for you to call. After entering your number you will be automatically called and joined into the audio portion of the Web conference on your phone.

April 8th, 2009

Tips and Tricks for Successful Farmers Markets

Join Jennifer Dennis, Specialty Crops Marketing Specialist, Purdue University for a farmers' market warmup for the coming season. This webinar will deal with proven strategies that make farmers' markets successful. Is it the advertising they do, the location, the extra events associated with the market? Recommended for farmers' market managers, farmers, craftspeople, artisans as well as business coaches and mentors.

May 13th, 2009

Finding Your Target Market Using MarketMaker

Join Dar Knipe, Marketing and Business Development Specialist, University of Illinois for an informative session on how to find your target market and how to use *MarketMaker*. *MarketMaker* is an interactive mapping system that locates businesses and markets of agricultural products. It provides an important link between producers and consumers. This session will wrap up our webinar series for the summer.

Pasture Logic: Consider An Alternative To Livestock-Feeding Units

Yankton Daily Press and Dakotan, Yankton, SD

Online at: http://www.yankton.net/stories/050704/nej_20040508009.shtml

I grew up eating farm-raised lamb, bantam chicken and duck eggs, goat milk, vegetables and fruit.

Now that I'm grown, I really miss this part of living on a farm — as do many rural residents who have since moved to town. At the Beverly Care Center in Hartington, Neb., my husband helps plant a garden every year. While there's not enough garden-fresh vegetables available for every meal, he said residents really enjoy getting homemade rhubarb crisp or eggplant patties during the summer. Because so many of the nursing home's residents were involved in farm life at some point, it's really a treat for them to get a taste of garden-fresh produce — rather than the bland, pre-packaged and preservative-packed foods supplied by the nursing home's usual food vendor.

Before coming to the Press & Dakotan, I worked for the North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program headquartered in Lincoln, Neb. The purpose of this agricultural research-related grant program was to promote sustainable agriculture. During my two-year stint, I reported on various projects conducted by both producers and expert researchers like university personnel and Extension educators.

One of my studies was on successful farmer-direct marketing programs. With these programs, colleges, nursing homes, restaurants and other businesses bought directly from their local producers.

Typically, farm-raised food products must go through a processor and wholesaler before reaching the retailer. With a farmer-direct program, these "middle men" are bypassed. Farmers can then get higher profits while the retailer — Mount Marty College, Fry'n Pan or Majestic Bluffs, for example — enjoys the competitive advantage of serving farm-fresh foods. In addition, dollars spent shipping in products from out of state or the country leave the Yankton area, while dollars spent on locally grown products stay local.

In one case study, Iowa residents in the cities of Waterloo and Cedar Falls were found to spend nearly \$300 million on groceries and restaurant-dining each year. Northern Iowa State University researcher Kamyar Enshayan estimated that if each person in these two cities spent only \$10 of their weekly grocery bills on local foods, \$2 million could be invested locally per month.

In his SARE project, Enshayan recruited 10 Waterloo institutions — including hospitals, nursing homes, restaurants and colleges — to try out farmer-direct purchasing. His results were outstanding. From 1998-2001, these businesses spent

nearly \$600,000 on locally grown products — which meant \$600,000 was being reinvested into Waterloo by these farmers through their everyday business, like shopping for dish detergent and getting a new part for the combine. There's plenty of benefits to both sides through a farmer-direct marketing program.

Local foods are usually harvested within 24 hours of purchase, so consumers eat them at the height of ripeness — giving them a better taste. Imported foods are not as fresh when consumed, because they're treated with wax, post-harvest pesticides and other preservatives to fight decay and pests during shipping and storage. While an apple shipped from Washington is OK to eat, it's not going to taste like an apple picked from a Clay County orchard the morning before I eat it.

Other benefits to local restaurants and food-service departments are that locally grown foods tend to have longer shelf lives than prepackaged foods and that foods grown locally usually cost less than foods supplied by national vendors.

What keeps many businesses from trying out a farmer-direct program is, businesses fear farmers won't have enough of a product available at a certain time, which is crucial for places with set menus. In addition, kitchens built to handle pre-packaged foods may need to reconstruct themselves to prepare fresh foods. There's a lot more work that goes into making a carrot cake when you're starting out with fresh ingredients than with a cake mix.

Farmers worry that they won't get paid the price their products are worth. However, Enshayan's studies show that while Waterloo institutions paid local farmers anywhere from \$2.18 under to 32 cents over the national vendor's price for more products, this price was much higher than farmers would receive if going through the conventional marketplace. And, once institutions find success in the program, Enshayan said most were very willing to pay farmers more for their products.

Establishing good working relationships between local businesses and local farmers is realistic opportunity for Yankton to boost its economy and still remain strong in agriculture. But, doing this requires risk and many people facing their fear of the unknown.

Rita Brhel works for Attachment Parenting International and also own her own business, Brhel Communications. She is a stay-at-home mom to two girls and has been married to her college sweetheart for 6 1/2 years.

Auction Donors 2009

We would like to thank the following individuals and businesses who donated items or their time to make the NSAS fundraising auction a great success again this year. We raised over \$4,950 thanks to your support! And, a special thank you to Farmer Bill Hawkins and NSAS member Michael Braunstein for filling in when the weather was not cooperating and helping make the live auction so entertaining!

The Rodale Institute

Whitmer Welding

Tom and Twyla Hansen

UNL Extension - Norfolk

Acres USA

Angelic Organics - John Peterson

Joan and Allan Benjamin

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Pam Huckins & SlowFood Nebraska

Debbie Hunsberger

Community CROPS & Ingrid Kirst

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Grazin' Acres with Terry and Melissa Fulton

Plain Power & Equipment Inc. with Doug Schmid

Blue River Hybrids

Matt Cranford Photography

Tom & Gretchen Pesek

Rezac Seed

SAGE Bistro - Metro Community College

Lucky Bucket Brewing - Zac Triemert

Liz Sarno

ShadowBrook Farm - Kevin and Charuth Loth

Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center

Sustainable Table

The Coffee House

The Last Straw Journal - Joyce Coppinger

The Mary Riepma Ross Media Arts Center

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Heartland Nuts & More

Scott Willet

Laura Demmel

Ben Schole

Harvest Health

West Point Implement of Columbus, Buddy Ternus

A Special Thanks also goes to our Food Sponsors

We would like to thank the following individuals and businesses who donated food items for the breaks and meals during the conference.

Back Alley Bakery - John Hamburger

Cultiva Coffee - Jon Ferguson

Spilker Ales - Sam Spilker

Ben Gotschall - Clover Clove

Wise Oven Bakery - Todd and Susan Rivers

A BIG Thank You to the 2009 Rural Advantage Healthy Farms Conference Sponsors

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OCIA News

Organic Crop Improvement Association, Nebraska Chapter #1 Newsletter

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2008 Update on the Healthy Farm Index

The Healthy Farm Index continues to develop as part of broader research in organic agroecosystems at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The index seeks to assess farm health based on measures of farm production, biodiversity, and associated ecosystem services. We have identified 12 indicators that we feel represent farm health. Biodiversity indicators are based on bird and insect surveys and associated vegetation data evaluated at field, farm, and landscape scales. The second year of biodiversity data collection on 27 farms has been completed.

Preliminary results indicate 108 breeding bird species observed in total, with individual farm richness ranging between 15 and 60 species with an average of 38.

We have begun using audio recorders to sample the presence and absence of bird species. This method provides us with greater flexibility and more information. We can also sample for owls at night. If you would like a copy of a recording from your farm or Mead contact John.

We are sending a survey to NE organic farmers. We're interested in your opinions and management and economic decisions. Your participation would be greatly appreciated.

The Healthy Farm Index will be a mechanism for integrating and communicating interdisciplinary data toward farm practices and policy that optimize food production, biodiversity, and ecosystem services.

To learn more about the Healthy Farm Index, contact John Quinn at: jquinn2@unl.edu / 3310 Holdrege Street / Lincoln NE 68583-0962 / (402) 472-0825 / FAX (402) 472-2946. Website: <http://organic.unl.edu/hfi/hfi.shtml>. For other questions about organic production: "Contact Us" at UNL: <http://organic.unl.edu/contact.shtml> or call Liz Sarno, UNL Extension Educator-Organic Project Coordinator at: esarno2@unl.edu or 402-309-0944.

Organic Crop Improvement Association Nebraska Chapter #1

OCIA is accredited by the USDA NOP, ISO-65, IFOAM, CAQ, JAS and the Costa Rican Ministry of Agriculture for the MAG program.

The Organic Crop Improvement Association was established in 1985. It is a non-profit international association of organic farmers, processors, traders, and manufacturers who have joined forces to promote partnerships, provide information to help growers improve crops and soil, build environmental stewardship, and provide certification services.

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Flame-On The Organic Way!

Liz Sarno, UNL Extension - Organic Project Coordinator

In 2008, UNL Weed-Flaming Project received a NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant Award and matched funds from the Propane Education and Research Council "Reducing Soil Erosion through Thermal Pest Control" The project will purchase a commercial type flamer - modify it for field demonstration purposes. Drs. Stevan Knezevic, Associate Professor of Integrated Weed Management, and George Gogos, Professor of Mechanical Engineering and Chris Bruening, UNL Graduate Student will work with four organic farmers - from the Abie/Bruno area.

The farmers will conduct on-farm experiments controlling various weeds that they are trying to control in their operation using the flamer.

To see progress of these experiments, what day and on which farms we will be conducting these experiments using the flaming go to: <http://organic.unl.edu/wdflm/wdflm.shtml> and NSAS: <http://www.nebsusag.org/> starting this spring - check in regularly to follow the research project and get updates.

For additional information about weed flaming contact Stevan Knezevic: SKNEZEVIC2@UNL.EDU or Santiago Ulloa, UNL Graduate Student: Santiago@huskers.unl.edu

Nebraska Local Foods Network holds two network educational meetings each year where we bring in speakers and hear about the exciting news in local foods. Please plan to attend our next network meeting from 8:30-Noon on Monday, May 11, 2009 in Lincoln at the East Campus Union. There will be a variety of speakers presenting on relevant local foods topics. In addition, there will be a break-out for each of the three committees; Marketing, Production, and Nutritional Education.

The Nebraska Local Foods Network (NLFN) is a collaboration of Nebraskans working together to encourage and facilitate the increased production and consumption of local foods. The NLFN strives to build stronger communities, healthier lives and a cleaner environment.

Please save **May 11th** and come be a part of the Nebraska Local Foods Network!

Sourcing and Using Organic Seed

Liz Sarno, UNL Extension - Organic Project Coordinator

If you farm or market garden organically you need to use organically produced seeds: National Organic Program (NOP) **205.204 Seeds and planting stock practice standard.**

(a) The producer must use organically grown seeds, annual seedlings, and planting stock: *Except*, That,

(1) Nonorganically produced, untreated seeds and planting stock may be used to produce an organic crop when an equivalent organically produced variety is not commercially available.

Commercially available does not mean - if you can't find organically produced seeds at a price you want to pay then you use an untreated, non-GMO, conventionally produced seeds. Using organic seeds includes all seeds "cover crops" and seeds used for "green manure plow-down" production as well. The good news is that sourcing organically produced is becoming easier. Because of the demand from farmers and gardeners, more companies are producing seeds organically.

Why use organically produced seeds - the real question should be "why use a non-treated seed that was conventionally produced?" Yes, if you cannot find an equivalent organic seed for a crop or forage you want to produce, you will have to use an untreated, non GMO conventionally bred variety. However, if a farmer feels they have a conventionally bred corn variety that they have used for years and cannot find an organically produced one that is comparable perhaps they have not looked lately at what is out there. There are many good corn varieties that are organically produced and reasonably priced. Another reason is the integrity of the organic system will be kept easier to preserve from the start by using organically produced seed. I know at our UNL research stations we our testing winter wheat varieties on organic farm ground that is managed organically to give farmers a better representation of which varieties would work best in their organic farming operation.

I have included several websites for sourcing organic seeds:

Seed Search - Organic Seed Sourcing: <http://www.organicseedsourcing.com>

Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas -ATTRA: http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/altseed_search.php

Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources - Organic: <http://csanr.wsu.edu/Organic/OrganicSeed.htm>

Welcome to Your Newest Board of Director Members

Alexandra McClanahan (Shively) is from Neligh, NE. She graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in journalism in 1975. She worked for several newspapers in Nebraska, generally focusing on agriculture and irrigation issues. The newspapers included the Keith County News, the Crete News, the Grand Island Daily Independent, the Lincoln Journal, the Lincoln Star and the Omaha World-Herald. She moved to Alaska in 1982. She attained her Master's Degree in Alaska Native studies in 2005. She bought her farm in Antelope County in 2002. She is the author of several books published by The CIRI Foundation, and she is also a published poet. She is married to John Shively and the mother of Natasha Hensley Shively.

Roger Wilson was raised on a combination crops and cattle operation near Scottsbluff, Nebraska and continues to be active in its management. Both his BS and MS degrees are from the University of Nebraska. His professional experience includes being a county agent (before they were educators) and bank agricultural lender/farm manager. He has worked for the University of Nebraska since 2001 and currently serves as the farm management / enterprise budget analyst in UNL's Agricultural Economics department. He and his wife, Margaret, have three adult children and seven grandchildren.



Dr. Charles Wortmann is an associate professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with an extension and research appointment as a soil fertility/nutrient management specialist focused on improving agricultural productivity, profitability, and sustainability and water quality protection, especially for no-till systems. He also conducts research on sweet sorghum as a biofuel crop.

Dr. Wortmann joined UNL in 2001 after working for 20 years in Africa to improve the sustainability and productivity of small-holder agriculture. He continues to have collaborative activities in eastern and southern Africa. He grew up on a farm near Hartington, NE where several family members farm.



During his career, he has had much research and extension on green manure/cover crops, agro-forestry, diverse cropping systems, use of organic resources in soil fertility management, as well as production systems common in Nebraska. He has also been involved with two farmer research groups in southeastern Nebraska and is interested to see such activities in other part of Nebraska, including for organic production.

Nebraska Food Cooperative Update

Gearing up for its third year of production the Nebraska Food Cooperative is really experiencing the definition behind "Growing Pains". But instead of "Growing Pains" we prefer to look at it as "Growing Plans". Plant the seeds and the plan grows. Or as the old adage about perennials goes: first they sleep, the next year they creep, then the third year they leap!

So what is about to leap? The demand and marketing opportunities for local foods is exploding. The Board of the Nebraska Food Cooperative (NFC) recognize this momentum and recently decided that our market should be as unlimited to people as we can make it. While we are a cooperative effort and having members buy into the concept is absolutely crucial for sustainability, we also feel it's important for our Nebraska community as a whole to enjoy all the options being made available.

Visitors are now welcome to shop the Nebraska Food Cooperative's on-line market during its monthly order cycles without paying the upfront cost of an annual membership. For a \$6 dollar fee per monthly order, one can place an order on-line any month they choose. If you are registering as a producer member to sell products you are still required to purchase one of the annual membership options. Annual membership options consist of \$40 for a year or the purchase of Coop stock for \$100 along with an annual maintenance fee of \$20 for every year thereafter.

In addition to this new opportunity for non-members, the cooperative is busy developing a transport and delivery service that will expand producer and consumer membership access across the state. The cooperative will soon be purchasing a vehicle to pull our NFC trailer complete with deep freeze transport. This trailer transport will be seen traveling on county roads all over the state. Along with this service, we are also teaming up with Tomato Tomato producers, Jody and Marv Fritz to share their transportation service to areas as far as Grand Island, Sioux City and southeast Nebraska.

In the meantime, NFC is working on a business plan that will sustain our transportation and delivery service goals. As part of that business plan, we are looking for an individual interested in owning and operating the delivery service business and working as a contractor with NFC. If you know of someone interested in this prospect, please pass our contact information along or inquire within.

The Cooperative's effort to build sustainable transportation and delivery networks is also being led in the east Omaha urban area by our new service provider, James Hermsen of Freewheelin Food bike delivery service. In our past article, we mentioned the development of such an endeavor. Due to the fast approach of winter last season, the Freewheelin

Food bike delivery service will launch its first official ride and delivery on our delivery date of April 9th, 2009.

Recently, the Together Inc. food pantry of Omaha joined the cooperative. Together Food Inc. is a local non-profit organization assisting individuals and families in need. It is imperative that as we build local food systems, we also make the systems equitable and accessible to all. Together Inc., an Omaha Food Bank recipient and distributor, will be set up to receive donations from Cooperative members and visitors towards fresh food baskets. Together Inc. will use the donations towards purchases from Nebraska Food Cooperative producers to create fresh food baskets for families/clients they serve at their local food pantry. In addition, they welcome any donated fresh foods gleaned from local farms and gardens.

Upcoming Nebraska Food Cooperative events are occurring in the Lincoln and Aurora communities.

- On March 28th, NFC is hosting a free movie event at Savannah Pines Retirement Community located at 3900 Pine Lake Road in Lincoln. The movie Fridays at the Farm will be shown at 2PM followed by a discussion on local foods. Guests will enjoy NFC products featuring coffee, popcorn and homemade pies.
- On May 2nd, NFC is holding a joint annual conference and banquet with the Nebraska Environmental Action Coalition (NEAC) in Aurora. This conference features keynote speaker John Ikerd, professor emeritus of agricultural economics from the University of Missouri Columbia College of Agriculture. The conference will be held from 1 to 9PM at the Leadership Center in Aurora. Lodging is available for those who might want to stay overnight. There is no conference fee, but the banquet dinner featuring local foods cost \$15/adult and \$5/children, 12 and under.

For further information contact 1-800-993-2379 or info@nebraskafood.org
Libby Broekemeier, Nebraska Food Cooperative

New Air Emissions EPCRA Rule for Livestock & Poultry

On December 28, 2008, the US EPA published a final rule that clarified which livestock facilities must report air emissions from their facilities. Animal agriculture was granted an administrative exemption from reporting air emissions that normally occur from raising farm animals under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA).

For more information: <http://water.unl.edu/missionsrule>

"In The Vault"

Beekeeping Benefits Include Pleasure, Profit by Andy McGuire, UNL Extension Educator

Why would anyone want to keep bees? There are a variety of answers depending on what motivates you.

If you are considering a side-line business, then this may be a good time to look into beekeeping. Marion Ellis, beekeeping specialist at UNL, believes that beekeeping offers a good opportunity for those seeking supplementary income. According to Ellis, an operation of 25-200 hives would be the right size for someone not wanting to go into beekeeping full-time. The bees could be kept within a close radius of your home and existing structures can be modified for honey processing and storage. Larger operations require specialized equipment, storage buildings, and trucks, and are spread out over a large area.

The honey from side-line operations can usually be marketed directly to consumers at a premium. Possible outlets include orchards, roadside produce stands, Christmas tree farms, advertising agencies (many are looking for Christmas gift packages for corporate customers to send their clients), tour companies (they like to give small thank-you gifts that reflect the area they visited), restaurants (if you supply them with honey, persuade them to put up a honey display by the cash register), or a sign in the yard along the road leading to your home.

If your needs are not so tangible, consider some of the other rewards of beekeeping as lauded by beekeepers through the centuries. (Taken from Ellis' newsletter Bee Tidings)

William Shakespeare in King Henry V, "For so work the honey bees, creatures that by a rule in nature, teach the art of order to a peopled kingdom."

Dr. John Dzierzon in his 1882 book, Rational Bee-Keeping Principals, states "The keeping of bees is an occupation as pleasant as it is profitable."

The Baron von Ehrenfels called bee-keeping the 'Poetry of Agriculture'

Sue Hubbell in A Book of Bees says quite simply, "For a long, long time - for nearly forty years- I never had any bees. I can't think why. Everyone should have two or three hives of bees...I have kept bees now for fifteen years, and my life is better for it."

What else could you want? More, it appears: unfortunately the number of people who keep bees has been declining. The results of this decline could be serious because of the demise

of the wild honeybee, and the need for bees in pollination of many crops, especially fruit, nut, and seed crops.

Consider these benefits from Ellis' Bee Tidings newsletter:

- Keeping honey bees allows one to be a part of the natural world that our tinsel and television society has hidden for many people.
- Honey bees are superb teachers when trying to instill an environmental awareness and conservation ethic in young people.
- Honey bees provide ample opportunity to engage young people in meaningful work that will teach them valuable skills, give them confidence in their abilities, and allow them to earn spending money.

Are you interested but think that it is only for people on farms? You can keep bees just about anywhere, even in the city where they are needed to pollinate many orchard and garden crops.

Want to learn how to keep bees? Marion Ellis conducts two beginning beekeeping courses each year with the location based on request for information from county extension offices. If you are interested in having beginning beekeeping classes in your area, contact the NSAS office at 402-525-7794.

If you would rather learn on your own, there are many books available for beginners such as: The Queen and I by Ed Weiss (Harper & Row), The Beekeepers Handbook by Diana Sammataro and Alphonse Avitabile (Macmillan Publishing Co) and Beekeeping, the Gentle Craft by John Adams (Wynwood Press).

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farmers' market and local
food distribution service

Virgin Prairie: A Disappearing But Important Resource

Contributed by Chris Rohrbaugh

Virgin prairie was plentiful in the US until the mid-1930s. At that time it was plowed up to plant wheat, as many farmers thought that the prairie had died in the extended drought. In fact the prairie was dormant and waiting for the next rain.

Today many grain producing states contain less than 5% grassland. Only about 1% of that is Virgin native. Much of Nebraska's Virgin native prairie is located in Pawnee, Johnson, and Gage counties. These are currently the areas of some of the best grassfed beef production in the world. Virgin Native prairie is important as an eco system as well as a basis for production of high quality, nutrient dense beef. It, in effect, is the eco system chosen by nature as the optimal long term balance.

As an eco system, prairie supports several species of unique and rare birds, snakes, and plants. The masasaga rattle snake is almost exclusively found in Pawnee County, Nebraska. The pre-historic looking prairie chicken is also a good example of important species supported by prairie. Bison, whitetail deer, cougars, bob cats, and prairie dogs are found in a variety of tallgrass and shortgrass prairie.

Most important of all is the grass itself. More than 150 species of plants can be found on a healthy virgin native prairie. These each have unique blends of micro- nutrients brought up from the soil and made available to animals and people by the wide range of root depths and soil layers. The grasses and forbs hold the soil from rain and build the soil for further generations.

Nebraska Environmental Action Coalition and the Nebraska Food Coop Annual Conference and Banquet

May 2nd, 2009

The Leadership Center, 1609 E Hwy 34, Aurora, Nebraska.

The well-known and respected author and agricultural economist John Ikerd, Professor Emeritus of Agriculture Economics, University of Missouri Columbia College of Agriculture, will be our keynote speaker at the 3rd annual NEAC Conference. The Conference will begin at 1 pm with a panel discussion including Bill Bullard, CEO of R-CALF USA discussing The National Animal Identification System and Country of Origin Labeling. Chris Petersen, President of the Iowa Farmers Union, a Nebraska food Coop representative and a NEAC Mobile Meat Processing project representative.

At the conclusion of the panel there will be break-out sessions with the panel speakers for group discussions and networking. Dinner will be at 5:30 featuring local foods prepared by Fayne Petersen, Creative Cuisine Catering, Marquette, NE. At 6:00 p.m., our guest speaker, John Ikerd, will be speaking on issues related to sustainability, with an emphasis on economics and agriculture. John Ikers is the author of: "Sustainable Capitalism: A Matter of Common Sense", "Small Farms are Real Farms", "Sustaining People Through Agriculture", "Return to Common Sense", and "Crisis and Opportunity: Sustainability in American Agriculture."

You do not have to be a member of NEAC to attend. There is no fee for the conference however, there is a \$15 fee for the banquet. Please RSVP to: Lori Fischer at lori_neac@hotmail.com or Diane Schroeder at 402-641-3652 and you will receive reminders and any updates on the conference.

Support Sustainable Agriculture in Nebraska

Join NSAS Today!

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- \$25 Student \$45 Family/Individual \$60 Sustainer \$100 Steward \$250 Benefactor \$100 Business

Total Enclosed _____ Check here to be added to the NSAS listserv _____
Check here to receive e-mail notification of newsletter _____ or hardcopy _____

Thank you for your support!

Please clip and return to: NSAS, PO Box 736, Hartington, NE 68739.
Please make checks payable to the Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society

Upcoming Events

Has your membership for NSAS expired? Please renew today by contacting the NSAS office at: healthyfarms@gmail.com or by calling Willaim at 402-525-7794

Sustainability Happy Hour, Lincoln.

March 27th beginning at 4:30 pm at Brewsky's in the Haymarket. Come join the discussion and enjoy "Locally Centered Drinks and Conversations about Sustainability!"

Email William at healthyfarms@gmail.com for more information or visit NSAS on Facebook for complete details.

Nebraska Small Food Manufacturer Conference

April 23-24, 2009. Holiday Inn - Downtown Lincoln, NE. Designed specifically for micro and small food manufacturers throughout the country, it includes current topics and industry recognized national speakers which will educate and motivate participants. Presented by the Foo Processing Center, UNL Lincoln. For additional information or questions, contact Jill Gifford at 402-472-2819 or register at: www.fpc.unl.edu/nsfmc

Nebraska Local Foods Network: NLFN holds two network educational meetings each year where we will bring in speakers and hear about the exciting news in local foods. Please plan to attend our next network meeting from 8:30-Noon on Monday, May 11, 2009 in Lincoln at the East Campus Union. There will be a variety of speakers presenting on relevant local foods topics. In addition, there will be a break-out for each of the three committees; Marketing, Production, and Nutrition/Education. The Nebraska Local Foods Network (NLFN) is a collaboration of Nebraskans working together to encourage and facilitate the increased production and consumption of local foods. The NLFN strives to build stronger communities, healthier lives and a cleaner environment. Please save **May 11th** and come be a part of the Nebraska Local Foods Network!

University of Nebraska-Lincoln University Dining Service/University Housing - GFL Special Meal Schedule

Cather-Pound-Neihardt dining Service

Thursday, March 26, 2009 - GFL Farmer's Breakfast

Thursday, April 23, 2009 - GFL BBQ Dinner

East Campus Union Cafe

Wednesday, March 25, 2009 - GFL Brunza Madness

Farmers' Market Starting Dates:

Omaha

Village Point Farmers Market - May 2nd

Omaha Farmers Market - May 2nd

Lincoln

Haymarket Farmers Market - May 2nd

Community CROPS - June 4th

Jazz in June Farmers Market - June 2nd

Throughout Nebraska

Nebraska City Farmers Market - May 29th

Nemaha County Farmers Market - May 30th

Columbus Farmers Market - May 28th

Blair Farmers Market - May 16th

Want to list the dates for your Farmer's Market, or one in your area? Contact NSAS today at: healthyfarms@gmail.com

Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society
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