



2019 Michigan Family Farms Conference Workshop Summary Information

TRACK 1 SARE Farmer's Forum

9:00 am - 10:10 am

1/2) Do cover crops pay? Expanding a learning circle for peer to peer cover crop promotion using economics as a theme.

Presenter: Jim Stute- Michael Fields Agricultural Institute

Description: Our goal is to increase cover crop use on the fragile, droughty soils of southeast Wisconsin. Farmers recognize soil health benefits of cover crops yet are weighing every input purchase in the current market environment and may forego this production expense at the risk of soil and environmental quality. Our objectives are to document/ demonstrate the economic impact of cover cropping and to expand our peer to peer learning circle to facilitate transfer of cover crop information and expertise in hopes of increasing adoption. Our initial group included experienced no-till farmers with long-term cover crop use histories who have met periodically to discuss cover crops. With SARE funding we conducted a total of 10 replicated comparisons of with and without cover crops, measuring the yield impact on crop yield and production economics in 2017 and 2018. This data will be presented as well as plans and strategies to further expand our network in 2019.

2/2) Soil Remediation Techniques in Urban Agriculture

Presenter: Casey Sabatka

Description: This presentation will explore possible solutions to contaminated soils in urban growing environments. Topics include various methods of phytoremediation and the PIMS method using apatite II.

10:40 am - 11:50 am

1/2) A comparative on-farm study of root crop production and post-harvest systems for scaling up diversified vegetable farms.

Presenters: Ruthie and Trent Thompson, Green Gardens Community Farm, Battle Creek, MI. Molly and Dion Stepanski, Presque Isle Farms, Alpena, MI. Dru and Adam Montri, Ten Hens Farm, Bath, MI

Description: Three Michigan farms participated in a two year NCR-SARE funded, on-farm research project looking at various aspects and equipment for scaling up their farms. These included seeding, cultivating, harvesting, and washing equipment for various root crops. Each of these farms varies in size, but all share the possibility for increasing sales through fall and winter storage crops to complement their winter high tunnel production. Challenges each of them face in scaling up include labor efficiencies, price points for larger volume sales, and the risk of bodily wear-and-tear over the course of many years of heavy, storage crop production without the right equipment. This session will share lessons learned and improvements made over the past two years to increase the economic viability of their farms, the experiences and attitudes of their employees and themselves, and how each of them have fit the expanded storage crop production into their extended season and year-round farms.

2/2) Open Source Automated Irrigation System for Small Farms, Urban Farms or Specialty Crops

Presenter: Christian Flickinger

Description: Renegade Acres officially began operations in 2015 as the culmination of a 5 year journey of urban farming. Katie Flickinger wanted to consolidate 8 urban farming locations into a single small farm to better scale her operation and give each crop the attention it needed. Along with her partner, Christian Flickinger, they moved to a 7 acre plot of land in Howell, MI. They were tasked with converting a 40+ year non-rotated cornfield into a diverse, organic, heirloom small farm. The first thing they decided to do was install irrigation, but they wanted to do it affordably, using automation, and in a way that could easily be replicated. We will share design considerations for OUR small farm's irrigation system, and why we chose what we did.

3:15 pm - 4:25 pm

1/2) Insectary Plants to Enhance Beneficial Insects: Expanding the Palette to Increase Options for Sustainable Crop Production in the NC Region

Presenter: Doug Landis

Description: Beneficial insects include pollinators and natural enemies (predators and parasitoids) of crop pests. Most beneficial insects use plant pollen and/or nectar as a food source to fuel their activities but these resources can be limited in some agricultural landscapes. We tested 50 native plant species to determine their attractiveness to pollinators and natural enemies at three field sites in Michigan. Results of these studies, including lists of the most attractive plants to two different groups of beneficial insects will be presented.

2/2) Grant Writing Workshop

Presenter: Dean Baas

Description: The North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Grant programs will be presented with emphasis on the Farmer Rancher and Youth Educator grants. Tips for successful grant writing will be discussed. A panel of SARE grant recipients will

talk about their experiences with and answer questions about applying for and receiving a SARE grant.

TRACK 2

9:00 am - 10:10 am

Food Safety at Farmers Markets: What an Inspector is Looking for and what a Customer Sees

Presenters: Michelle Gagliardi, MIFMA and an MDARD Representative

Description: Farmers market vendors are subject to food safety guidelines from various regulatory agencies, as well as consumer expectations for quality, sourcing, and transparency. Our experts will help you understand the legal requirements and customer service best practices for ensuring confidence in your product from inspectors and farmers market shoppers alike.

10:40 am - 11:50 am

Sharpening Your Marketing Skills: Tools for Small Farms

Presenters: Matt Romine, Mike Romine, Andrea Romeyn, Tricia Phelps, Kelly Wilson

Description: Whether you're just starting out, or looking to take your business to the next level, this session has something for you. Farm Field Table, Providence Organic Farm and Taste the Local Difference will present actionable steps, fresh ideas, and examples of marketing strategies that can help your business connect to new markets and reach a wider audience.

3:15 pm - 4:25 pm

How to Price Goods for Farmers Market Sales

Presenter: Erin Caudell and another farmer

Description: Pricing your produce for the farmers market sales isn't always an intuitive process, as it often involves many variables. The experienced farmers in this session will teach you how to set fair prices that are true to your production practices, while still yielding positive farmers market sales and customer relationships.

TRACK 3

9:00 am - 10:10 am

Access to Capital and Preparing Financial Info

Presenter: Matthew Willbrandt, GreenStone Farm Credit Services

Description: This session will prepare you for a discussion with a lender. It will provide an overview of a business plan, balance sheet, profit and loss statement and cash flow projection.

There will also be discussion on various programs that are available to young, beginning and small farmers.

10:40 am - 11:50 am

Beyond Survival: Risk Management for Growth

Presenters: SCORE Mentors Steve Feinman and Ed Krupa, CPA; et al

Description: Once a farm's business operation has reached sustainability there tends to be an impetus to look for ways to enhance profitability through growth in base operations or some sort of value added farming. The purpose of this presentations is to provide a framework for identifying, analyzing and examining options for mitigating the continually changing risks associated with strategic/tactical plans for family farm growth in volatile markets.

The session will consider the principal risk and contingent risk categories that affect current and proposed growth operations. They include the typical agricultural risk including production, marketing/sales, financial, legal and people. We will use the business model canvas as the framework for the analysis. We will introduce a variety of tools/techniques that can applied to identify, assess, evaluate, and prioritize, and types of actions to mitigate these risks in each of the major segments of the farm business.

3:15 pm - 4:25 pm

Crop Insurance for Beginning Farmers

Presenter: David Moll, GreenStone Farm Credit Services

Description: "If I have a crop failure, will I be able to keep farming next year? If the market falls sharply, will I be protected? What if I forward contract and do not have a crop?" Take advantage of this session to learn how to incorporate crop insurance to help manage your financial risk on your farm and understand how crop insurance can benefit your operation by protecting your investment. Take time to learn the basics of how it works, when to sign-up, what you need to sign up and the process for getting paid a claim. And when it comes to costs - did you know some crop insurance is government subsidized up to 80% of the total premium and there are additional benefits for beginning farmers? You might find yourself asking "is that really all it costs?"

TRACK 4

9:00 am - 10:10 am

Using Humified Compost as the Foundation to Soil Health

Presenter: Joel Clifton, Morgan Composting Inc.

Description: Soil health is essential to human health and the health of our entire planet. The key to soil health is the proper management of soil carbon. For decades organic growers have

understood the importance of using natural, organic products for their fertility, but now even conventional farms are taking notice of carbon-based products and the benefits of organic chemistry. Learn about organic carbon and how it changes soil properties to benefit your produce.

10:40 am - 11:50 am

Biological Control in Protected Environments: Planning and Strategy

Presenter: Jeremy Jubenville, MSU Extension

Description: This presentation will cover the fundamentals of biological control in hoop houses and greenhouses. We will cover the most important characteristics of four key pests in protected agriculture and how to scout for them. From there, we'll touch on the general IPM framework and discuss commercially available biological control products for controlling all four pests.

3:15 pm - 4:25 pm

Soil Health & Cover Crop Termination with Roller Crimper: Made for each other!!

Presenters: Will Jaquinde and Jim Marshall

Description: Building and maintaining healthy soil is not as difficult and daunting as you might think. If we provide a bit of time, energy, patience and actually do a little bit less to the soil mother nature will do most of the heavy lifting for us. Despite a focus on soil health, organic farms have been heavily reliant on tillage, often to the detriment of the soil. In this session, we will explore roller crimping, an organic conservation tillage technique, that holds great potential for the organic farm. Join us for a session about practical, cost effective and simple ways to build healthy soil for smaller operation farms.

TRACK 5

9:00 am - 10:10 am

Selling to Wholesale Markets

Presenter: Erin Caudell, The Local Grocer

Description: Want to sell wholesale but think your farm isn't big enough? This session will bust that myth and others while giving you information on how to approach wholesalers and food hubs. We'll talk expectations, products and pricing

10:40 am - 11:50 am

Seed to Seed: Closing the Gap in Sustainable Farming

Presenter: Ben Cohen, Small House Farm/ MI Seed Library

Description: Saving seeds is an essential practice for maintaining a sustainable 'closed circuit' farm operation. Local food is only as local as the seed supply. Seeds are just as vital as healthy soil, clean water and market access. Regionally adapted and locally grown seeds are paramount to a secure food system. This presentation explores the benefits and challenges of incorporating seed saving into a small farm operation.

3:15 pm - 4:25 pm

Getting to Know Your Market

Presenter: Katie Brandt (MSU Student Organic Farm)

Description: This session will guide you through researching your community and creating real strategies to reach out to eaters rooted there. Expect hands-on experience with how to use the census, USPS website, dot surveys, maps, online surveys, conversations and video clips to make your marketing relevant. Everyone will research their community at the zip code level using the census then zoom in to the micro-level with info by mail route. The group will share what we discover using dot surveys and a Michigan map. To fully engage the expertise of growers in the room, we will split into expert groups to discuss strategies to help you fit your farm and marketing to local needs and values. Each group will share proposed strategies using a google form and record a video clip of their best idea or two. Then you can take what you've tried out during the session to your farm's hometown to connect with customers and let them know that their input is heard and appreciated.

TRACK 6

9:00 am - 10:10 am

Easy and Inexpensive Methods to Incorporate Gourmet & Medical Mushrooms into any Farm's Cropping System

Presenter: Christopher A. Wright, Ph.D. Easygrow Mushrooms and Composting LLC

Description: This session will present an overview of different mushrooms and mushroom growing techniques that any small or large farmer can incorporate into their cropping system. Information will be presented concerning growing gourmet and medicinal mushrooms including shiitake, oyster, reishi, *Hericium* spp., maitake, chicken of the woods and others via log culture. Information will also be presented relating to the cultivation of mushrooms in beds and on pasteurized straw. These techniques are easy to follow and inexpensive to incorporate into any farm. They also offer the opportunity for any farm/farmer to provide a unique and lucrative crop to the community at farmers and other markets.

10:40 am - 11:50 am

The Wisdom of WISEWOMAN Gardeners

Presenters: Lisa Hand, Dolly Hunt, Tammy Adams, Sheila Wedell

Description: Join this panel of WISEWOMAN Entrepreneurial Gardeners as they share their wisdom and experiences of gardening on a tight budget, overcoming their fear of selling, and being successful no matter how big or small your garden or farm is.

3:15 pm - 4:25 pm

What's in a Bee Hive: An Introduction to Beekeeping

Presenter: Adam Ingrao

Description: In this session we will discuss basic beekeeping equipment and the things beekeepers see in a bee hive. We will discuss all of the elements that make up a healthy colony and discuss challenges new beekeepers face as they prepare to enter their 1st year of beekeeping.

TRACK 7

9:00 am - 10:10 am

Aspects of Racial Equity in Food Systems

Presenters: J.R. Reynolds, Good Food Battle Creek; Rich Pirog, Center for Regional Food Systems; Rubén Martinez, Julian Samora Research Institute, MSU

Description: Racial equity is an emerging and critical lens in food systems studies, but what does racial equity have to do with food systems? This session consists of three presentations followed by a discussion that address this question by focusing on different aspects of racial equity in food systems. We begin by providing an overview of racial equity issues in food systems. That is followed by a focus on the metrics that are used by educators and researchers to assess racial equity in food systems. The final presentation provides an example of racial equity issues by focusing on workplace issues among “milkers” in the dairy industry.

10:40 am - 1:20 pm (Session, Tour, & Lunch on the Road)

Menus that Matter- How Chefs Can Be Farmers' Best Friends

Presenter: KVCC Food Innovation Center staff

Description: “Menus that Matter” is the name of KVCC’s Culinary Arts and Sustainable Food Systems curriculum, and is linked to the urban farm and food hub on site. Join us for a 30 minute session, followed by a tour of the Culinary Arts facility and Food Innovation Center where we’ll talk about how connecting chefs (especially institutional chefs), food hubs, and farms can be incredibly beneficial to farmers. This session spans lunchtime so a bag lunch will be provided.

3:15 pm - 4:25 pm

Farm Bill Update: Positive Policy Change in a Fractured Political Landscape

Presenter: Wes King, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

Description: It's tough to follow all the zigs and zags of the farm bill and untangle what each piece means for the future of sustainable agriculture and family farmers. Want to learn about what changes were made to key programs and policies in the 2018 Farm Bill and what they mean for sustainable agriculture, local food, healthy food access, beginning & socially disadvantaged farmers, and farm viability? If so, this session is for you. Join the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition for a clear breakdown of what is in the 2018 Farm Bill, how it builds on previous farm bills, and what it means moving forward.