

Community Assistantship Program

Food and Farming: Potential for Partnership

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Food and Farming: Potential for Partnership

Prepared in partnership with University of
Minnesota Regional Sustainable Development
Partnerships

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University of Minnesota
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Food and Farming, Potential for Partnership

A CAP Program Report prepared for the

University of Minnesota Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships

September 2002

by Kara Slaughter

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Table Of Contents

Introduction and Purpose	1
Section 1: Who Are We? Defining a Regional Food and Farming Identity	6
Section 2: What Are We Doing? Projects Underway in Each Region	31
Section 3: How Do We Work? Regional Approaches and Procedures	54
Section 4: With Whom Do We Work? Current and Potential Partners	60
Section 5: What Next? Potential Multi-Region or Statewide Projects	65

Appendices

Appendix A: Minnesota Land Use and Cover Map

Appendix B: Northwest Region Food Round Table Issues and Concerns

Appendix C: Northwest Food Round Table Vision

Appendix D: Faculty Incentives for Land Grant Research in Sustainable Agriculture
(Dick Levins and Michele Beck)

Appendix E: Supporting a Few Large vs. Many Small Projects

Appendix F: Tips from CAP Project Supervisors

Appendix G: Other Web Resources



INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

My goal in this paper is to look at how the Regional Partnerships address food and farming issues. Although my initial charge was to seek out opportunities for multi-regional or statewide cooperation on local food issues, I want to begin this paper with an acknowledgment of the importance of regional autonomy in the work of the Partnerships. This is a big part of the Partnerships' strength – their connection to the land and sense of place. As one farmer and longtime regional board member told me, “the Regional Partnership areas were established based on ecosystem and microclimate. Our soil and our weather here are different than in other regions – we don't always grow the same things or grow them in the same ways as other places.” I am sure that business owners would express a similar sentiment couched in terms of the regional economy, and elected officials would see the boundaries of the Partnership regions as corresponding with particular political inclinations. No matter how the differences are defined, however, based on my observations there is real value in having divergent regional priorities.

That is not to say, however, that the Regions should be isolated from one another. In fact, there are good reasons for the Regional Staff and Board Members to be even more aware of other Regions' projects, procedures, and identity. First, knowing what projects are going on in other Regions can provide valuable project models and ideas for one's own Regions. Moreover, Regional Staff and Board Members can glean valuable lessons about how other regions administer their projects and operate as a team. Finally, on the most basic level, it is important to understand who we are as Regional Partnerships.

HOW THIS REPORT IS ORGANIZED

Before attempting to collaborate on multi-regional food and farming projects, staff and Board Members in each region should have a good understanding of who the other Regions are, how they operate, and what food and farming projects they have undertaken in the past. These three types of questions – who, how, and what – form the organizational scheme for this paper. My goal with this paper is to offer my observations on, and hopefully also prompt the reader to consider, the following questions specifically:

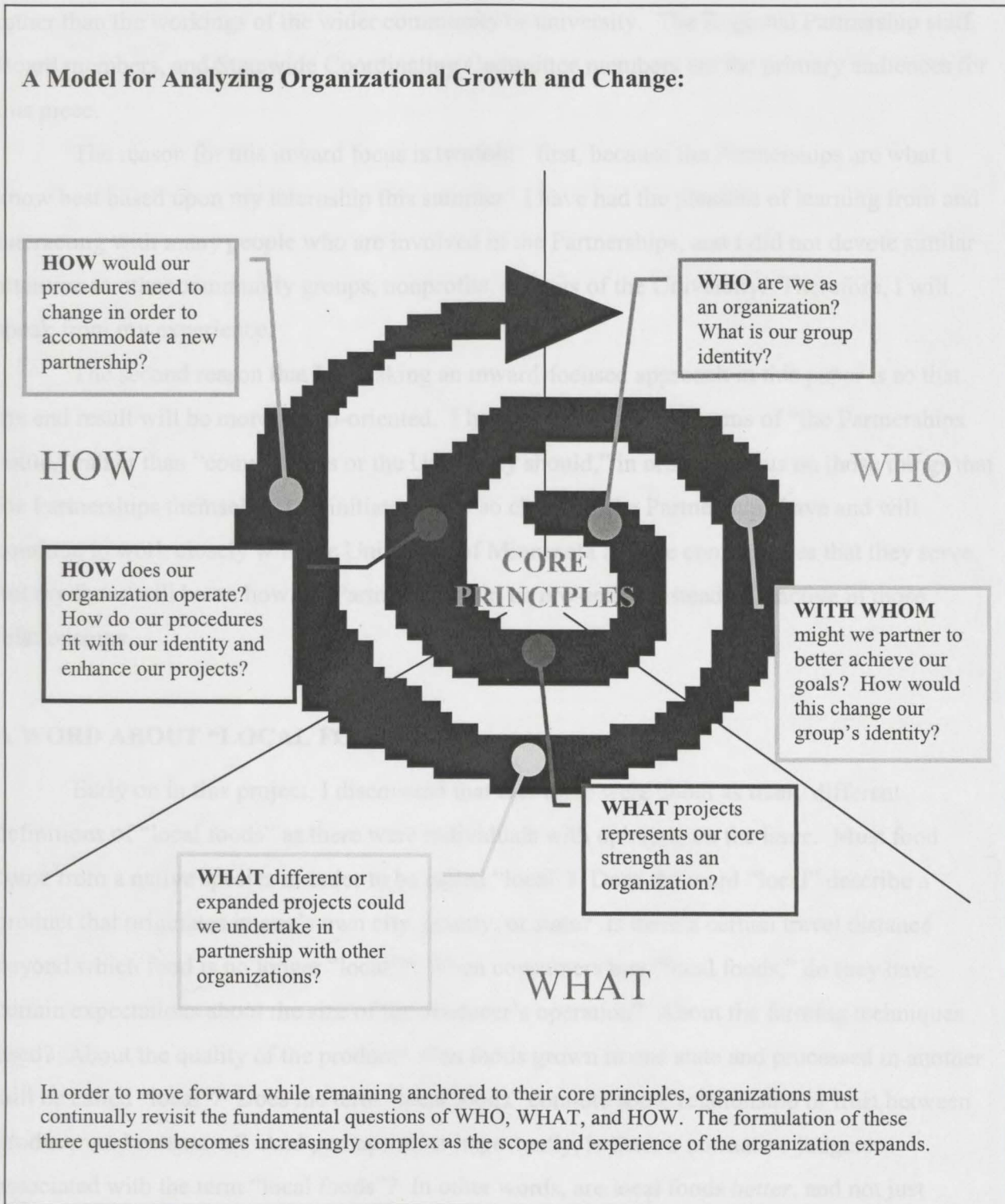
1. WHO are the Regions and the Regional Partnerships? What is the “food and farm identity” of each Region?
2. WHAT food and farming projects are already underway in each Region?
3. HOW does each Regional Board operate in regard to food and farming projects?
4. WITH WHOM at the University of Minnesota do the Regions partner to carry out food and farming projects? Who else at the University might be valuable project partners?
5. WHAT food and farming projects, including multi-regional or statewide initiatives, might we initiate in the future?

I have divided the first three sections of this paper into sub-sections that cover each of the Partnerships separately. In the fourth and fifth sections, I have considered the Regional Partnerships as a unified whole. By organizing the paper in this way, I have tried to distinguish between those questions that are best answered by individual Regions, and those questions that can be answered collectively as the Regional Partnerships.

Discussions about how an organization should move forward oftentimes seem circular, and I think there is a good reason for this. In order to expand and grow, yet still remain anchored to its core principles, an organization must continually revisit the fundamental questions of WHO, WHAT, and HOW. The formulation of these three questions becomes increasingly complex and outward-focused as the scope and experience of the organization expands. Since the five Regional Partnerships have had relatively little experience working together as a single entity, the current focus would be more towards the center of the spiral: determining WHO the Regional Partnerships are as a statewide organization precedes questions of WITH WHOM should the statewide organization work.

I have constructed the following "spiral" diagram to illustrate how an organization can change and grow while remaining centered on its fundamental core beliefs:

A Model for Analyzing Organizational Growth and Change:



PERSPECTIVE OF THE REPORT

I have chosen to write this paper as a primarily introspective document relative to the Partnerships. In other words, it will focus on the internal workings of the Regional Partnerships, rather than the workings of the wider community or university. The Regional Partnership staff, Board members, and Statewide Coordinating Committee members are the primary audiences for this piece.

The reason for this inward focus is twofold: first, because the Partnerships are what I know best based upon my internship this summer. I have had the pleasure of learning from and interacting with many people who are involved in the Partnerships, and I did not devote similar attention to other community groups, nonprofits, or units of the University. Therefore, I will speak from my experience.

The second reason that I am taking an inward-focused approach in this paper is so that the end result will be more action-oriented. I have opted to write in terms of "the Partnerships could," rather than "communities or the University should," in order to focus on those things that the Partnerships themselves can initiate if they so choose. The Partnerships have and will continue to work closely with the University of Minnesota and the communities that they serve, but my focus will be on how the Partnerships can be pro-active instead of reactive in those relationships.

A WORD ABOUT "LOCAL FOODS"

Early on in this project, I discovered that there were about as many different definitions of "local foods" as there were individuals with opinions on the issue. Must food come from a native species in order to be called "local"? Does the word "local" describe a product that originates in one's own city, county, or state? Is there a certain travel distance beyond which food is no longer "local"? When consumers buy "local foods," do they have certain expectations about the size of the producer's operation? About the farming techniques used? About the quality of the product? Can foods grown in one state and processed in another still be called "local"? Does the term "local foods" connote some relationship or trust between producer and consumer? And perhaps most importantly, is there a normative judgment associated with the term "local foods"? In other words, are local foods *better*, and not just

different, than non-local foods? With varying answers to all of these questions, it seemed like it might be impossible to come to a definition of “local foods” that would strike all Partnership Staff and Board Members as satisfactory.

So I abandoned altogether the idea of coming up with a definition “local foods.” Instead, I focused on the *actual Partnership projects* that Staff and Board members described when I said the words “local foods.” I found that it was the projects, and not some abstract definition, that Staff and Board Members were really excited and closest to agreement about.

Therefore, in this paper, I do not attempt to define the term “local foods,” and I have tried to avoid using it. The common denominator between all of the projects described in this paper is that they are about Food and Farming, and so that is the terminology I have chosen to use.

1. WHO ARE WE? DEFINING A REGIONAL FOOD AND FARMING IDENTITY.

The following descriptions capture my overall impressions of the food and farming identity of each of the five regions. I have tried to check my observations against factual sources wherever possible, but the fact remains that these descriptions are probably still highly dependent upon when, where, and whom I visited in each region. Regardless of their shortcomings, however, these descriptions at least constitute a starting point in understanding how Regional Staff, Board Members, and citizens think about the food and farming that takes place in their communities.

CENTRAL REGION

In my initial conversation with Sharon, I asked her what she saw as the defining features of the Central Region. "Lakes, trees, natural resources, tourism, and agriculture," she responded. She noted that although the potential for conflict between agricultural, natural resources, and tourism concerns does exist in the region, the Central Board has had significant success in uniting those groups in mutually beneficial projects. This Old Farm and Market and the Farm and Ranch Adventure Tours are two agri-tourism projects supported by the Central Partnership. Independently from the partnerships, several area farmers are also looking at the possibility of marketing locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables to hotels and resorts in the area.

A second issue over which farming has the potential to come into conflict with other interests is water quality. Department of Agriculture Advisor Don Sirucek, who is stationed in Staples, noted that high nitrate and phosphate content in lakes, streams, and wells is an ongoing problem in Central Minnesota. The typical culprits are all present in the region: misuse of lawn chemicals by some homeowners, resorts, and golf courses, misuse of agricultural chemicals by some farmers, and mishandled human and animal wastes. These problems are compounded by the very sandy soils in some areas of the region, which facilitate nutrient leaching. Moreover, the sandiness of the soil is correlated with high levels of irrigation, which feeds yet again into the question of water quality and usage.

In fact, the sandiness of the soil was one of the things that I found most striking in my visits to the Central Region. I would find myself wondering, "Why do people around here dump sand in their gardens/yards/fields?" And then I would remember that this is just the normal state of the soil. It is worth noting, however, that the soil in the eight-county region is far from

uniform, and farmers in the area make the distinction between the sandier soil in Otter Tail county and the heavier soil in Todd County.

On the other hand, the census figures highlight the difference between the growth in Crow Wing, Cass, and Hubbard Counties and the slow to negative growth in Todd and Wadena counties. Anecdotally, I found that the prospects for direct-marketed, locally produced food seemed to mirror those population trajectories. Al Jabs is a small-scale dairy farmer in Crow Wing County who has received an overwhelming response in his first year of operating an organic and largely heirloom-variety vegetable CSA. He has also generated a high degree of interest and participation in his "Pizza Garden" within the Brainerd area schools. Whole Farm Coop, on the other hand, sells almost all of its products in the Twin Cities due to lackluster interest among the "home audience" in Long Prairie and Todd County. Population change is not the only factor that accounts for the divergent experiences of these two producer groups, but it may be a factor that deserves further investigation.

Though This Old Farm and Market, the Jabs CSA, and Whole Farm Coop are all relatively new organizations, the tradition of "sustainable" agriculture in the region is not new. There are sizable Amish communities in the region whose members have been farming with few to no synthetic chemicals or off-farm inputs for generations. Other important populations to consider in the region are the Red Lake and White Earth bands of Ojibwe, new immigrants who have come to work in meat packing plants, and part-time homeowners who live in the region during the summer months.

Influential food and farming-related institutions in the region include the Sustainable Farming Association, the Central Lakes Ag College in Staples, and the Lamb Weston RDO Frozen potato processing facilities, to name just a few. Legislators in the region have shown interest in small-scale food and farming projects, and have talked with farmers about the possibility of building a commercial kitchen and food service education facility in the region.

CENTRAL MINNESOTA FARM STATISTICS

County	Geography	Item	1987	1992	1997
005	BECKER COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	1,220	1,037	1,084
021	CASS COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	685	595	598
035	CROW WING COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	585	509	593
057	HUBBARD COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	460	387	431
097	MORRISON COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	1,911	1,807	1,808
111	OTTER TAIL COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	2,925	2,509	2,647
153	TODD COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	1,946	1,768	1,741
159	WADENA COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	689	602	625
TOTAL FARMS			10,421	9,214	9,527

County	Geography	Item	1987	1992	1997
005	BECKER COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	397,385	377,693	388,733
021	CASS COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	195,569	200,199	191,847
035	CROW WING COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	132,410	130,683	135,322
057	HUBBARD COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	123,875	112,412	130,530
097	MORRISON COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	430,023	422,916	430,467
111	OTTER TAIL COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	876,319	821,073	840,353
153	TODD COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	418,136	395,071	387,462
159	WADENA COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	178,124	171,412	174,833
TOTAL LAND IN FARMS			2,751,841	2,631,459	2,679,547

County	Geography	Item	1987	1992	1997
005	BECKER COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	326	364	359
021	CASS COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	286	336	321
035	CROW WING COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	226	257	228
057	HUBBARD COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	269	290	303
097	MORRISON COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	225	234	238
111	OTTER TAIL COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	300	327	317
153	TODD COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	215	223	223
159	WADENA COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	259	285	280

Source: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, 1997 Census of Agriculture
<http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/>

CENTRAL MINNESOTA LAND USE AND COVER STATISTICS

Becker, Cass, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Morrison, Todd, and Wadena Counties

Description	Acreage	% of Total
Urban and rural development	142,529	2
Cultivated land	1,647,731	23.6
Hay/pasture/grassland	1,032,128	14.8
Brushland	140,174	2
Forested	2,610,458	37.4
Water	712,678	10.2
Bog/marsh/fen	689,633	9.9
Mining	8,922	0.1
Total	6,984,253	100

CATEGORY DEFINITIONS

Urban and rural development residential, commercial, industrial, cultural and recreational developments and related developments such as power plants, power lines, pipelines, airports, waste treatment facilities, golf courses, farmsteads and feedlots. Associated structures include garages, sheds and landscaped areas.

Cultivated land areas under intensive cropping or rotation, including fallow fields and fields seeded for forage or cover crops that exhibit linear or other patterns associated with current tillage

Hay/pasture/grassland areas covered by grasslands and herbaceous plants; these may contain up to one-third shrub and tree cover. Some areas may be used as pastures and mowed or grazed. Included are fields that show evidence of past tillage but now appear to be abandoned and grown over with native vegetation or planted with a cover crop.

Brushland areas with a combination of grass, shrubs, and trees in which deciduous or coniferous tree cover comprises from one to two-thirds of the area, or shrub cover comprises more than one-third of the area. These areas are often found adjacent to hay/pasture/grassland or forested areas and vary greatly in shape and extent.

Forested areas where two-thirds or more of the total canopy cover is composed of predominantly woody deciduous and coniferous species and areas of regenerated or young forest where commercial timber has been completely or partially removed by logging, other management activities or natural events; includes woodlots, shelterbelts and plantations.

Water permanent bodies of water such as lakes, rivers, reservoirs, stock ponds and open water areas where photo evidence indicates that the areas are covered by water the majority of the time

Bog/marsh/fen grassy, wet areas with standing or slowly moving water. Vegetation consists of grass and sedge sods, and common hydrophilic vegetation such as cattail and rushes. These areas include wetlands with lowland coniferous forest and peat-covered or peat-filled depressions with a high water table; areas are often interspersed with channels or pools of open water.

Mining area stripped of topsoil revealing exposed substrate such as sand or gravel, including gravel quarries, mine tailings, borrow pits and rock quarries. Included are areas that lack appreciable soil development or vegetation cover such as rock outcrops, sand dunes or beaches.

Source: State of Minnesota Office of Strategic and Long Range Planning, 1990s Census of the Land
<http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us/datanetweb/landuse.html>

CENTRAL MINNESOTA POPULATION STATISTICS

County	Census Population Counts			% Change Between Censuses	
	1980	1990	2000	1980-2000	1990-2000
Becker	29,336	27,881	30,000	2.3	7.6
Cass	21,050	21,791	27,150	29.0	24.6
Crow Wing	41,722	44,249	55,099	32.1	24.5
Hubbard	14,098	14,939	18,376	30.3	23.0
Morrison	29,311	29,604	31,712	8.2	7.1
Otter Tail	51,937	50,714	57,159	10.1	12.7
Todd	24,991	23,363	24,426	-2.3	4.5
Wadena	14,192	13,154	13,713	-3.4	4.2
REGION	226,637	225,695	257,635	13.7	14.2

Source: State of Minnesota Office of Strategic and Long Range Planning, based on United States Census 2000 data

<http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us/demography/>

NORTHEAST REGION

A drive through Northeast Minnesota reveals that the landscape is far more dominated by forests than fields. The land cover map and Land Use and Cover Statistics (Appendix A) validate this observation: approximately 59% of the region is forested, whereas less than 1% is in cultivation. According to the 1997 Census of Agriculture, the average farm size in the area was between 100 and 250 acres, compared to an average farm size of 354 acres in the state of Minnesota and 487 acres in the U.S. overall.

Nonetheless, food is being produced in the region, even if the evidence of such activity is tucked away behind the pines. "The research that we supported through Northland Food and Farming Initiative (NFFI) revealed that there is more agriculture going on here than people think," says Okey.

And there are at least some people in the region who would like to see more food production and processing taking place there. In December 2000 and January 2001, NFFI conducted interviews with nearly 40 area stakeholders to develop a basic picture of the food system in Northeast Minnesota. Interviewees expressed interest in increasing local food production, processing, and direct marketing venues. In particular, local residents have identified the lack of local meat processing facilities as an obstacle to developing more localized food economies.

Northeast Minnesota is in growing zone 4, which means that fewer crops are winter-hardy here than in other areas of the state. The population is also unevenly distributed, with large portions of the region consisting of undeveloped public land.

Of course, in Northeast Minnesota it is also important to consider not only the activity that takes place on land, but also what occurs underground. Though heavy industry, and especially mining, has been in steady decline in recent decades, mining is still one of the major industries in the region. Thus, miners constitute one of the main occupational populations in the region, along with woodland owners and those in the tourism industry. Other important constituencies in Northeast Minnesota are part-time residents and non-resident landowners.

Though there has not been any major population influx in the region in recent years, David Abazs noted anecdotally that there were quite a number of conservative Christian families who have moved to the region since the late 1990's. They were seeking a simpler lifestyle and a closer relationship to the land, and thus may be natural partners when it comes to sustainable agriculture projects. In 1991, area producers established a Sustainable Farming Association

chapter to establish a tighter network of the ever-dwindling number of farmers in the area, and to help farmers make a transition to more environmentally sound and economically profitable methods of production. The University of Minnesota-Duluth is an important institution in the region, although its programs emphasize liberal arts more than agriculture. There are also several technical colleges in the region.

NORTHEAST MINNESOTA FARM STATISTICS

County	Geography	Item	1987	1992	1997
017	CARLTON COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	649	509	527
031	COOK COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	9	7	11
061	ITASCA COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	541	420	415
075	LAKE COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	47	35	37
137	ST LOUIS COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	921	677	713
TOTAL FARMS			2,167	1,648	1,703

County	Geography	Item	1987	1992	1997
017	CARLTON COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	132,863	113,422	107,166
031	COOK COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	1,283	1,249	D
061	ITASCA COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	123,555	107,810	103,716
075	LAKE COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	6,404	5,262	3,970
137	ST LOUIS COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	180,030	153,188	155,452
TOTAL LAND IN FARMS			444,135	380,931	D

County	Geography	Item	1987	1992	1997
017	CARLTON COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	205	223	203
031	COOK COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	143	178	D
061	ITASCA COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	228	257	250
075	LAKE COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	136	150	107
137	ST LOUIS COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	195	226	218

D: data withheld to avoid disclosing information for individual farms

Source: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, 1997 Census of Agriculture
<http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/>

NORTHEAST MINNESOTA LAND USE AND COVER STATISTICS

Carlton, Cook, Lake, Itasca, and St. Louis Counties

Description	Acreage	% of Total
Urban and rural development	95,164	1
Cultivated land	15,869	0.2
Hay/pasture/grassland	457,460	5
Brushland	477,264	5.2
Forested	5,417,623	58.7
Water	817,628	8.9
Bog/marsh/fen	1,847,732	20
Mining	106,581	1.2
Total	9,235,321	100

CATEGORY DEFINITIONS

Urban and rural development residential, commercial, industrial, cultural and recreational developments and related developments such as power plants, power lines, pipelines, airports, waste treatment facilities, golf courses, farmsteads and feedlots. Associated structures include garages, sheds and landscaped areas.

Cultivated land areas under intensive cropping or rotation, including fallow fields and fields seeded for forage or cover crops that exhibit linear or other patterns associated with current tillage

Hay/pasture/grassland areas covered by grasslands and herbaceous plants; these may contain up to one-third shrub and tree cover. Some areas may be used as pastures and mowed or grazed. Included are fields that show evidence of past tillage but now appear to be abandoned and grown over with native vegetation or planted with a cover crop.

Brushland areas with a combination of grass, shrubs, and trees in which deciduous or coniferous tree cover comprises from one to two-thirds of the area, or shrub cover comprises more than one-third of the area. These areas are often found adjacent to hay/pasture/grassland or forested areas and vary greatly in shape and extent.

Forested areas where two-thirds or more of the total canopy cover is composed of predominantly woody deciduous and coniferous species and areas of regenerated or young forest where commercial timber has been completely or partially removed by logging, other management activities or natural events; includes woodlots, shelterbelts and plantations.

Water permanent bodies of water such as lakes, rivers, reservoirs, stock ponds and open water areas where photo evidence indicates that the areas are covered by water the majority of the time

Bog/marsh/fen grassy, wet areas with standing or slowly moving water. Vegetation consists of grass and sedge sods, and common hydrophilic vegetation such as cattail and rushes. These areas include wetlands with lowland coniferous forest and peat-covered or peat-filled depressions with a high water table; areas are often interspersed with channels or pools of open water.

Mining area stripped of topsoil revealing exposed substrate such as sand or gravel, including gravel quarries, mine tailings, borrow pits and rock quarries. Included are areas that lack appreciable soil development or vegetation cover such as rock outcrops, sand dunes or beaches.

Source: State of Minnesota Office of Strategic and Long Range Planning, 1990s Census of the Land
<http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us/datanetweb/landuse.html>

NORTHEAST MINNESOTA POPULATION STATISTICS

County	Census Population Counts			% Change Between Censuses	
	1980	1990	2000	1980-2000	1990-2000
Carlton	29,936	29,259	31,671	5.8	8.2
Cook	4,092	3,868	5,168	26.3	33.6
Itasca	43,069	40,863	43,992	2.1	7.7
Lake	13,043	10,415	11,058	-15.2	6.2
St. Louis	222,229	198,213	200,528	-9.8	1.2
REGION	312,369	282,618	292,417	-6.4	3.5

Source: State of Minnesota Office of Strategic and Long Range Planning, based on United States Census 2000 data

<http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us/demography/>

NORTHWEST REGION

In November of 2001, the Northwest Partnership hosted a roundtable discussion on agricultural issues (summaries in Appendix B and Appendix C.) Attendees included area farmers, Extension personnel, and Northwest Board Members. As part of these discussions, the participants defined their key ag-related goals for the region, including:

- encouraging production of value-added crops such as those used for medicine, fuel, and other and non-food products,
- increasing animal agriculture,
- enhancing vertical integration of farmer-owned processing facilities.

One thing that is striking about these documents is that, although they are entirely about *agriculture*, they say relatively little about *food*. Perhaps this is a fitting reflection of the food and farming landscape in Northwest Minnesota. There is not a lot of buzz about direct marketing of local foods in the region, since the predominant farm products such as wheat, soybeans, and sugar beets all require significant processing before they become the bread, cooking oil, and granulated sugar we find in our shopping carts. Even the majority of the potatoes and other vegetables grown in the region are destined for dried, frozen or pre-cooked sales.

The more significant farm-related discussions in the region are first, producer ownership or control of food processing facilities so that farmers can retain a higher portion of the food dollar, and second, incentives for better conservation practices including removal of marginal and erosion-prone lands from agricultural production. Attention to these concerns have resulted in farming population that is focused on the ins and outs of international trade, corporate farming, Federal food policy, and land conservation provisions.

Land conservation began to receive particular attention after the massive floods of 1997, and continued flooding keeps the issue at the forefront. The regional identity of Northwest Minnesota is strongly linked to the Red River Valley, and it almost seems as if people feel the river is trying to tell them something. If anything positive has emerged from the destruction of the floods, it is a greater awareness of the relationships between land use, ecology, and economics.

Another food and farming bright spot in the region also grew out of the great 1997 Grand Forks flood and fire. The Grand Forks Market Square is an inviting plaza with a fountain and small performance stage, bordered by rows of covered market stalls. The Market Square was part of the riverfront redevelopment effort that took place after the three to four-foot floodwaters receded. The Saturday market has been a huge success, with as many as 4,000 visitors some days. About half of the growers and many of the customers at the market are from across the river in Minnesota.

Kim Woods, a member of the Grand Forks downtown revitalization committee, was the major driving force behind the creation of the farmers market. Other important groups and institutions in the region include the FarmConnect program at the University of Minnesota-Crookston, the Ag Utilization Research Institute in Crookston, the Dakota Medical Foundation, Crystal Sugar, and several other dehydrating and processing facilities. The Northwest did have the Lake Agassiz Chapter of the Sustainable Farming Association, but the group became inactive shortly after the 1997 flood. Key population groups in the region include the White Earth and Red Lake bands, migrant workers who come to pick processing vegetables and did post-flood construction work, and non-resident land owners. According to Linda, about 70% of the farmland in the Red River Basin is managed by tenant farmers.

NORTHWEST MINNESOTA FARM STATISTICS

County	Geography	Item	1987	1992	1997
027	CLAY COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	1,017	875	887
069	KITTSOON COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	576	521	558
077	LAKE OF THE WOODS CTY, MN	Farms (number)	222	176	196
087	MAHNOMEN COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	393	368	341
089	MARSHALL COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	1,299	1,012	1,144
107	NORMAN COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	718	581	670
113	PENNINGTON COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	585	480	528
119	POLK COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	1,556	1,334	1,366
125	RED LAKE COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	404	352	376
135	ROSEAU COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	1,124	891	1,051
167	WILKIN COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	505	456	441
TOTAL FARMS			8,399	7,046	7,558

County	Geography	Item	1987	1992	1997
027	CLAY COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	588,808	566,981	581,226
069	KITTSOON COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	498,259	482,991	501,466
077	LAKE OF THE WOODS CTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	118,959	103,665	117,644
087	MAHNOMEN COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	197,078	186,573	189,927
089	MARSHALL COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	819,664	744,710	774,342
107	NORMAN COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	472,449	457,670	483,041
113	PENNINGTON COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	305,784	280,089	312,752
119	POLK COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	1,075,711	1,042,850	1,051,813
125	RED LAKE COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	210,348	183,208	204,977
135	ROSEAU COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	613,736	536,299	577,455
167	WILKIN COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	426,995	420,778	457,806
TOTAL LAND IN FARMS			5,327,791	5,005,814	5,252,449

County	Geography	Item	1987	1992	1997
027	CLAY COUNTY, MN	Average size farm (acres)	579	648	655
069	KITTSOON COUNTY, MN	Average size farm (acres)	865	927	899
077	LAKE OF THE WOODS CTY, MN	Average size farm (acres)	536	589	600
087	MAHNOMEN COUNTY, MN	Average size farm (acres)	501	507	557
089	MARSHALL COUNTY, MN	Average size farm (acres)	631	736	677
107	NORMAN COUNTY, MN	Average size farm (acres)	658	788	721
113	PENNINGTON COUNTY, MN	Average size farm (acres)	523	584	592
119	POLK COUNTY, MN	Average size farm (acres)	691	782	770
125	RED LAKE COUNTY, MN	Average size farm (acres)	521	520	545
135	ROSEAU COUNTY, MN	Average size farm (acres)	546	602	549
167	WILKIN COUNTY, MN	Average size farm (acres)	846	923	1,038

Source: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, 1997 Census of Agriculture

NORTHWEST MINNESOTA LAND USE AND COVER STATISTICS

Clay, Kittson, Lake of the Woods, Mahnommen, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake, Roseau, and Wilkin Counties

Description	Acreage	% of Total
Urban and rural development	93,004	1.1
Cultivated land	5,064,060	62.3
Hay/pasture/grassland	562,075	6.9
Brushland	274,220	3.4
Forested	1,075,243	13.2
Water	384,928	4.7
Bog/marsh/fen	661,844	8.1
Mining	8,472	0.1
Total	8,123,846	100

CATEGORY DEFINITIONS

Urban and rural development residential, commercial, industrial, cultural and recreational developments and related developments such as power plants, power lines, pipelines, airports, waste treatment facilities, golf courses, farmsteads and feedlots. Associated structures include garages, sheds and landscaped areas.

Cultivated land areas under intensive cropping or rotation, including fallow fields and fields seeded for forage or cover crops that exhibit linear or other patterns associated with current tillage

Hay/pasture/grassland areas covered by grasslands and herbaceous plants; these may contain up to one-third shrub and tree cover. Some areas may be used as pastures and mowed or grazed. Included are fields that show evidence of past tillage but now appear to be abandoned and grown over with native vegetation or planted with a cover crop.

Brushland areas with a combination of grass, shrubs, and trees in which deciduous or coniferous tree cover comprises from one to two-thirds of the area, or shrub cover comprises more than one-third of the area. These areas are often found adjacent to hay/pasture/grassland or forested areas and vary greatly in shape and extent.

Forested areas where two-thirds or more of the total canopy cover is composed of predominantly woody deciduous and coniferous species and areas of regenerated or young forest where commercial timber has been completely or partially removed by logging, other management activities or natural events; includes woodlots, shelterbelts and plantations.

Water permanent bodies of water such as lakes, rivers, reservoirs, stock ponds and open water areas where photo evidence indicates that the areas are covered by water the majority of the time

Bog/marsh/fen grassy, wet areas with standing or slowly moving water. Vegetation consists of grass and sedge sods, and common hydrophilic vegetation such as cattail and rushes. These areas include wetlands with lowland coniferous forest and peat-covered or peat-filled depressions with a high water table; areas are often interspersed with channels or pools of open water.

Mining area stripped of topsoil revealing exposed substrate such as sand or gravel, including gravel quarries, mine tailings, borrow pits and rock quarries. Included are areas that lack appreciable soil development or vegetation cover such as rock outcrops, sand dunes or beaches.

Source: State of Minnesota Office of Strategic and Long Range Planning, 1990s Census of the Land
<http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us/datanetweb/landuse.html>

NORTHWEST MINNESOTA POPULATION STATISTICS

County	Census Population Counts			% Change Between Censuses	
	1980	1990	2000	1980-2000	1990-2000
Clay	49,327	50,422	51,229	3.9	1.6
Kittson	6,672	5,767	5,285	-20.8	-8.4
Lake of the Woods	3,764	4,076	4,522	20.1	10.9
Mahnomen	5,535	5,044	5,190	-6.2	2.9
Marshall	13,027	10,993	10,155	-22.0	-7.6
Norman	9,379	7,975	7,442	-20.7	-6.7
Pennington	15,258	13,306	13,584	-11.0	2.1
Polk	34,844	32,498	31,369	-10.0	-3.5
Red Lake	5,471	4,525	4,299	-21.4	-5.0
Roseau	12,574	15,026	16,338	29.9	8.7
Wilkin	8,454	7,516	7,138	-15.6	-5.0
REGION	164,305	157,148	156,551	-4.7	-0.4

Source: State of Minnesota Office of Strategic and Long Range Planning, based on United States Census 2000

<http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us/demography/>

SOUTHEAST REGION

According to the 1997 Census of Agriculture, the average farm size in Southeast Minnesota was about 270 acres. As Dick put it, "in the 1980's, the trend was for farms to get really big, but a lot of these family farms never jumped on that trend." There is less absentee land ownership in the Southeast relative to other parts of the state, and farmers in the Southeast are proud that their region receives few federal farm subsidies.

The climate and soils in Southeast Minnesota are conducive to growing a wide variety of crops, including grains, oilseeds, fruits, vegetables, and ornamental plants. The prevalence of apple orchards and commercial fresh vegetable growers in particular distinguish Southeast Minnesota from other regions of the state. And although their numbers are dwindling, there are also still a fair number of families in the region with small dairy herds (see Karen Lehman's report, "Food and Community in Southeast Minnesota: One View of Many.") The area also produces many varieties of meats and cheeses, as well as milk and eggs. Because of the prevalence of seasonal agricultural work, a significant number of migrant workers come to Southeast Minnesota each year. Centro Campesino is one agency that has worked to provide adequate housing and ensure worker protection for Hispanic migrant workers.

Another major issue for people in the Southeast region is the rapid growth of the city of Rochester. Olmsted County has experienced 35 percent growth over the last two decades, and with it has come increasing property values and urban sprawl. Rural communities in Goodhue and Wabasha Counties are facing similar development pressures. At the same time, urban areas such as Rochester provide the most lucrative markets for organic and locally grown fresh produce (contact Dick Broeker for information on the OMEGA Cooperative Study of Southeast Minnesota food buyers.)

Important organizations in the region include the Land Stewardship Project, a large Sustainable Farming Association, Sno-Pac frozen organic foods, Organic Valley across the border in Wisconsin, and the Mayo Clinic in Rochester. There is no University of Minnesota campus or outreach center in the region, but there are several smaller community colleges and liberal arts colleges in the region.

SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA FARM STATISTICS

County	Geography	Item	1987	1992	1997
045	FILLMORE COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	1,695	1,618	1,546
049	GOODHUE COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	1,686	1,540	1,489
055	HOUSTON COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	1,073	974	954
109	OLMSTED COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	1,446	1,270	1,317
157	WABASHA COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	1,034	928	963
169	WINONA COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	1,174	1,090	1,044
TOTAL FARMS			8,108	7,420	7,313

County	Geography	Item	1987	1992	1997
045	FILLMORE COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	451,054	443,496	434,581
049	GOODHUE COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	389,539	379,603	384,565
055	HOUSTON COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	285,056	272,049	298,173
109	OLMSTED COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	318,748	305,831	303,665
157	WABASHA COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	255,550	245,686	253,401
169	WINONA COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	310,325	290,627	289,708
TOTAL LAND IN FARMS			2,010,272	1,937,292	1,964,093

County	Geography	Item	1987	1992	1997
045	FILLMORE COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	266	274	281
049	GOODHUE COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	231	246	258
055	HOUSTON COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	266	279	313
109	OLMSTED COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	220	241	231
157	WABASHA COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	247	265	263
169	WINONA COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	264	267	277

Source: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, 1997 Census of Agriculture
<http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/>

SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA LAND USE AND COVER STATISTICS

Fillmore, Goodhue, Houston, Olmsted, Wabasha, and Winona Counties

Description	General Population Counts			Acreage	% Change Between Censuses		% of Total
	1990	1990	2000		1990	1990	
Urban and rural development				99,428			3.8
Cultivated land				1,407,790			54.3
Hay/pasture/grassland				385,732			14.9
Brushland	21,930	20,777	21,122	20,261			0.8
Forested	30,749	40,690	41,127	617,496			23.8
Water	18,382	18,497	19,718	50,316			1.9
Bog/marsh/fen	92,006	106,479	134,277	9,429			0.4
Mining	19,335	16,744	21,610	3,685			0.1
	48,299	47,226	49,583				1.5
Total				2,594,137			100
REGION	238,658	254,005	280,839		18.7		10.4

CATEGORY DEFINITIONS

Urban and rural development residential, commercial, industrial, cultural and recreational developments and related developments such as power plants, power lines, pipelines, airports, waste treatment facilities, golf courses, farmsteads and feedlots. Associated structures include garages, sheds and landscaped areas.

Cultivated land areas under intensive cropping or rotation, including fallow fields and fields seeded for forage or cover crops that exhibit linear or other patterns associated with current tillage

Hay/pasture/grassland areas covered by grasslands and herbaceous plants; these may contain up to one-third shrub and tree cover. Some areas may be used as pastures and mowed or grazed. Included are fields that show evidence of past tillage but now appear to be abandoned and grown over with native vegetation or planted with a cover crop.

Brushland areas with a combination of grass, shrubs, and trees in which deciduous or coniferous tree cover comprises from one to two-thirds of the area, or shrub cover comprises more than one-third of the area. These areas are often found adjacent to hay/pasture/grassland or forested areas and vary greatly in shape and extent.

Forested areas where two-thirds or more of the total canopy cover is composed of predominantly woody deciduous and coniferous species and areas of regenerated or young forest where commercial timber has been completely or partially removed by logging, other management activities or natural events; includes woodlots, shelterbelts and plantations.

Water permanent bodies of water such as lakes, rivers, reservoirs, stock ponds and open water areas where photo evidence indicates that the areas are covered by water the majority of the time

Bog/marsh/fen grassy, wet areas with standing or slowly moving water. Vegetation consists of grass and sedge sods, and common hydrophilic vegetation such as cattail and rushes. These areas include wetlands with lowland coniferous forest and peat-covered or peat-filled depressions with a high water table; areas are often interspersed with channels or pools of open water.

Mining area stripped of topsoil revealing exposed substrate such as sand or gravel, including gravel quarries, mine tailings, borrow pits and rock quarries. Included are areas that lack appreciable soil development or vegetation cover such as rock outcrops, sand dunes or beaches.

Source: State of Minnesota Office of Strategic and Long Range Planning, 1990s Census of the Land
<http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us/datanetweb/landuse.html>

SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA POPULATION STATISTICS

County	Census Population Counts			% Change Between Censuses	
	1980	1990	2000	1980-2000	1990-2000
Fillmore	21,930	20,777	21,122	-3.7	1.7
Goodhue	38,749	40,690	44,127	13.9	8.4
Houston	18,382	18,497	19,718	7.3	6.6
Olmsted	92,006	106,470	124,277	35.1	16.7
Wabasha	19,335	19,744	21,610	11.8	9.5
Winona	46,256	47,828	49,985	8.1	4.5
REGION	236,658	254,006	280,839	18.7	10.6

Source: State of Minnesota Office of Strategic and Long Range Planning, based on United States Census 2000 data

<http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us/demography/>

WEST CENTRAL REGION

On June 22, in the Kviteseid Lutheran Church basement in Milan, the Land Stewardship Project hosted an intergenerational dialog about the future of family farms. Volunteer panelists from each of six age groups shared their thoughts about the value of rural life and their visions for the future of agriculture. (see summary in appendix). Concerns expressed by older participants included the loss of tradition and the desire for children or grandchildren to take over farms that had been in their families for generations. Younger farmers, especially those producing for fresh-market and direct sales, lamented the fact that they had to transport their food to the Twin Cities in order to find willing buyers. When asked what older generations could do to make younger people want to stay in small towns and consider going into farming, a CSA farmer in the back of the room gave a simple yet powerful response. "*Buy our vegetables,*" she said.

Other panelists agreed that while older generations had provided new farmers with invaluable financial and practical support, they remained skeptical of "new ways of doing things" such as organic production, CSA's, and direct marketing over the internet. This farmer also noted that many of the young farmers he knew were actually "city kids" who have moved to the country seeking a connection with their food and the land.

I found that the tensions between older and younger farmers, big and small farms, and insiders and newcomers were most prevalent in West Central Minnesota – or at least that the discussions of these tensions were the most honest and forthright. In a region where about 50% of farmland is rented out by absentee landlords (Dick Levin, "Swift County Farm Business Retention and Enhancement Program Summary Report, 1999), incentives for conservation is a major issue. Another major tension in the West Central region is the prevalence of, and community opposition to, large confinement animal operations. Dorothy notes that such operations become less and less common the closer one gets to the Minnesota River. The river, she says, is a defining feature of the West Central landscape, and peoples' philosophies and farming practices seem to differ based on their distance from it.

It seemed to me that there was a lot of water in general in western Minnesota, and also a lot of birds. Lone songbirds perched on fence posts and swaying pussywillows, and groups of two or three hidden in the grass by the roadside that took flight as I drove past. The landscape also reminded me of my native Kansas in the sense that I could see forever. Of the 2,800 miles

that I drove for the Partnerships this summer, I enjoyed the 53 miles between Morris and Fergus Falls the most.

The Land Stewardship Project (and Pride of the Prairie) is a major player when it comes to food and farming issues in the West Central region. Other important institutions include the University of Minnesota-Morris and the UMM Center for Small Towns, the West Central Research and Outreach Center in Morris, AURI offices in Morris, a very strong Sustainable Farming Association, and commodity groups for corn, soybeans, pork, and cattle.

WEST CENTRAL MINNESOTA FARM STATISTICS

County	Geography	Item	1987	1992	1997
011	BIG STONE COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	504	460	420
023	CHIPPEWA COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	820	689	618
041	DOUGLAS COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	1,091	956	1,042
051	GRANT COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	555	471	468
067	KANDIYOHI COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	1,219	1,113	1,131
073	LAC QUI PARLE COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	972	866	790
121	POPE COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	961	816	825
129	RENVILLE COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	1,455	1,302	1,114
149	STEVENS COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	619	538	497
151	SWIFT COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	884	760	739
155	TRAVERSE COUNTY, MN	Farms (number)	457	385	385
173	YELLOW MEDICINE CTY, MN	Farms (number)	1,027	923	876
TOTAL FARMS			10,564	9,279	8,905

County	Geography	Item	1987	1992	1997
011	BIG STONE COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	277,071	262,207	253,988
023	CHIPPEWA COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	327,916	326,804	318,472
041	DOUGLAS COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	260,294	260,125	267,875
051	GRANT COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	286,857	269,147	278,495
067	KANDIYOHI COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	377,392	360,500	378,831
073	LAC QUI PARLE COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	411,194	405,029	397,519
121	POPE COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	328,165	310,135	324,730
129	RENVILLE COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	563,931	600,114	601,103
149	STEVENS COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	295,499	286,337	299,346
151	SWIFT COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	395,484	389,897	388,215
155	TRAVERSE COUNTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	312,130	310,184	315,068
173	YELLOW MEDICINE CTY, MN	Land in farms (acres)	412,568	407,953	415,269
TOTAL LAND IN FARMS			4,248,501	4,188,432	4,238,911

County	Geography	Item	1987	1992	1997
011	BIG STONE COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	550	570	605
023	CHIPPEWA COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	400	474	515
041	DOUGLAS COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	239	272	257
051	GRANT COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	517	571	595
067	KANDIYOHI COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	310	324	335
073	LAC QUI PARLE COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	423	468	503
121	POPE COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	341	380	394
129	RENVILLE COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	388	461	540
149	STEVENS COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	477	532	602
151	SWIFT COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	447	513	525
155	TRAVERSE COUNTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	683	806	818
173	YELLOW MEDICINE CTY, MN	Average size of farm (acres)	402	442	474

Source: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, 1997 Census of Agriculture

<http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/>

WEST CENTRAL MINNESOTA LAND USE AND COVER STATISTICS

Big Stone, Chippewa, Douglas, Grant, Kandiyohi, Lac qui Parle, Pope, Renville, Stevens, Swift, Traverse, and Yellow Medicine Counties

Description	Acreage	% of Total
Urban and rural development	101,651	1.9
Cultivated land	4,239,008	78.5
Hay/pasture/grassland	489,863	9.1
Brushland	19,205	0.4
Forested	225,688	4.2
Water	214,823	4
Bog/marsh/fen	104,732	1.9
Mining	3,696	0.1
Total	5,398,666	100

CATEGORY DEFINITIONS

Urban and rural development residential, commercial, industrial, cultural and recreational developments and related developments such as power plants, power lines, pipelines, airports, waste treatment facilities, golf courses, farmsteads and feedlots. Associated structures include garages, sheds and landscaped areas.

Cultivated land areas under intensive cropping or rotation, including fallow fields and fields seeded for forage or cover crops that exhibit linear or other patterns associated with current tillage

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Forested areas where two-thirds or more of the total canopy cover is composed of predominantly woody deciduous and coniferous species and areas of regenerated or young forest where commercial timber has been completely or partially removed by logging, other management activities or natural events; includes woodlots, shelterbelts and plantations.

Water permanent bodies of water such as lakes, rivers, reservoirs, stock ponds and open water areas where photo evidence indicates that the areas are covered by water the majority of the time

Bog/marsh/fen grassy, wet areas with standing or slowly moving water. Vegetation consists of grass and sedge sods, and common hydrophilic vegetation such as cattail and rushes. These areas include wetlands with lowland coniferous forest and peat-covered or peat-filled depressions with a high water table; areas are often interspersed with channels or pools of open water.

Mining area stripped of topsoil revealing exposed substrate such as sand or gravel, including gravel quarries, mine tailings, borrow pits and rock quarries. Included are areas that lack appreciable soil development or vegetation cover such as rock outcrops, sand dunes or beaches.

Source: State of Minnesota Office of Strategic and Long Range Planning, 1990s Census of the Land
<http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us/datanetweb/landuse.html>

WEST CENTRAL MINNESOTA POPULATION STATISTICS

County	Census Population Counts			% Change Between Censuses	
	1980	1990	2000	1980-2000	1990-2000
Big Stone	7,716	6,285	5,820	-24.6	-7.4
Chippewa	14,941	13,228	13,088	-12.4	-1.1
Douglas	27,839	28,674	32,821	17.9	14.5
Grant	7,171	6,246	6,289	-12.3	0.7
Kandiyohi	36,763	38,761	41,203	12.1	6.3
Lac qui Parle	10,592	8,924	8,067	-23.8	-9.6
Pope	11,657	10,745	11,236	-3.6	4.6
Renville	20,401	17,673	17,154	-15.9	-2.9
Stevens	11,322	10,634	10,053	-11.2	-5.5
Swift	12,920	10,724	11,956	-7.5	11.5
Traverse	5,542	4,463	4,134	-25.4	-7.4
Yellow Medicine	13,653	11,684	11,080	-18.8	-5.2
REGION	180,517	168,041	172,901	-4.2	2.9

Source: State of Minnesota Office of Strategic and Long Range Planning, based on United States Census 2000

<http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us/demography/>

2. WHAT ARE WE DOING? PROJECTS UNDERWAY IN EACH REGION.

Several components are required for any food system to function. At a minimum, there must be a supply of food, people who want to buy the food, and processing and distribution channels connecting the two. Similarly, the projects that the Regional Partnerships have undertaken so far are a combination of improving production, educating consumers, and streamlining the activities that take place in between. An overview of the Partnerships' Food and Farming Projects follows.

CENTRAL PARTNERSHIP**Whole Farm Coop**

Background:

Whole Farm Coop is a cooperative of approximately 30 farm families in central Minnesota. The Coop is based in Long Prairie but sells the majority of its products in the Twin Cities, at natural foods stores and through its "Congregationally Supported Agriculture" program. Coop members emphasize pastured poultry meats, cheeses and eggs; vegetables grown with few or no chemical fertilizers, herbicides or pesticides; and locally-produced crafts, baked goods, mixes, honey, syrup, and popcorn.

Partnership-Sponsored Activities:

First project: In 1999-2000, intern Kristen Corselius developed producer profiles for all products sold through Whole Farm Coop. She also assessed customer satisfaction and product standards based on consumer research. Coop members and others in the region met to share profiles and discuss standards.

Second project: In 2002, student intern Kelly Albrecht conducted two marketing surveys for the Coop in the Twin Cities. The first survey compared Whole Farm Coop product prices with prices for comparable products at one high-end and one discount grocery store in Minneapolis. The second survey gauged the satisfaction of customers buying through the "Congregationally Supported Agriculture" program.

Funding Level:

Year 1: \$5,650 for first project by Kristen

Year 2: \$2,500 for second project by Kelly

Total: \$8,150

Community Contact: Herman Hendrickson

Status/Results/Outcomes:

The report was just completed this summer. Copies of the report are available at the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, Minneapolis campus.

This Old Farm

Background:

Located on an actual farmstead, This Old Farm is a venue for local producers to sell their wares and demonstrate aspects of the farming way of life to visitors. On summer weekends, there are demonstrations on cooking, canning, and cow milking, and other attractions such as performances by local music groups and a corn maze. Site owners Dick and Marian Rademacher are also avid antique collectors, and have created an antique village that visitors can tour.

Another important component of This Old Farm place is the organic Pizza Garden, which provides students from the Brainerd schools the opportunity to learn where their food originates and become directly involved with planting, cultivating, harvesting and eventually eating the vegetables that are grown there. A Pizza Garden classroom activity book augments what children learn from farmer Al Jabs when they come to the farm.

Partnership-Sponsored Activity:

Partnership served as a liaison between This Old Farm and legal, business, and technical resources both inside and outside the University. Partnership funding supported equipment and supplies, brochures and publicity for This Old Farm.

Funding Level:

Year 1: \$12,000

Year 2: \$20,000

Total: \$32,000

Community Contact:

Al Jabs, Nokay Lake Farmers Association

Farm and Ranch Adventure Tours

Background:

With organizing and coordination by Hubbard County Extension Educator Will Yliniemi, several farmers and ranchers in the Central Lakes region joined together to collaboratively market their farm and ranch tours.

Partnership-Sponsored Activity:

The Tourism Center helped the tour operators design a customer satisfaction survey and provides ongoing tabulation of the results. The Hubbard County Extension office helped the group design advertising materials such as brochures and signs and identify other publicity outlets.

Funding Level:

Year 1: \$4,555

Year 2: \$3,825

Total: \$8,380

The project also received in-kind support from the Chamber of Commerce.

Community Contacts:

Dave and Pam Johnson, Northland Bison Ranch

Status/Results/Outcomes:

Tour operators receive an annual summary of survey results, which lets them know what they liked and did not like about the tours. Comments on the surveys are overwhelmingly positive, such as: "really appreciated 'non-touristy' learning opportunities," "let grandchildren see where milk comes from," "the kids loved the animals," and "hope to come back next year."

The survey results also indicate how visitors learned of the tours. Common responses, from most to least frequent, were: Newspaper, Summer Scene (local publication), Brochure, Lakes Alive (local publication), and Friends and Relatives.

Bean Root Rot Research

Background:

Yields of edible beans in the Central Region were steadily decreasing.

Partnership-Sponsored Activity:

University of Minnesota Plant Pathologist Jim Percich is conducting crop trials and lab research to identify better management practices for edible beans. His work involves a high degree of interaction with area farmers. Several have even donated a portion of their land to be used for research, in order to ensure that the diagnoses are accurate and solutions are workable for their particular situations. Percich also invited Central Minnesota farmers to St. Paul last winter to observe his laboratory work related to edible bean root rot. They met with other researchers and discussed bean root rot issues with Extension Dean Charles Casey and COAFES Dean Charles Muscoplat.

Funding Level:

Year 1: \$20,308

Year 2: \$20,815

Total: \$41,123

Edible bean companies also provided funding for this research, and the University of Minnesota college deans kicked in some "rapid response" money.

Preliminary Conclusions:

The common three-year rotation is not long enough to disrupt plant pest and disease cycles – a five-year rotation would be better. The problem may also be exacerbated by over-application of fertilizer. Deeper plowing and biological and chemical seed treatments should also improve the situation. Some cultivars are better than others when it comes to disease resistance.

Organic Blueberry research

Background:

Nearly 25 years ago, the Central Lakes Ag College established blueberry test plots at its research center in Staples. The University of Minnesota Central Research and Outreach Center also conducts research on blueberry management and cultivars.

Partnership-Sponsored Activity:

Extension Specialists David Wildung and Jerry Wright are testing out various mulching, irrigation, and composting combinations for organic blueberry production. This information is disseminated to local gardeners and commercial growers via the internet and through Field days, such as the one I attended in July.

Funding Level:

Year 1: \$8,500

Year 2: \$8,500

Year 3: \$9,500

Total: \$26,500

Preliminary Conclusions:

Trickle irrigation improves plant hardiness and yield. Wood-chip mulch decreases weed pressure and improves moisture retention, but over time can cause the soil to be too alkaline for the acid-loving blueberry plants. Turkey litter can be used effectively as an organic fertilizer; research on proper timing and amounts of application is ongoing.

NORTHEAST PARTNERSHIP

Northland Food and Farming Initiative

Background:

NFFI was formed in 2000 as the umbrella organization for the Northeast Partnership's food and farming activities.

Partnership-Sponsored Activities:

UMD Sociology Professor David Smith and his undergraduate students conducted a preliminary assessment of the food and farming "landscape" in Northeast Minnesota. Their assessment included two types of information: secondary data that was mostly quantitative in nature (such as data from the U.S. Census, Census of Agriculture, and other data sets and reports), and primary data that was mostly qualitative in nature (from interviews with regional residents).

Based on the results of this assessment, NFFI decided to concentrate its efforts in three main areas: education, policy, and direct action (also known as "doing something.") In the education area, NFFI developed a slide show about food and farming in Northeast Minnesota, and a fifth-grade curriculum about sustainable farming taught by area farmers. In the direct action category, NFFI began working with the Extension Service to develop a farm internship program and a promotional kit for churches interested in providing local foods to low-income people. NFFI also assembled a team of people to work on a project aimed at helping small food and farm-related businesses in the area to be more successful.

Funding Level:

\$205,100 over two years

Community Contacts:

NFFI generally: Jennifer Buckley, Sustainable Farming Association

Fifth-grade curriculum: David Abazs, David Graf, Kurt Mead, and Allison Wood created the curriculum and are among the farmer-teachers who participated in the first year.

Status/Results/Outcomes:

NFFI will officially end in December 2002.

The assessment conducted by Professor Smith and his students provided NFFI with a good roadmap of the food and farming needs in the area and an idea of what it should do next. The assessment is available by contacting Okey Ukaga.

Jennifer Buckley, NFFI staff, used the slide show at various meetings to raise awareness of food issues.

Fifteen farmers taught the fifth-grade curriculum in ten schools during the 2001-2002 school year. Anecdotal feedback from the students, the farmer-teachers, and the classroom teachers in the schools all indicated that the program was a big success. A couple of the farmers decided not to continue with teaching in 2002-2003, but the rest have signed on again for another year.

The farm internship program has more or less stagnated due to the Extension Service's recent reorganization. It is unclear whether the farm internship program will continue to be a part of the local Extension Educator's job description.

The food and farm-related business project is still in its early stages. Initially the team intended to work with the Department of Applied Economics in St. Paul and use their Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) Model, but then the team decided that the BR&E Model was actually not a good fit – they were looking for more qualitative data. Work on this project is slated to continue, even though funding for NFFI and Jennifer Buckley's involvement has come to an end. The policy area did not take off, but may be considered for the future.

Community Garden

Partnership-Sponsored Activity:

Funded members of the East Lake band of Ojibwe in McGregor to develop a community garden.

Funding Level:

\$2,500

Status/Results/Outcome:

The garden was created, but the outcomes were not as successful one might have hoped. The individual who initiated the project and sought funding from the Northwest Partnership moved away before the project was complete. Since then, the project has lacked a strong "champion" and there has been a high rate of turnover in supervisory staff.

NORTHWEST PARTNERSHIP

Ag Round Table

Partnership-Sponsored Activity:

In November 2002, the Northwest Partnership organized a roundtable discussion on agriculture in the region.

Funding Level:

\$2,400

Status/Results/Outcome:

A summary of the views expressed at the Roundtable is available in the Appendix B and Appendix C. Hosting this event gave participants, and especially members of the Northwest Board, the chance to identify and prioritize some of the key issues facing the region related to agriculture.

Organic Crop Trials

Partnership-Sponsored Activity:

Wheat and Soybean variety trials under organic production to determine which varieties perform best in the region.

Funding Level:

\$16,000

Researchers:

Paul Porter and Hans Kandel, Northwest Board Members

Minwamanji'o**Background:**

Minwamanji'o is an Ojibwe term meaning, roughly, "in good health." The goal of the project is to provide people in the Mahnohman community the opportunity to grow, eat, and use traditional Ojibwe plants and medicinal herbs. Minwamanji'o grew out of a previous endeavor on the White Earth Reservation called "Project Grow."

Partnership-Sponsored Activity:

The Northwest Partnership has contracted with Minwamanji'o to host a Straw Bale Construction Workshop. With consultation from university and community partners, Minwamanji'o group members will construct a building in which the group can hold meetings, provide educational opportunities, and potentially sell native crafts and food products. The building as it is currently envisioned will use highly renewable building materials, solar energy, and a composting sewage system. In addition, hoop houses near the main building site will be used for starting seedlings. Native plants and heirloom varieties will be grown on site, and made available through Minwamanji'o.

Funding Level:

\$15,000

The group is may also seek financial support for this project from area foundations and rural development programs. It is seeking technical assistance and in-kind support from the University of Minnesota Solar Energy Lab and from a number of Extension Specialists.

Status:

The Northwest Partnership has approved funding for the construction project and is currently seeking University partners with interest or expertise in straw bale construction, energy systems expertise, and experience with composting toilets and gray water systems.

EXPERIMENT IN RURAL COOPERATION (SOUTHEAST PARTNERSHIP)

Southeast Minnesota Food Network

Background:

The Food Network evolved from three years of work driven by community-based growers and producers who worked with a wide variety of faculty interests from the College of Agriculture, Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, Extension Service and the Carlson School of Management.

Partnership-Sponsored Activities:

Producer workshops, paid consulting and/or travel expenses for faculty researchers, field days.

Funding Level:

\$100,000 over 3 years.

Status/Results/Outcome:

Currently in its first year. So far, the Network has established a limited liability corporation (LLC) that has grown to about 40 members. Members agree to adhere to a set of principles on soil and water management, care of livestock, and product origins and processing.

Badgerset Farm

Background:

Use of woody agriculture crops can be a highly sustainable farming practice and provide new cash crop opportunities for farmers.

Partnership-Sponsored Activity:

This 5-year project builds upon previous research aimed at using Hazelnuts in such a production system. Goals include identifying best management techniques and developing and bringing to market a Hazelnut variety that is well-adapted to the Minnesota climate.

First Phase: \$55,000, university staff costs

Second Phase: \$34,000, Ph.D. student working full time

Total: \$89,000 over four to five years

Status:

Currently in year 3 of this project.

LSP/Minnesota Food Alliance

Partnership-Sponsored Activity:

Supported organizational costs for producer workshops, organized university resources on behalf of growers, and paid some of the costs for University faculty members' time and travel.

Funding Level:

\$25,000

Status:

Complete.

LSP Food Connections Project

Background:

The goal of this project is to incorporate food grown by local producers into the menus of public schools in the area.

Partnership-Sponsored Activity:

Support for two students and consultation from two faculty in department of epidemiology.

Level of Funding:

\$17,500

Status:

The project is about 25% complete at this point. It got off to a good start; there was an excellent CAP student working on the project previously. The project group is planning a large workshop/conference this winter that will involve both producers and schools in a discussion of how the two can better work together.

Southeast Minnesota at the Crossroads... Telling the Region's Farm Story

Background:

The Farm Story Project is a collaboration between community leaders in Southeast Minnesota and faculty from a variety of disciplines who are part of the Landscape, Human & Animal Health initiative on the Twin Cities campus. The goal of the project is to increase citizens' knowledge of the history, culture, environment and agriculture of the region, with the aim of enhancing environmentally successful farming practices and the well being of rural communities. This initiative may involve the development of a University class.

Funding Level:

\$145,000 over three years.

Status:

currently in its first year.

Apple Crisp Cooperative

Background:

The Apple Crisp Cooperative had previously developed a frozen, sliced apple product as a value-added way to use their #2 apples.

Partnership-Sponsored Activity:

The Experiment in Rural Cooperation provided the Cooperative a grant to investigate new markets for their frozen apple slices. They worked with a Marketing professor and her graduate students to research the market opportunities for Apple Crisp apple slices. One promising prospect that was identified was bakeries, which could use the slices in pies. The Partnership then supported the Cooperative's work with Food Scientists and the University and bakers at Lund's and Byerly's to develop a new signature pie for the grocery chain.

Funding Level: \$23,000

Outcomes:

Through the Carlson School of Management and COAFES Department of Food, Science and Nutrition, Apple Crisp Cooperative developed a new apple pie product now carried exclusively in Lunds and Byerlys grocery stores. Assistance on package design was also provided through the U.'s byDesign service.

Finding Food in Farm Country

Partnership-Sponsored Activity:

Research on farm and food expenditures in Southeast Minnesota carried out in cooperation with a graduate research assistant.

Funding Level: \$10,000

Status/Results/Outcomes:

Project is complete. Report is available by contacting Dick Broeker.

OMEGA Cooperative

Partnership-Sponsored Activity:

Research on consumer interest in local foods. Survey was conducted by SNG consumer research, with University faculty involved on a consultative basis.

Funding Level:

\$14,900

Status/Results/Outcomes:

Interest in buying local foods is highest among those with mid- and upper incomes, and among those who have previously shopped or regularly shop in natural foods stores. Main concerns about buying local include price and convenience. The full report (which is quite substantial in length) can be obtained by contacting Dick Broeker.

Full Circle Cooperative Greenhouse

Partnership-Sponsored Project:

Model demonstration project to show how to design and utilize and energy-efficient greenhouse in Northern climates. Project included producer workshops with University faculty from the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Science.

Level of funding:

\$10,000 for faculty travel costs and time.

Steven Schwenn, the owner of the cooperative paid for greenhouse materials, while the Partnership covered cost of labor and consultation.

Status:

Complete.

Paradise Prairie Products

Background:

Paradise Prairie is a group of producers seeking to produce a line of all-natural processed food products, such as sweet corn chowders, herbed butters, and soups.

Partnership-Sponsored Project:

Working with 3 University faculty members from the Retail Food Industry Center and a graduate student in Marketing to conduct pre-business planning and exploration. Research includes identifying grocery trends and closing in on product lines.

Funding Level: \$25,000

Status: Ongoing.

Featherstone Fruits and Vegetables

Background:

Featherstone Fruits and Vegetables represents a consortium of organic growers who sell at farmers markets, grocery stores, and at outlets in the Twin Cities.

Partnership-Sponsored Project:

The group sought to design a portable grow house to take advantage of seasonal changes, such as directness of light, on a farm. The goal was to create a structure that could be built very inexpensively. Throughout the project, the project Director consulted with a team of faculty from the College of Agriculture.

Funding Level: \$2,000

Status: Complete.

Root River Market

Background:

When the small town community of Houston lost the last of its five of grocery stores, the community determined that it needed to establish a cooperative market.

Partnership-Sponsored Project:

The Southeast Partnership supported a series of three supply chain workshops with Rob King, Department of Applied Economics, and other University faculty. The Root River leaders attended the workshops to discuss plans for the new market. The workshops focused on local foods and working with the community.

Funding Level: \$7,000

Over 400 citizens also made financial contributions in order to launch the project, and those who contributed are now shareholders in the new market. Other cooperatives donated funds and provided loans as well.

Status:

Complete. The market opened its doors in 2000.

Animal Processing Task Force

Partnership-Sponsored Project:

A group of farmers involved in animal agriculture and experts from the community, University and state government examined the capacity of area meat processors to service smaller farm operations wanting to maintain or expand animal production.

Funding Level:

\$2500

Status:

Complete.

Alternative Swine Producer Round Table

Partnership-Sponsored Activity:

A joint project with the West Central Regional Partnership and U of M Alternative Swine Housing Systems Task Force to conduct Round Table discussion groups throughout west central and southern Minnesota. The "Producer Round Table Discussion Groups" will bring producers and researchers together to discuss alternative swine housing systems and to develop marketing opportunities and networks with each other and their local community.

Funding Level:

\$7,500

Status:

Not yet begun.

Southeast Minnesota Foods Working Group

Partnership-Sponsored Project:

A group of food project leaders in southeast Minnesota worked with numerous faculty from several departments within the College of Agriculture, other University departments, colleges and centers. Over 50 University interests were involved at one time or another in the process.

Funding Level:

\$7,500

Status/Outcomes:

Complete. Led directly to the establishment of the Southeast Minnesota Food Network.

WEST CENTRAL PARTNERSHIP

Pride of the Prairie

Background:

Pride of the Prairie is an initiative coordinated by the Land Stewardship Project. Its goal is to develop a local food system that will help protect the environment, reduce energy consumption and circulate dollars in the community. The project will explore ways in which institutions such as the University of Minnesota-Morris could buy food directly from farmers.

Funding Level: \$123,500

The West Central Partnership is just one of a number of organizations providing financial and in-kind support to the project.

Status/Results/Outcomes:

Local Foods Banquets, Buffets and Harvest Meals organized by Pride of the Prairie have had multiple outcomes: first, they have increased the incomes of area farmers, and second, they have raised awareness of the kinds of foods available in Western Minnesota. Interest in local food meals is growing, with additional churches and community groups contacting Pride of the Prairie for more information on how to organize a local foods meal. A next step may be to identify experienced cooks and caterers who are interested in partnering with Pride of the Prairie on these meals. UMM will have local foods on campus menu this fall. Michael Sparby, AURI, is also looking at studying market feasibility and supply chain issues with the U of M Department of Applied Economics.

Community Partners:

Audrey Arner, Terry VanDerPol, Lynn Mader, Land Stewardship Project; Dennis Lindor, City of Morris Prairie Renaissance Project (sponsored by Blandin Foundation); Craig Murphy, Farmer; Bev Struxness and Mary Ann Scharf, WC Regional Partnership

Agriculture/Rural Policy Study Circle Project

Using the study circle model to engage many citizens in discussions on rural sustainability and agriculture/rural policy. As a result of conducting several study circles throughout the region, citizen action forums will be conducted to develop action steps for policies that will help sustain the region. This Study Circle process also serves as an assessment for the board of regional issues and potential projects.

Funding Level:

\$19,460

Community Partners – Susan Brickweg (serves as the coordinator); study circle participants and West Central Regional Partnership board

Status:

Local Foods (Pride of the Prairie), Rural Entrepreneurship and Health Purchasing Alliance were identified as priority efforts through the Study Circle Project. All of these have a connection to Food and Farming Projects as cost of doing farming business and encouraging entrepreneurial ways of farming are impacted by current policies. The board is moving forward on all three issues.

Alternative Swine Producer Round Table**Partnership-Sponsored Activity:**

A joint project with Experiment in Rural Cooperation (SE Regional Partnership) and U of M Alternative Swine Housing Systems Task Force to conduct Round Table discussion groups throughout west central and southern Minnesota. The "Producer Round Table Discussion Groups" will bring producers and researchers together to discuss alternative swine housing systems and to develop marketing opportunities and networks with each other and their local community.

Funding Level:

\$7,500

Community Partners:

Jim VanDerPol, Dwight Ault, Steve Stassen, Kevin Connolly, Swine Producers; Paul Sobocinski, Swine Producer and Land Stewardship Project; Marlene Halverson, Swedish deep-bedded farrowing consultant; Mary Ann Scharf, WC Regional Partnership; SE Regional Partnership rep.

Status:

Not yet begun.

Farm Beginnings

Background:

Farm Beginnings is a program sponsored by Land Stewardship Project that aims to increase communications and cooperation between established and beginning farmers.

Partnership-Sponsored Activity:

Farm Beginnings is a program sponsored by Land Stewardship Project that aims to increase communications and cooperation between established and beginning farmers. Melissa Fishbach, CAP graduate student intern in agriculture/horticulture, was employed during summer 2002 to assist with the implementation of the mentoring program and conduct evaluation of the program.

Funding Level:

\$1,500

Additional financial and in-kind support provided by the Land Stewardship Project.

Contact:

Amy Bacigalupo, Farm Beginnings Coordinator, Land Stewardship Project

Surveying the Gaps between Farmers and Lenders

Partnership-Sponsored Activity:

CAP Graduate student Hassan Ghomrawi is conducting a statewide survey of farmers, lenders, ag educators and consultants to learn about their perspectives on financing of sustainable farming methods. U of M student is employed on this project through Land Stewardship Project and several collaborators.

Funding Level:

\$1,500, with additional financial and in-kind support from Land Stewardship Project and several other collaborators.

Community Partners:

Caroline van Schaik, Richard Ness and Terry VanDerPol, Land Stewardship; Mark Simon, Dairy Farmer; Gigi DiGiacomo; Karl Hakanson, UW

Working Land, Animals and Water

The West Central Regional Partnership is considering potential partnerships with regional groups/organizations and project ideas that focus on working land and conservation methods to reduce residue to the MN River, and animal agriculture expansion/waste land application and it's relationship/impacts on communities and natural resources.

3. HOW DO WE WORK? REGIONAL APPROACHES AND PROCEDURES.

All of the Partnership Boards face similar questions about how to organize themselves and operate effectively as a group. These summaries are intended to provide a snapshot of how each Board has answered some of these operational questions in regards to food and farming projects. Perhaps Regions will learn about procedures going on elsewhere that they would like to emulate. If nothing else, hopefully this section will enable the five Partnerships to understand each other a little better.

CENTRAL

If there is one word that describes the food and farming work of the Central Partnership, it is "relational." The Partnership's work is characterized by a high degree of interaction with community groups, local political figures, and University faculty and staff. The Central Partnership's longstanding relationship with the Central Lakes Ag College is especially relevant to their food and farming projects. The Regional Partnership as we now know it is actually a continuation of a previous group in the Central Region who had a say in the research priorities of the Central Lakes Ag College and the U of M Experiment Station in Grand Rapids. Sharon's office is also co-located with the Central Lakes Ag College, which she considers to be a real advantage. "A lot of important relationships and connections are built over lunch breaks," she said.

Sharon also tries to foster strong ties within the Central Board itself. Board Members take turns "hosting" the monthly meetings somewhere in their home counties. Sometimes, this also coincides with a visit to a place that they have funded – for example, their August meeting will take place at This Old Farm in Crow Wing County. Sharon says this system has several benefits: first, it promotes a sense of place by getting Board members out to see different parts of the region. Second, it seems to foster a greater team spirit among board members. Board members buy into the Partnership more after hosting. Sharon also hosts an annual holiday party for the board at her home, which she says allows the Board members to get to know each other in a more social setting.

In terms of the Partnership's connection with the University, the Central Board has a policy of being very explicit about this for each project it funds. If a project idea form is

submitted by a community group without any mention of University involvement, the Partnership will consult with the applicant to find out what they see as the role for University involvement. Only after a faculty member has committed to the project does the Partnership vote on whether to fund it. In this way, the Central Board tries to ensure that there is always a University connection in all of its work.

Each project is also assigned a Board member liaison, who along with Sharon is responsible for following up on the project and providing contacts or assistance if the project runs into a snag. With at least 52 projects in total, however, such follow-up is increasingly time-consuming. The Central Board is giving serious thought to scaling back on the number of projects it funds in order to focus on fewer, larger projects.

NORTHEAST

The work of the Northeast Partnership, at least as it relates to food and farming projects, might best be described as “methodical.” “Before we began jumping in and just doing things, we wanted to understand what was going on in the region,” said Okey.

The work of the Northland Food and Farming Initiative commenced with a systematic assessment of the food system in Northeast Minnesota. The assessment included two types of information: secondary data (from the U.S. Census, Census of Agriculture, and other data sets and reports) that was mostly quantitative in nature, and primary data (from interviews with regional residents) that was mostly qualitative in nature.

Based on the results of this assessment, NFFI decided to concentrate its efforts in three main areas: education, policy, and direct action, or “doing something.” In the education area, NFFI developed a slide show about food and farming in Northeast Minnesota, and a fifth-grade curriculum about sustainable farming taught by area farmers. In the direct action category, NFFI began work on a farm internship program, and on a project that is intended to help small food and farm-related businesses in the area be more successful. Both of these programs are ongoing, though they have suffered from staff turnover in Extension, at the University of Minnesota-Duluth, and at NFFI itself. The policy area did not take off, but may be considered for the future.

Food and farming is one of the five “arenas of work” that the Northeast Partnership has defined for itself. The other arenas are energy, forestry, tourism, and community forums and infrastructure. All Board members choose at least one arena in which to work, but they can opt to be a part of two or even three.

The conclusion of the NFFI project now presents the Northeast Board, and specifically the food and farming arena group, with the opportunity to re-evaluate their past food and farming activities. Okey expects that the group will identify a niche within the broad food and farming arena around which to focus future efforts. For example, the forestry arena group has chosen to focus on sustainable management of private woodlands, and has set a two-year goal of helping all private woodland owners in the region develop certified woodland management plans. The group will now identify University and community resources that can help achieve this goal, and may even distribute Requests for Proposals for specific activities. Since the Northeast Board only meets every other month, much of an arena’s success depends upon the willingness of group members to work between meetings to accomplish goals.

NORTHWEST

The food and farming projects in the Northwest reflect the two routes by which projects usually come to the Partnerships. First, there is the “inside-out” trajectory, whereby University faculty members spearhead a project and then involve the community in it. An example in the Northwest is the organic variety trials being conducted by Extension Reserchers and Board Members Hans Kandel and Paul Porter. Although they initiated the research, they involved community members in the research design and also in the results phase through field days, workshops, and other communiques. The main roles of the Board in these types of projects are to make sure that the proposed research is of interest to people in the area in the first place, and then to ensure that there is ongoing community involvement in the project.

The second project route could be described as “outside-in;” Minwanmanj’o is a good example of this. A group of citizens sought funding from the Partnership for a project that has potential for University involvement. The role of the Board and Regional Director in this case is to be a liaison to resources within the university and to make sure that those linkages occur.

The Northwest Board itself also identifies needs and initiates projects that draw together University and community constituencies. The ag forum that the Board hosted last winter, for example, was an opportunity for farmers, community leaders, researchers and Extension Educators to sit together at the same table and discuss the possibilities for agriculture in the Northwest.

One of the standing jokes within the Northwest Board is their proclivity for sending e-mail. E-mail has proven to be a very effective way for the Board to communicate and make minor decisions between meetings. It has also provided a forum for the more philosophical discussions that do not always take place at Board meetings, though as Linda notes, there are advantages and disadvantages to having a philosophical discussion electronically.

The Northwest Board also has a unique method for voting on projects. Instead of simply voting "yes" or "no" for a particular project, Board members indicate their level of support: five fingers for highly supportive, one finger for quite skeptical. If opinion is nearly unanimous at one end of the spectrum or another, then less discussion is needed. If levels of support vary widely, or if a lot of people are at levels two and three, then the Board will have a more extended discussion about the proposal in order to reach a firmer consensus.

SOUTHEAST

If you ask Dick, he will tell you that there is no pattern to how the Southeast Partnership operates. "There is no 'typical' project," he says. "Every one of them is different, and they all came off in different ways." Clearly, this way of re-inventing the wheel each time is labor-intensive and time-consuming. It is also, by and large, very effective, as evidenced by the Southeast Partnership's long list of successful projects. The fact that each project is different means that it is designed specifically for the need at hand.

The Southeast's food and farming projects alone have involved faculty from places as varied as the College of Agricultural, Food, and Environmental Sciences, the College of Human Ecology, the Carlson School of Management, the Department of Epidemiology, the College of Liberal Arts, and Extension. Despite this variety, one clear trend is that the Southeast Partnership has worked predominantly with faculty from the Twin Cities campus. Unlike the

other four Regions, there is no University of Minnesota campus or Research and Outreach Center in the Southeast Region.

The lack of Extension facilities and top Extension personnel in the region has meant that the Southeast most often partners with academic/tenure-track faculty. This is relatively unique among the Partnerships, and perhaps for good reason: as Dick will tell you, convincing academic faculty to engage in community projects is sometimes a very tough sell. "The incentive structures do not exist to reward academic faculty for doing outreach," he says. One of Dick's main concerns is that the relationships he does manage to forge between community groups and University faculty are usually temporary. He notes that the community projects for which he is seeking faculty assistance are often not in the core interest area of faculty members, and so it is difficult to attract and retain their interest.

Funding levels for projects in the Southeast vary widely, from a one-time grant of \$2,000 to three-year project costing \$145,000. Many of the Southeast's smaller-budget items are actually components of larger projects. In general, the Southeast Partnership has been quite successful in leveraging community funds in addition to its own. For example, the Full Circle Cooperative Greenhouse project was a demonstration to show how to design and utilize and energy-efficient greenhouse. The Southeast Partnership contributed \$10,000 to cover producer workshops and the travel and consulting expenses of University faculty members. The Cooperative supplied the materials and labor for the actual construction of the greenhouse.

Another way that the Southeast Partnership has stretched its funds is through the use of undergraduate and graduate student interns, who, as Dick says, "are the best bargain around." Dick keeps students engaged and on-track through frequent e-mails, telephone conversations, and invitations to attend meetings and other events. The Southeast Partnership's access to graduate students in particular is enhanced by its proximity to the Twin Cities campus. (The Duluth campus also has graduate programs, but in a more limited number of fields.)

WEST CENTRAL

I did not have the opportunity this summer to sit in on a West Central Partnership Board meeting, so my comments in this section are less about the West Central Board and more about the Pride of the Prairie, which I did have the opportunity to visit. I will finish up with some

speculations, however, on how working with a semi-autonomous group such as Pride of the Prairie might be different than Partnerships working directly on Food and Farming projects.

The Pride of the Prairie working group is a collection of seasoned activists, advocates and administrators who bring valuable skills such as grant writing, lobbying, community organizing, and nutritional and food science to the cause of local foods. It is worth noting that a good number of Pride of the Prairie members are not volunteers – they have chosen to promote local foods as part of their vocation.

Pride of the Prairie members work under different structures of accountability than people in food and farming projects that are solely supported by the Partnerships. For example, Pride of the Prairie members Audrey Arner and Terry VanDerPol come to Pride of the Prairie as part of their jobs at Land Stewardship Project, and thus are more accountable to LSP. Pride of the Prairie also recently received a SARE grant to do food safety education, so SARE project leads such as Lynn Mader will have important responsibilities vis-à-vis SARE. In short, people have to answer to their funding sources. Unlike some of the other food and farming projects discussed in this paper, Pride of the Prairie has more funding sources than just the Regional Partnerships, and must maintain accountability to all of them.

This fact highlights one of the possible disadvantages of spinning off food and farming projects into a semi-autonomous group such as Pride of the Prairie: less direct Partnership oversight and control over how its money is spent. West Central Partnership members represent a wider spectrum of opinions about “sustainability” than Pride of the Prairie members, and thus might make different funding and programmatic decisions given the same set of circumstances.

On the other hand, Pride of the Prairie’s unified vision demonstrates a key advantage of creating an outside sub-group for food and farming projects: since everyone is on the same page, projects really move forward quickly. There is a clear sense of purpose within Pride of the Prairie, and also a high degree of trust and accountability within the group. As a result, Pride of the Prairie is efficient and achieves more rapid “on the ground” success than the Partnership might be able to accomplish on its own. The West Central Partnership receives a lot of “bang for the buck” that it contributes to Pride of the Prairie.

4. WITH WHOM DO WE WORK? CURRENT AND POTENTIAL PARTNERS.

As section two indicates, the Partnerships have collaborated with a long list of university students and faculty members on food and farming projects alone. Additionally, dozens of other University offices, centers, or services have contributed to the Partnerships' food and farming projects. Hopefully this document can serve as a partial "directory" of University contacts with experience in food and farming projects with the Partnerships.

Projects Database

Another resource that will be valuable in this regard is the Regional Partnerships Project Database, which will catalog all of the Partnership's projects, past and present. The SCC funded the initial design costs for the database and is currently paying Belle Swanby at the University of Minnesota-Duluth to provide data entry and maintenance services. Belle gave me a demonstration of the database during my visit to Duluth, and I was very impressed. It is fully designed and operational, but only about 15 percent of the project information has been entered so far. Once complete, the database will include the following information for each Regional and Multi-Regional Project:

- Project Title
- Project Description (goals, approach, outcome)
- Project Category (Agriculture, Natural Resources, Tourism, Energy Self-Reliance, Local Food Economies, Appreciating Rural Assets)
- Region
- Start Date and End Date
- Community Partners (citizens, government agencies)
- University of Minnesota Partners (departments, students, professors)
- Description of Sustainability (environmental, social, economic)
- Description of University Involvement (how was partnership with the University enhanced?)
- Description of Active Citizenship (how were citizens involved?)
- Lessons Learned
- Funding Summary (RP, other sources, in-kind, total)
- Beyond funding, how did/could have the RP's ensured project success?
- Additional Comments

The database can potentially be a valuable tool for documenting the impact of the Partnerships and their value to the state. It might have applications for people outside of the Partnerships as well: for example, the web version of the database could be used by a food cooperative looking for assistance from a faculty member, a reporter looking for people to

interview for a story about local foods, or a farming-related organization seeking to expand its mailing list. Which uses of database information are acceptable, and which are not? The Partnerships may want to develop guidelines for how they share and distribute database information to people outside of the Partnerships.

The Partnerships may even want to consider developing guidelines for internal use of database information. In particular, it may be a good idea for the Partnerships to develop a protocol for re-approaching University faculty members who have already worked with other Partnerships in the past. Coordinating requests may help ensure that the Partnerships do not "wear out their welcome" with certain faculty members who are very busy and in high demand. Also, being aware of what a faculty member has done with Partnerships in the past sends faculty the signal that the Partnerships are organized, that one hand knows that the other is doing. Finally, it should be noted that just because a faculty member is in the database as a University Partner on a previous project does not mean that he or she will have the time or inclination to work with the Partnerships again in the future. The outcomes of University-community collaborations are varied: some spark long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationships, others end in frustration for both parties involved. Most outcomes are somewhere in between. If for no reason other than self-interest, Regional Staff and Boards should want to know what kind of response to expect from a faculty member who has worked with another Partnership in the past.

Working with Extension and Tenure-Track Faculty

A more general examination of the Partnerships' experiences working with University faculty may also be fruitful. What determines the level of ease and success when it comes to working with faculty? Are there "best practices" that Regional Staff and Boards have developed in working with University partners over the past several years? What are the main differences between working with Extension and Academic-track personnel? Taking a look at "Faculty Incentives for Land Grant Research in Sustainable Agriculture," October 1996, by Richard A. Levins and Michele Beck, may also be worthwhile. (Appendix D.)

In looking at the list of projects in section two of this report, it is evident that the majority of faculty collaborators on food and farming projects are Extension rather than academic-track personnel. Based on what I have learned from my conversations with Board Members and Staff

this summer, there appear to be a number of reasons why the Partnerships have opted to work with Extension on food and farming projects in the past:

1. Extension personnel have expertise that is relevant to the food and farming projects proposed by the community.
2. Extension educators are often geographically closer to project sites than are academic faculty.
3. Unlike academic faculty who often make themselves scarce during the summer, Extension is there year-round (in particular, they're around when farmers are farming.)
4. Because Extension personnel have fewer teaching and research obligations than academic faculty, working with Extension can produce a faster turn-around.
5. The Extension working model is in many ways a "natural fit" with that of the RSDP. Extension personnel already have a personal interest in working with the community, and their work environment rewards them for doing so. Thus, partnering with Extension does not require a "hard sell" about the value of outreach.
6. It is generally cheaper to "buy" Extension Educators' time rather than academic faculty time, because academic faculty earn more than Extension Educators. Moreover, Extension has traditionally not expected to be paid for providing services to the community. (This may be changing with the new "fee for service" model now being emphasized in Extension.)
7. Funding for Extension may be somewhat more resilient than general University funding, since Extension receives funds from multiple sources. I admittedly know very little about the funding issue, however.

What are the main differences between Extension and Academic faculty from an institutional point of view? Kent Gustafson, an Extension Tourism Specialist and a member of the Central Partnership board, outlined what he sees as the differences between the extension and academic tenure tracks. "Achieving tenure in an academic department takes longer and is more rigorous – the emphasis is on publication in academic journals, and also undergraduate and graduate teaching. Those are the things that your department head and your peers that are on your tenure review committee are going to be looking for. Extension personnel achieve tenure through the P&A (Professional and Administrative) track. It is faster, but you don't get paid as well and don't have a say in issues of university governance. On the other hand, since outreach is central to the mission of Extension, working with the community is rewarded."

So what do these differences mean to the partnerships? As stated earlier, recruiting Extension personnel to work on community-driven projects will probably be an easier sell than rustling up support from academic faculty. On the other hand, partnering with Extension personnel will probably bring about less enduring change in the University system than partnering with academic faculty. Is the most important goal of the Partnerships to change the University, or to change communities? Each of the five Regional Boards would probably answer this question differently. The differences in Board priorities help dictate whom the Boards have sought out as University partners thus far.

In this discussion of Academic and Extension faculty, it is important to note that there are some faculty members who are both. For example, Bill Schaeffer (who worked with the Apple Crisp Cooperative in Southeast Minnesota) is a Food Scientist with a joint appointment in COAFES and in Extension.

Some predict that there be more of these as budgets continue to be tight. Joint appointments are a way of "stretching budgets" between two units. How would the Partnerships feel about an explicit or implicit shift towards greater numbers of joint appointments between Extension and other colleges? In my opinion, joint appointments may be an effective means of bridging the gap between the ivory tower and the furrowed field. Additionally, faculty members who wear multiple hats may also be more adept at moving between the specialized "silos" that often characterize the university organizational structure. Advocating for a greater number of joint appointments is one possible approach that is outlined in section five, "what next?".

I wish that I had had time during my internship to understand more about how University Extension operates. Suffice it to say, however, that figuring out Extension would be an internship unto itself. At the same time, it may be worthwhile for the Partnerships to give additional thought to the nature of their relationship with Extension. Extension has long been considered the main vehicle by which the University fulfills the outreach component of its three-pronged teaching, research and outreach Land Grant mission. Since the Partnerships also fall under the "outreach" corner of the triangle, it seems important to be explicit (both with ourselves and with others) about how the Partnerships are similar to, different than, and complementary to University Extension.

Working with Student Interns

A final personnel-related issue that may be worthy of discussion is the question of what makes for a successful student internship. Just as working with University faculty has produced a range of results, CAP and other student projects have ranged the gamut from lackluster to exceptional. Based on the Partnerships' experience with student interns so far, what patterns can be identified? Which internship projects really take off, and which ones fizzle out?

Some specific questions to answer in regard to student interns include:

- How do internships *with the Partnerships themselves* differ from internships *with community organizations* that are funded by the Partnerships?
- Should there be different expectations, support structures, and oversight in place for undergraduate and graduate students?
- Should the Partnerships push for the goal of students receiving academic credit for internships? What advantages would the Partnerships reap from becoming a tuition-generating entity? Would having to pay for tuition credits deter students from applying for RSDP internships?
- What is the role of the faculty advisor currently? What do the Partnerships want the role of the faculty advisor to be?

(See also Appendix F, Tips from CAP Supervisors.)

Understanding what makes for a successful CAP internship may be particularly relevant in the fall of 2002, as the SCC will decide in October how to allocate funds for a COAFES intern. Some specific ideas about potential internship projects are included in the following section: "what next?"

5. WHAT NEXT? POTENTIAL MULTI-REGION OR STATEWIDE PROJECTS.

This final section enumerates some ideas for future action. I use the word “ideas” rather than “recommendations” because the Partnership Boards and Staff should feel free to either pursue or not pursue these projects, based on their own circumstances and preferences.

Ideas related to WHAT is already underway

Newsletter

I am sorry that I did not complete newsletters two through five this summer as I had planned – writing them turned out to be much more time-consuming than I had anticipated. I do think putting out a regular newsletter is a very worthwhile project, however. I did receive quite a bit of positive feedback on the first newsletter, including comments and questions from people who were not even on the original mailing list. As with anything in electronic form, the e-newsletter was easily forwarded to other interested parties.

The newsletter that I wrote focused specifically on food and farming issues, and that would be one possible model for future newsletters. Another option would be for the Partnerships to develop a general newsletter that provides updates on all types of projects taking place in the regions. A newsletter would serve a number of purposes:

- brainstorming – the activities of one region might serve as an idea generators for other regions.
- all regions have made contacts with university faculty and resources that may be of interest to other partnerships.
- trading “best practices,” or ways for the regional Boards themselves to operate more effectively.
- improving communication among Partnerships and with the SCC, which seemed to be big priorities in the meetings at Itasca.
- developing a greater repertoire of examples to explain what the partnerships do. The more that Board members and staff know about the activities of all five partnerships, the easier it is for them to “sell” the Partnerships during their interactions with university and community members.
- identifying common Local Foods-related concerns that could be addressed effectively at a Multi-Regional level.

Ideas related to HOW Boards Operate

Idea Exchange on the issues facing all or several Boards

In my conversations with Directors and Board Members, there were several questions that several or all Boards seemed to be facing. I will list them here, as possible conversation topics between Directors on their own or during their bi-weekly teleconferences, or between Board members at the next Statewide meeting:

- How to strike a good balance between supporting many small and a few large projects. (See comparison in Appendix E.)
- How to strike a good balance between identifying regional needs and addressing them proactively versus letting the agenda be set by community members and the projects they bring forward to the board.
- How to structure the Board for greatest efficiency and effectiveness. Should there be committees, project liaisons, etc.?
- How to initiate conversations about over-arching issues such as “sustainability” without polarizing the Board (e.g., discussions of articles, use of case studies, etc.)
- How can Boards interact with and reach out to specific populations in their regions, including American Indians, migrant farm workers, and the Amish? What if the location of those populations does not fall entirely within the Regional Partnership boundaries?
- How do Boards feel about funding the activities of other Board Members? This seems to come up often in food and farming projects, since each board has members from Extension.
- How to organize follow-up on projects to ensure their success. Specific scenarios to think about include leadership turnover in the community organization, change in University personnel, and turnover within the Board itself.
- How to recruit and welcome new Board members and bring them up to speed so that they will feel a sense of ownership and become active and engaged participants.
- How to hold on to the Board Members who are already serving.
- How often should the Board meet?
- How to encourage communication and Board Members making progress on projects between meetings.
- How to handle “projects in limbo” whose status is unknown or stalled. Is it OK to terminate those projects, or should funding be set aside for them “just in case”?
- How do the Partnerships currently disburse funds? Is there a better way of disbursing funds that would be more convenient for community partners, JoAnn, and the Partnerships?

Ideas related to WITH WHOM

Database Guidelines

Section Four provides an overview of the Regional Partnerships Projects Database. Specific questions that should be answered in designing a database protocol might include:

- How quickly should project forms be turned in to Belle and entered into the database? In what format should they be sent?
- How long will Belle continue working on the database?
- What are appropriate and inappropriate uses of database information? Who outside of Partnership Board members and staff can access this information, and for what purposes?
- Can a Board member "cold call" a contact from another region?

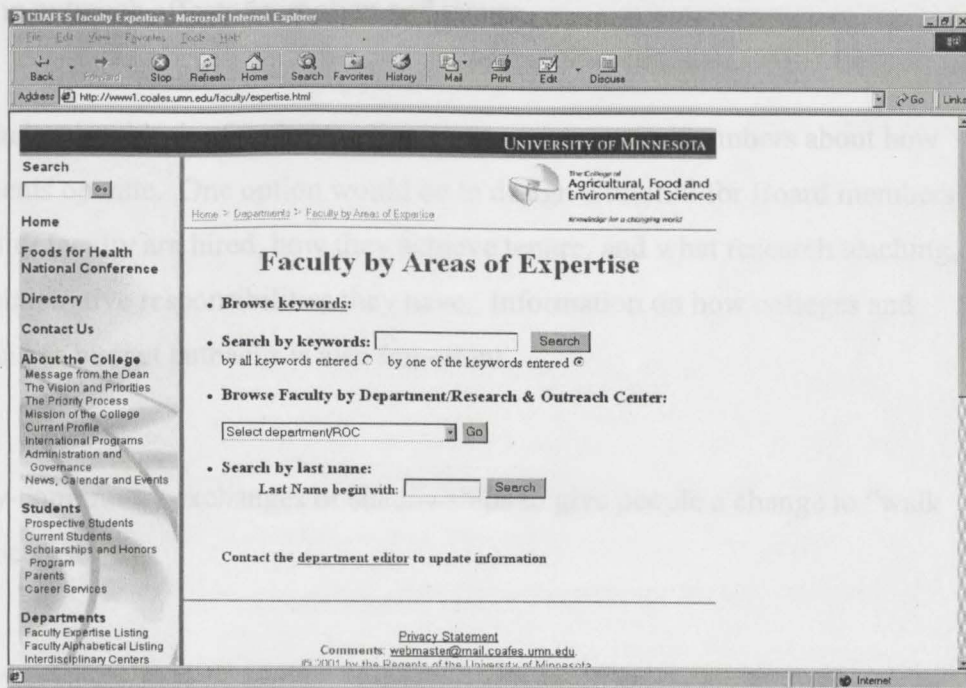
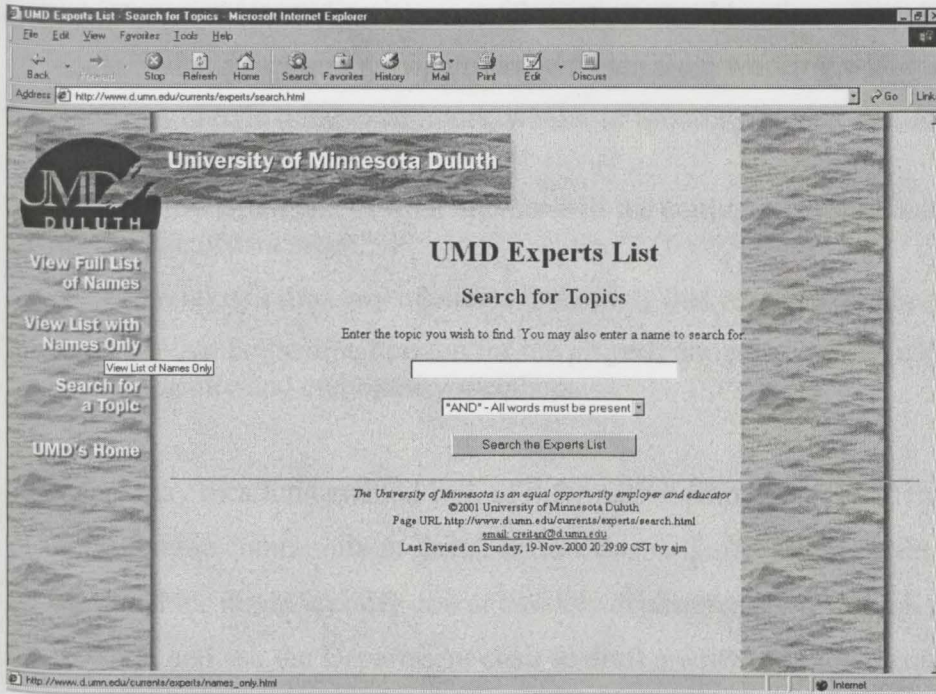
Working with Extension

As discussed in Section Four, the Partnerships' relationship with Extension is worthy of far more examination than I have had the opportunity to conduct. The following are some more concrete steps for action that the Partnerships might choose to pursue:

- Clearly define the Partnerships' relationship vis-à-vis extension. How are the Partnerships different than, similar to, and complimentary to Extension?
- Identify a representative from the College of Extension who will be able to attend and contribute to SCC meetings.
- Find ways to support Extension. For example, can the Partnerships, working through citizens, help to safeguard the funding that Extension's receives from the counties? Can the Partnerships be of assistance in facilitating Extension's citizen input process?
- The Partnerships might research the pros and cons of joint Academic/Extension appointments and try to influence how such arrangements become systematized within the university.
- identify the process (or processes) by which the Partnerships can make programmatic suggestions to Extension. How can the Partnerships provide helpful feedback to Extension based on what they are hearing from citizens? Specific comments that I heard this summer from citizens include:
 - include a unit on organic gardening in Master Gardener course. Overall people are very pleased with the Master Gardener program, but would like to learn more about food plants in addition to ornamental plants, and would like to learn about organic weed and pest management for both food and ornamental plants.
 - include more organic research and outreach in general in the work of Extension.

- Extension research that compares various crop treatments should always include cost comparisons. Farmers in “the real world” need to be able to weigh improvements in yield against the cost of irrigation, mulch, compost, etc.

Several University of Minnesota websites feature faculty Expertise Guides:



Working with Academic Faculty

- Develop guidelines or “best practices” for working with Academic Faculty. This could take the form of a checklist or Memorandum of Understanding that includes:
 - what the faculty member will gain from working with the Partnership:
equipment, research plots, access to new data, buyout of faculty time, research assistants, and assistance with writing or publication of results.
 - what the community partners will gain from working with the faculty member:
A certain number of hours, weeks, or months of work, completion of a particular study.
 - How often and in what manner will the community group communicate with the faculty member.
 - Who will own any intellectual property that results from the project.
 - What is the time horizon for the project, and what are critical times of the year for faculty and community members.
- There may be a fundamental lack of information among faculty members about how they can contribute to community projects, or how this will affect their career advancement. The Partnerships might identify one or two key departments with which they often work or want to work, and ask the Department chair to draft a written policy memorandum to faculty about how participating in outreach affects promotion and tenure.
- There may be a fundamental lack of understanding among community members about how academic departments operate. One option would be to design a tutorial for Board members about how university faculty are hired, how they achieve tenure, and what research teaching, outreach, and administrative responsibilities they have. Information on how colleges and departments respond to budget cutbacks is also important.
- Encourage Faculty-community exchanges or shadowships to give people a change to “walk in each other’s shoes.”

- The Partnerships might identify several key departments or colleges within the University and request to be included as citizen representatives in any dean or department head searches that those units conduct. The purpose of this type of participation would be to ensure that along with teaching and research, attention is given to outreach in important hiring decisions.
- The Partnerships could help academic departments by finding ways of funding important programs that may be discontinued due to lack of resources. For example, the Partnerships can make citizens aware of faculty cutbacks and solicit funds for endowed chairs in key departments or centers. Likewise, Partnerships can encourage citizens to contribute directly to existing structures such as the Endowed Chair in Sustainable Systems.
- Encourage interns and community project partners who have benefited from faculty assistance to send thank-you notes to their department chairs and deans.

Connecting the Dots: Specific Opportunities for Collaboration on Projects

- **Absentee land ownership** is often mentioned as an impediment to adoption of sustainable farming practices, especially in the Northwest and the West Central Regions. Similarly, non-resident ownership of private woodlands may be a hindrance to sustainable forestry in the Northeast. This may be an opportunity for multi-regional collaboration.
- There is a lot of interest in **starting or expanding local farmers markets** among citizens in all regions. Helpful contacts include Kim Woods, who spearheaded the Farmer's Market in Grand Forks, Al Jabs, who is starting a farmer's market near Brainerd, and Annette Fernholz, who has organized several farmers markets in Southwest and West Central Minnesota.
- Whole Farm Coop, Pride of the Prairie, and the Southeast Minnesota Food Network are facing many of the same **organizational issues and challenges in direct marketing local foods**. They may benefit from getting together and exchanging their own experiences and best practices on issues such as:
 - establishing governance and committee structures

- hiring paid staff
 - setting product standards that are neither too broad nor too narrow
 - equilibrating quantity supplied with and quantity demanded
 - determining which producers will fill orders
 - setting prices
 - understanding current buyers and finding new markets
- There is real interest in **jam production** in the Central and Northwest Regions. Points of contact would be J & B Restaurant in Crookston, The Blue House in Hitterdal, Jerry Breid in Wadena, Al Jabs in Brainerd, and Extension Researchers such as Jerry Wright, Dave Wildung, and Kent Montgomery who work with berry production.
- Many groups have noted the importance of **education** in regards to how food and farming systems operate. The Regional Partnerships have some valuable resources in this regard: the NFFI slide show for all audiences, the NFFI fifth-grade curriculum on sustainable farming, and Al Jabs' work with students in the Brainerd Public Schools. This work has established an EXCELLENT foundation for further efforts in the area of public education, and instead of re-inventing the wheel, a better strategy would be to build upon what we already have. In my opinion, any RSDP Staff or Board Member who has not examined the NFFI fifth-grade curriculum in particular should do so: <http://www.nffi.net/curriculumhome.html>
- Pride of the Prairie recently received a SARE grant to improve the state FoodSafe training and educate institutional food buyers about the **safety and legality of purchasing direct from producers**. Though the issue of misinformation among food buyers has recently come to light in the West Central region, it is undoubtedly a problem in other regions as well.
- Groups such as Pride of the Prairie and Whole Farm Coop have discovered that **working with religious congregations** can be a great way to promoting the cause of sustainable farming and direct marketing of foods. The Northland Food and Farming Initiative also began work on a local foods promotional kit for churches. Other groups at the intersection of faith, food, and farming include the School Sisters of Notre Dame/Center for Earth Spirituality in Mankato and the National Catholic Rural Life Conference in Des Moines, Iowa. Many of these groups have developed very effective brochures, educational materials,

and guidelines for working with faith communities on food and farming issues. Hence, this is an area in which it makes very little sense to re-invent the wheel.

- The Northland Food and Farming Initiative discussed the possibility of **direct-marketing to people with limited incomes**, and Whole Farm Coop had direct experience with doing so through a state-funded food assistance program. Such efforts are admirable in their attention to environmental and social sustainability, but are unlikely to gain independent economic sustainability. WFC's experience is a good example: the state program benefited the farmers as long as the state was supplying funding, but once the program ended, none of the low-income customers continued to order from the Coop. It is a real sacrifice for people with fixed incomes to spend more than they normally would on food. Establishing new sales relationships with low-income buyers will either require farmers to charge lower prices, or it will require some outside entity such as the government, a foundation or a non-profit to subsidize customers' buying power.

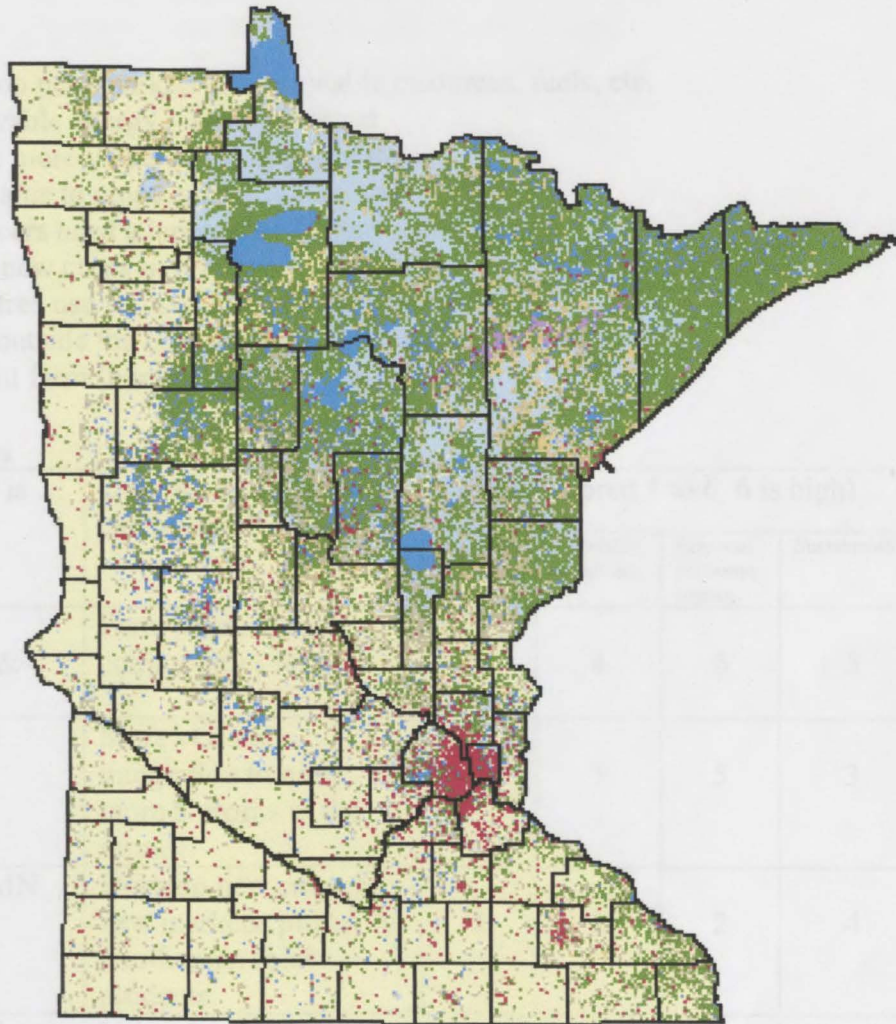
Public Relations Ideas





- Develop a list of internal newsletters and other PR outlets within the university that the partnerships can use to do press releases. Then send out press releases to announce new projects or project successes.
- Request a link to the Partnerships homepage from the University of Minnesota "Outreach" web page: <http://www1.umn.edu/systemwide/sysoutr.html>
- Contribute regularly to Extension's weekly bulletin.
- Contribute regularly to the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station electronic newsletter: <http://www.maes.umn.edu/maesinfo/e-letter/e-letter.html>





MAES e-Letter contact: Sarah Greening, Agricultural Experiment Station. Telephone: 612-625-4211; maes@tc.umn.edu.

- Use public radio, public television, and local newspapers to provide regular updates about the work of the Partnerships.

MINNESOTA LAND USE AND COVER 1990s CENSUS OF THE LAND



	Description	Acreage	% of State
	Urban & rural development	1,472,267	2.7
	Cultivated land	22,694,200	42.0
	Hay/pasture/ grassland	4,977,451	9.2
	Brushland	1,326,796	2.5

	Description	Acreage	% of State
	Forested	14,434,482	26.7
	Water	3,211,643	5.9
	Bog/marsh/fen	5,728,056	10.6
	Mining	147,175	0.3



Land Management Information Center
658 Cedar St.
St. Paul, MN 55155

651-296-1211
lmic@mnplan.state.mn.us
www.lmic.state.mn.us

Northwest Partnership Agriculture Roundtable

Summary of Issues and Concerns:

Product Alternatives

Participants: Brad Barth, Hans Kandel, Paul Porter, Richard Nelson, Paul Sand, Dave Hoff

Issues:

- ❖ Develop new markets for renewable resources, fuels, etc.
- ❖ Renewable energy – farm produced
- ❖ Create more value-added opportunities
- ❖ Add value to crops currently produced
- ❖ Producers need a larger share of the added value
- ❖ Grow new crops in NW MN
- ❖ Agro-tree use for wood, food, other products
- ❖ Look outside the box – different kinds of enterprises to supplement farm (hunting and recreation)

Defining the Issues

Name it! The issue is ...	Describe it! The issue can be defined as	Criteria (scored 1 to 6, 6 is high)				Rank
		feasibility	Probability of success	Regional economic impact	Sustainability	
Develop renewable energy fuel/energy & markets	Farm production of commodities for fuel	5	4	6	5	1
Create value added opportunities	More vertical integration to bring more \$ profits to the farm.	3	3	5	3	2
New crops in NW MN	Develop new crops for new markets, primarily non-human food products.	3	2	2	4	3
Money generating farm enterprise other than traditional production	Using farm assets for alternative businesses, ie tourism and recreation	5	4	1	2	4

Moving toward the vision:

An Issue: Develop renewable Energy/Fuel Markets

A Strategy: 1. Develop a business to develop a niche market for energy products.
2. Develop a proprietary energy product

Partners: Large energy consumers / large investor

Education

Participants: Lauri Polansky, Paul Rutherford, Margaret Anderson, Aase Hammes, Susan Westrom

Issues:

- ❖ *Farmers use internet for communication and marketing*
- ❖ *Consumers communicate their preference to farmers*
- ❖ *Educate public on value of family farms*
- ❖ *Educate public about connections between subsidies and cheap food*
- ❖ *Consumer education – ‘where your food comes from’*

Defining the Issues

Name it! The issue is ...	Describe it! The issue can be defined as	Criteria (scored high, med, low)					Rank
		Profitability	Feasibility	Cost	Ability to reach audience	Time	
Consumer Education	Connection between subsidies and cheap food	H	H	L	H	L	1
Producer Education	Know customer needs and wants	H	M	H	?	L	2
Consumer Education	Use of value-added products for new technology – research, medicine	M	M	H	H	L	3
Producer Education	Internet marketing, communication, resources book on website	M	H	H	H	H	4
Producer Education	Extension and Vo/Ag programs	M	H	L	H	M	5
Consumer Education	Value of Rural Lifestyle	M	M	H	H	L	5

Moving toward the vision:

An Issue: Consumer Education – Connection between Subsidies and Cheap Food
 A Strategy: Call it “Food Policy” instead of “Farm Policy”. Make up videos explaining the price of food and distribute it where food is sold. Farmers share breakfasts and dinners. Have Extension help to educate all ages of consumers, starting with children – school age – college bound – etc. Compare our costs to other countries. TV ads, radio, newspaper. Find websites that are available that explain the subsidies and let people know.
 Partners: Extension Service, Partnership, Vo-Ag Groups, School staff, Volunteer Farm Groups, Supermarkets

Policy

Participants: Milo Mathison, Richard Magnusson, Steve Dahl, LeRoy Stumpf, Greg Hilgeman, Jim Stordahl, Bennett Osmanson

Issues

- ❖ *Promote People on the Land – rural sustainability*
- ❖ *Government programs that favor rural sustainability*
- ❖ *Reward responsible innovation*
- ❖ *Remove counter-productive incentives & unintended consequences*
- ❖ *\$\$\$ available to get “over the hump” for change*
- ❖ *Citizen participation in market policies*
- ❖ *World Trade!*
- ❖ *World level playing field*
- ❖ *Multinational Corporation Control*
- ❖ *Stop large corporations from taking over agricultural production*
- ❖ *Need more animal agriculture and a friendlier state government*
- ❖ *Impediments to maintenance and expansion of animal agriculture*
- ❖ *More animal agriculture, needs to return to NW MN*
- ❖ *More business structure flexibility – enhance capital*
- ❖ *Loss of public involvement in Ag Research – governments abrogation of that responsibility to private industry.*

Defining the Issues

Name it! The issue is ...	Describe it! The issue can be defined as	Criteria (scored high, med, low)					Rank
		Resources	Funding	Time	Effective-ness	Regu-latory	
How sets policy?	Corporate influence on policy decisions is too strong – money talks.						1
Animal Agriculture	Reverse the decline of animal agriculture in NW MN						2
Research Funding	More public investment in basic research – balance between public and private.						3
Ag Business Consolidation / Concentration	Enforce anti-trust laws.						4

Moving toward the vision:

An Issue: Who sets policy?

A Strategy: More citizen participation in setting public policy. Identify the most effective forums for increasing participation – time is limited.

Partners: Commodity groups, General farm organizations, corporate partners, legislators

Marketing Opportunities

Participants: Curt Knutson, Harold Stanaslowski, Bob Pieper, Jay Nord, Dave Torgerson, Duane Cariveau, Zack Fore, Pete Kappes, Linda Kingery

Issues:

- ❖ Increase profitability by direct connection between producer and end user.
- ❖ Viability of Duluth grain port is important to our area.
- ❖ We need to break out from traditional markets – traditional markets are too centralized and consolidated.
- ❖ Better connection between farmers, food industry and consumers.
- ❖ Farmer ownership of high-value traits
- ❖ Entrepreneurship – Individual and group
- ❖ Balance – resource diversity, land uses, goals = resiliency
- ❖ How to obtain market access
- ❖ Value added with a value
- ❖ Animal Agriculture
- ❖ Products produced for market demands
- ❖ Identify market opportunities

Name it! The issue is ...	Describe it! The issue can be defined as	Rank
Identify the markets and focus	Better connection between farmer, food industry, and consumer. Identify high value opportunities	1
Animal Agriculture		1
Creation of new markets	Education of consumers on what we can provide that they can't get now.	
Accessing the markets	Remove barriers and develop entities that can access markets	
Understanding obstacles	Why are we doing now?	
Business structure solutions	State policy changes	

Production

Mike, Justin Dager

Issues❖ *Water Management for production****Defining the Issues***

Name it! The issue is ...	Describe it! The issue can be defined as	Criteria	Rank
		Economic / Environmental Benefit	
Tile drainage		High initial cost, long term benefit	1
Water Quality		All systems must be long term to be sustainable	2
Surface drainage		Must be respect neighbors and laws	3
NRCS programs		Retire land with guaranteed payments	4
DNR protected waterways		Claim control but no responsibility	5

Moving toward the vision:

An Issue: Water Management

A Strategy: Managing excess water effectively for profitable production

Partners Zack Fore, NRCS, DNR, Watershed Board

Vision of the Future ~ 2025

...Focus on the Farm Economy

- ◆ What is the economic environment in which we now live?
 - Vertically integrated supply chain for consumer specific requirements (designer).
 - Safety and certification
 - Services (stewardship)
 - Diverse markets for agricultural products at home and abroad. Thriving markets for organic products
 - Sustainable compensation to farmers – not just for crops, but for multiple benefits of agriculture: wildlife, water quality, food security, landscape.
 - Farming is profitable without subsidies – “prices are right”
 - Free trade is not completely revamped – the economy is almost entirely vertically integrated. No seed or livestock is grown without contract.
 - The economy is stable, not great – some protectionisms
 - High energy costs, have and have-not consumers, rising food prices
 - Food produced for consumer needs (designer foods, prescription) XX
 - Consumers trust and reward producers for the effort.
 - Strong enough to sustain rural populations
 - Farmers appreciated for supplying food – paid enough to sustain themselves and their families
 - Climate in NW MN is warmer and drier, small grains are no longer grown in the region. Specialty crops dominate the region.
 - Free enterprise, capitalism remain! You still have the right to go broke.
 - Specialized, customer focused, profitable, working together creatively.
 - Bigger farms with less income per unit.
 - Very few farms, lots of abandon communities.
 - Large mega farms, some labor replace by robotic machines.
 - We live in a world economic environment. We are tied together , still some regional chaos.
 - US farm economy is strong with government support
 - Strong farm economy, world is one place, farming is a more solid profession
 - More crop/animal production worldwide creating a stable supply of commodities and therefore generally lower prices. Those producing commodities must be very efficient.
 - Consumer trace back (IP) ; Ag landscape is tourist destination.
 - Mostly urban population
 - World is open market place
 - More leisure time, shorter work day, longer retirement
 - Volatile, up and down markets
 - Faster, better, cheaper, more international trade, fierce competition

- ◆ What are the world events affecting the farm economy?
 - Food security and safety will be very important. XXX
 - Conflicts – Population, Water, Energy. XXX
 - Different societal and cultural needs and priorities.
 - Energy – need for stable energy supply creates an opportunity for rural communities and agriculture
 - Focus on safe and healthy food, greater awareness of where food come from.
 - Food safety / certification is required.
 - Water wars, regional famines
 - Population growth – special needs, energy utilization
 - Self-sufficiency
 - World population expansion, specific needs by region
 - Increased political unrest caused local hot spots. Energy crisis has been reduced with alternative sources.
 - Wars and political unrest will be over, nations will be working together to feed everyone. US will play a very large role. We will have started 1000 years of peace.
 - Better production worldwide
 - Greater separation of wealth – some very wealthy nations, some very poor. XX
 - Conflict, competition from other countries, globalization, environmentalism
 - Hungry people
 - Struggle between agricultural use and urban sprawl.

Vision of the Future ~ 2025

...Focus on Farmers and the Land

- ◆ What percentage of the population is involved in production agriculture?
 - Less than today – 1% of population – XXXXXXXXXXXX
 - Greater than 1%, and growing small and hobby
 - 2% XXX
 - 3%-5% XX
 - Greater than now - 5% to 10% XXXXXXXXXXXX
 - 20%
 - Stability in production farmers (not extinct)
- ◆ What is the average size farm in the U.S.? In NW Minnesota?
 - Average US farm size – 500 acresX
 - 400 acres in US, 800 in NW MN
 - 400 to 500 acres, larger in Minnesota XX
 - 600 acres in US, 1500 acres in NW MN XX
 - 1000 acres US, 2-4000 acres NW MN XXXXXX XX
 - 6000 acres
 - 8,000 acres – 12,000XXX
 - 15,000 to 50,000 acres XX
 - Average will stay about the same, median will drop
 - Large, except for veggie growers
 - Farm size will be small family / coop/ with a real love of growing.
 - Several very small units
 - Some very large production farms and many very small specialized farms XXXX
- ◆ How would you describe "the farmer?"
 - Highly intelligent, uses computer, high-tech
 - Some are businessmen, some are producer/manager, many are hobby farmers.
 - Food technologist and marketer
 - More scripts pre-scribe methods
 - Businessman, CEO or entrepreneur or hobbyist
 - Farmer is food production specialist
 - Food merchandiser, seller of final product.XX
 - Business owner, marketer, uses ecological model
 - Farmer is hard working, intelligent, knows how to figure out production and marketing.
 - Global, younger than today, connected, customer focused
 - Corporate
 - Farmer is a pawn (serf) for the multinational companies – highly trained.
 - Well educated, old
 - Family man with time for family, but busy enough to make a living
 - Better educated, technically savvy, very in tune with their customers. XX
 - Technical manager, tractors to the job
 - Manager of capital and labor – food producer.
 - More emphasis on business, less on production
 - Serf to corporation, employee of Cargill
 - Operator of productive ag land.
 - Educated and disciplined
 - Manager – will rarely get dirty

Vision of the Future ~ 2025

...Focus on Farm Machinery and Technology

- ◆ What type of "equipment" is an essential part of farm operations?
 - Refinement of just-in-time inventories
 - Very large and specialized
 - Diagnostic equipment to create solution and balance nutrient, hand held monitors,
 - Fruit and berry harvesting technologies improved
 - Computer, safer equipment, fuel-efficient tractors,
 - Computer – crop production is done remotelyXX
 - Friendly chemical technology
 - Information technology
 - Equipment to make use of inputs to highest level.
 - GPS with auto tracking, driver-less tractor, fuel cell technologyX
 - High tech, fast growing greenhouse – grow your own and live healthy
 - Much equipment is computer controlled, robotic
 - All GRS, expensive, only a couple major lines
 - Cheap, reliable communications
 - Biggest change in electronic communications, tractors and combines are higher tech, more comfortable, more efficient, often remotely operated.
 - Telecommunications with marketing.
 - Labor saving improvements
 - Equipment will be gentle to the soil

- ◆ What are the new inventions to assist farm production?
 - Genetic engineering to improve crops
 - Sustainable agriculture
 - Technology used to regulate appropriate amount of fertilizer.
 - Pesticides are not necessary due to ecological pest management
 - GIS – automated everything.XXXX
 - Electronic and biological components
 - Solar and wind technology used on farm for production and drying
 - Crops with extraordinary nutrient values, cotton with frost free gene.
 - Corn, soybeans and sugar beets with medical advances for the world
 - Easier forms of fertilization
 - Food, medicine, special crops
 - Renewable energy

Vision of the Future ~ 2025

...Focus on Crops and Livestock

- ◆ What types of commodities are produced in this region?
 - More diverse,
 - Perennial crops
 - Wildlife products
 - Specific types with known characteristics (IP)
 - Same commodities grown, some for different intended uses
 - Dairy, beef, misc crops – XXX
 - Protein based, specialty products.
 - Grains, oil seeds, potatoes, carrots, sugar, berries, - increasing use of specialized crops instead of commodities (specialized means it can be differentiated from commodity)
 - Oats, alfalfa, soybeans, wheat, barley, sugarbeets, potatoes, milk, beef
 - Milk, meat, cereals, crops for energy
 - Free range, organic cattle add value
 - Much less commodity production – more food suppliers
 - Mix of current and specialty crops
 - Oil crops and small grains
 - More specialized commodities, small group growing for special purpose.
 - Bison, wheat produced for Americans.
 - A very diverse range of commodities
 - Much the same as today, more grower contracts with end users, more IP, XX
 - Partly food, partly renewable resources
 - Less commodities, more products for specific users/uses.
 - Still wheat and soybeans, but also large array of specialty crops and livestock
 - Many specific varieties of wheat and soybeans
 - Grass seed, flowers
 - Soybeans, wheat, hogs, cattle
 - Commodities that have proven to retain maximum food value, assuring sustainable methods
 -
- ◆ Who are these commodities produced for?
 - Direct sales of commodities – sold before produced.
 - Different types of commodities for valued added crops.
 - Produced for domestic and international markets
 - Under contract with integrators
 - Emerging semi-developed, growing economies
 - Niche markets worldwide
 - Consumer useable items and energy production
 - Crops utilized in North America, Europe, Asia, South America
 - Produced for local consumption and local processing plants, excess is shipped to foreign markets. XX
 - Domestic market uses US products due to food security concerns. Imports are dramatically reduced.
 - A bushel of wheat for a barrel of oil.
 - Most markets are domestic, value added in region

Vision of the Future ~ 2025

...Focus on Trade and Transportation

- ◆ What percentage of our commodities are exported?
 - Exports close to the same as now XX
 - Very little, total market dominated by multi-nationals
 - Very little is exported out of US
 - Less than now, more used in domestic market
 - Less than now because more crop is used for energy
 - 20%
 - 25%
 - 30% exported
 - Export 40%, rough feed converted to special uses
 - 45% exported
 - 50% exported XX
 - 75% exported to the world
 - 80% out of US, 99% out of region
 - 90%
 - Exports account for 80% of production
 - Most product will be exported

- ◆ What are those markets?
 - In counties with rising disposable income
 - Counties that cannot produce enough of these crops.
 - Half of exports to counties with growing population, half to specific markets in countries with higher standard of living.
 - Food give-away

- ◆ How would you describe our transportation systems?
 - Trucks with hydrogen fuels
 - Increased rail transport, using modern rail technology
 - Regionalized shipping points
 - Similar to now, rail and OTR trucks, air for highest value crops XX
 - Road, rail, water
 - Ships, trucks, railroads XXXXXXXXXXXX
 - Transportation system able to keep crops segregated.
 - High speed rail and air.
 - Much more product goes in containers, less bulk. Movement on trucks and trains.

Vision of the Future ~ 2025

...Focus on Government and Farm Organizations

- ◆ What is the role of government in agriculture?
 - Supports agriculture at multiple levels by paying for public goods and services that can't be priced in the marketplace.
 - Subsidize, regulate
 - To preserve a nice rural area aesthetically. Farm some areas intensively to allow other areas for recreation.
 - Food safety and securityXX
 - Compliance – health and environment
 - Water management
 - Food safety and quality assurance
 - Policy built on food safety, viable rural communities, greater use of natural system as model
 - US policy to be self-reliant in energy
 - Limits to total payments made to individual farm
 - Government has basically gotten out of farming since supply and demand are back in force.
 - Role of government is to stabilize production
 - More broad brush than specific or targeted with less possible support, some efforts to facilitate international markets.
 - Government role would be limited.
 - Government finally got out of agriculture.
 - Government role will be to get out of the way, but support agriculture.
 - Government strongly involved, role to make a safe, sustainable food supply.
 - Little government involvement, only to promote and protect free trade.
 - Provide a minimal safety net,
 - Government more involved in conservation and environmental issues
 - No price control
 - Government will always be there, it can't afford not to.
 - Subsidize
 - Income protection
 - Price supports
 - Regulation
 - Rural life-style protection, conservation, insurance
 - Policy will favor the masses, has been and will continue to be cheap food – we can add cheap energy to the policy.

◆ What organizations exist to support agriculture?

- Government supports cooperative research and extension, less focused on major commodities and technological fixes, more focused on solving “big picture” systems.
- Vertical Integrators, fewer farm organizations, policy rhetoric.
- Farm groups are the same as now.
- Marketing for margin, finance for capital access, technical for innovation
- Farm Bureau, commodity groups
- Land grant university – legislative and policy focus, optimize return to producer, research
- Land Stewardship organizations support agriculture – offer environmentally friendly support
- Farmers teach one another, Farm coops and farm groups sponsored by colleges support and teach about agriculture. Groups consist of older farmers helping young, new farmers.
- Similar to now but will have better understanding of markets and will help members meet those markets.
- Many regions specialty organizations – marketing
- More farm organizations cooperating – working on technology
- Organization will have little control, basically social groups.
- Same organizations today, but with more common ground – provide vision to government.
- University very important.
- Coop development organizations – start-up and marketing
- Farm organizations less important. As government involvement declines, the support for commodity groups and farmer organizations declines.
- Large integrated organizations
- Processing and delivery organizations
- Trade issues and lobbying

Vision of the Future ~ 2025

...Focus on the Whole Picture

◆ In a "snapshot," what does the "picture of agriculture in NW Minnesota" look like?

- Rural network is stabilized – more young people on the farm – more niche crops
- Environmentally friendly crops inputs and better end product fit to what consumer wants.
- Diverse landscape with thriving recreational economy.
- Meat animals and dairy – specialized crops for specific end-users.
- We realize that CRP and other programs have devastated our infrastructure. We now look at the soil to produce useable grain and include livestock in the mix.
- Sparse population for producer group, Many people reside in area and work elsewhere, population grows, life style and values.
- Landscape has greater variety of crops, more perennials
- Fewer producers working together in creative ways and adding more specialized crops for specific markets.
- NW MN – fewer farms, more CRP
- Agriculture is combined with tourism to keep people in NW MN and to provide income for the residents. Farmers farm smarter and do a better job in all areas – no off-farm income needed. More young people on the farm, more diversified crops.
- The picture of ag is self-sufficient at the local level – diverse, perennial, proper ecosystem functioning
- Bigger farms, value-added plants and industries.
- 200 farms produce 80% of product – many smaller specialized producers.
- Marginal agricultural lands no longer farmed as they have been in the past. They are in permanent cover.
- Recognition for the value, restoration and development of native plant species, which involves direct benefit to MN such as medicinal value.
- Abandon, deserted.
- Increasing population with healthy economic development, no two farms doing the same exact thing.
- No get rich quick thing, but a family able to produce a reasonable living without having to work outside the farm.
- More diverse, more sustainable, more profitable, farmers more integral in value chain, more organic, more traceable, more certified products, less commodity production, better environmental stewardship.
- Larger, well-run, production farms with lots of locally processes and internet marketed products.
- A tough row to hoe, with many changes to meet the needs of the world market. Smaller operators will not have it easy, and may not survive. Small may be way bigger than it is now.
- Two kinds of farms, one efficient commercial commodity, the other smaller, niche market, more in tune to demands of consumer.
- Larger farms, less labor, more management intensity.
- Large crop farms, few large beef, hog, dairy farms
- Global warming will give us a longer growing season, comparable to Iowa or Nebraska
- Fewer, larger entities throughout all of society, farms, businesses, schools, churches, etc.

Faculty Incentives for Land Grant Research in Sustainable Agriculture

October 1996

**Richard A. Levins
and
Michele Beck**

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The Dean of the College of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences at the University of Minnesota has on several occasions called for a greater research effort in sustainable agriculture. If such a call is to be successful, faculty incentives for research projects must be understood and used appropriately. Is producing more research in a new area primarily a matter of providing funds, or must other factors be considered?

A survey of faculty members in the College showed that, at least in the case of the University of Minnesota, changing research directions in any new direction is difficult and complex. In addition, there are special problems associated with a change toward sustainable agriculture that must be addressed if significant change is to result.

- **Survey Method**
- **Survey Results**
- **Discussion**
- **Conclusion**
- **Appendix I: The Survey Instrument**

Survey Method

Faculty members holding research appointments in the College are required to submit an Experiment Station research project. During the Spring of 1995, about 250 faculty members had such projects on file. Sixty-six of these faculty were drawn at random to

participate in the study reported here. This number was deemed sufficient for the results to be held with at least 90 percent confidence.

Each participant was scheduled for an in-person interview which took between 30 minutes and one hour to complete. The interview had two principal parts. In the first part, the participant was asked a set of questions to explore why he or she had chosen the project they had filed with the experiment station, and any other research projects not reported to the Extension Station in which they might be involved. No mention was made of sustainable agriculture.

Then, in the second part of the interview, the participant was first told: "Many organizations are suggesting new directions that university researchers should pursue. I would like to see what specific factors could lead to a change of focus on your research, specifically using the example of sustainable agriculture."

There are, of course, many different definitions of sustainable agriculture. For purposes of this survey, each respondent was read the working definition suggested by the American Society of Agronomy: "A sustainable agriculture is one that, over the long term

(1) enhances environmental quality, (2) provides for basic human food and fiber needs, (3) is economically viable, and (4) enhances the quality of life for farmers, farm workers and society as a whole."

Results from both parts of the survey were tabulated and compiled graphically for purposes of this paper.

Survey Results

Some primary results from the first part of the survey are shown in figures 1 through 8. Each of these graphs shows how the faculty member surveyed rated possible influences on research priorities. An influence could have a rating of "Major", "Minor", or "None." The influences of State and National policy are shown in figures 1 and 2. In both cases, the majority of respondents indicated an influence of "Moderate" or "Minor." More participants rated these two influences as having no influence than as having a major influence.

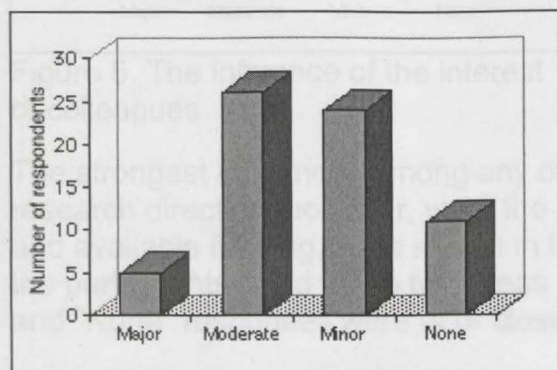


Figure 1. The influence of state policy

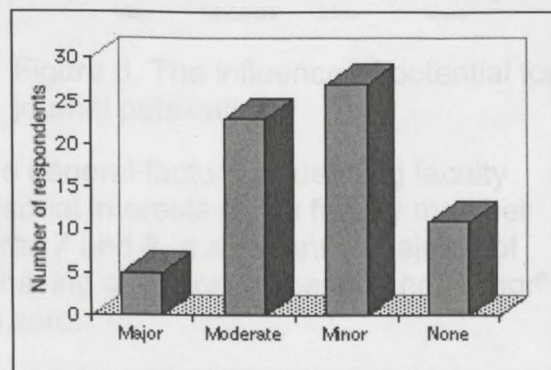


Figure 2. The influence of national policy

College priorities, as shown in figure 3, were found to have the least influence of any of the eight factors considered. The most common response was "Minor." For each respondent saying college priorities were a major influence, two said it

had no influence at all. Figure 4 shows that the influence of departmental policies and priorities is somewhat similar to those of the college.

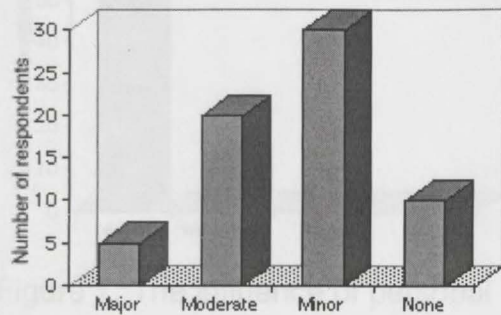


Figure 3. The influence of the College of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences policies and priorities

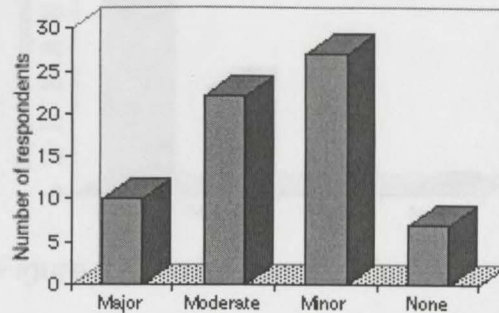


Figure 4. The influence of department policies and priorities

Figures 5 and 6 show that the influence of the interests of colleagues and the potential for journal publication are stronger than those of policies at any level. Over half of the respondents rated these two areas as either "Major" or "Moderate."

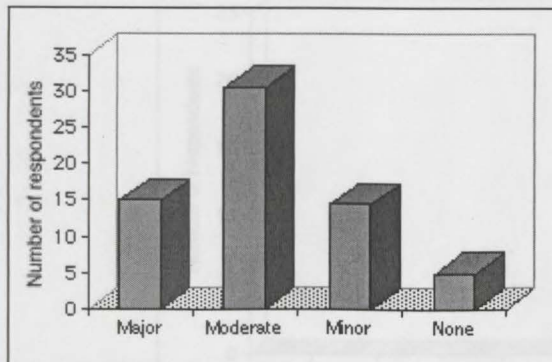


Figure 5. The influence of the interest of colleagues

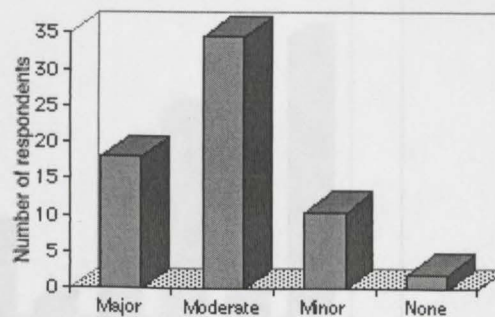


Figure 6. The influence of potential for journal publication

The strongest influences among any of the general factors influencing faculty research direction, however, were the personal interests of the faculty member and available funding. As is shown in figures 7 and 8, a substantial majority of the participants rated these two areas as having a "Major" influence and "Minor" and "None" responses were at or close to zero.

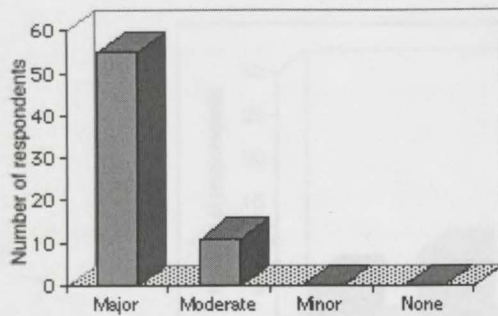


Figure 7. The influence of personal interest

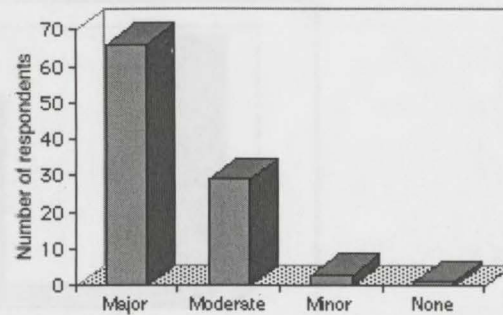


Figure 8. The influence of funding

We now turn to parts of the study that are specific to sustainable agriculture. The first issue discussed was that of the researcher's own perspective on the research he or she was conducting. Each participant was asked to rank his or her project on a scale from "extremely inconsistent (-5)" to "extremely consistent (+5)" with the ideas of sustainable agriculture. The results, in figure 9, show that not one of the researchers, the most common response was a +5, indicating extreme consistency.

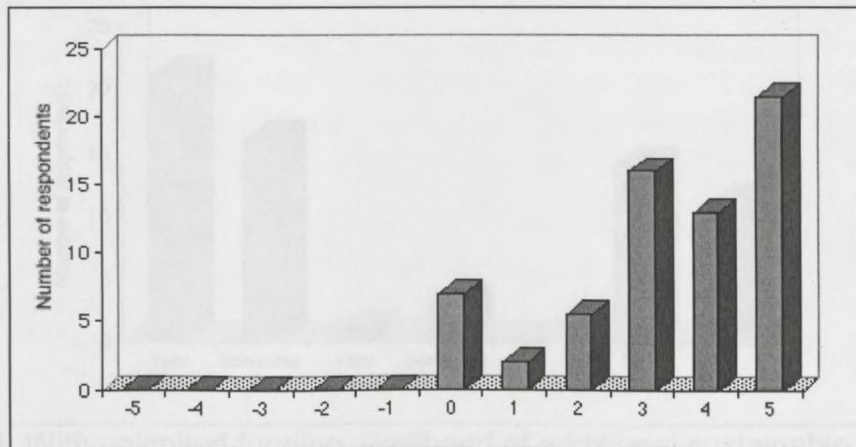


Figure 9. Self-evaluation of Experiment Station projects relative to sustainable agriculture

The results in figure 9 at first appear inconsistent with those of figure 10. In this part of the survey, researchers were asked about their attitudes toward sustainable agriculture. Less than half said they had a positive attitude. "Mixed" was the most common response, and a few said their attitude was "Negative."

We now have some context in which to evaluate the effectiveness of the administrative call for more research in sustainable agriculture at a land grant college. If Minnesota is any example, there is little reason to expect such a call will be successful.

For one thing, the call for any change in research directions will be made to a group that generally does not consider itself to be influenced by policy and priorities at any external level. The College was of all. The group is most

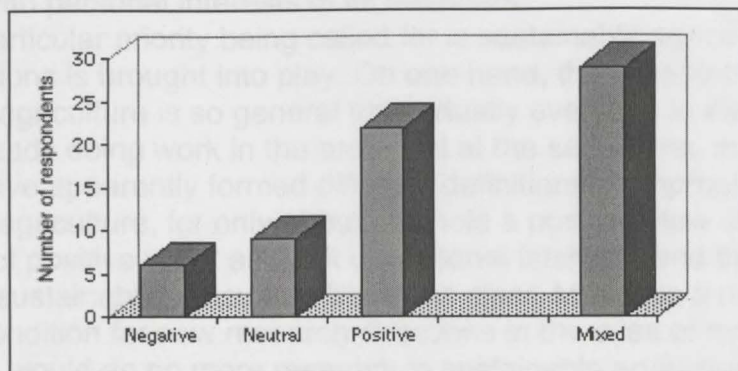


Figure 10. Attitudes toward sustainable agriculture

The funding issue was revisited in the final part of the survey. Each participant was asked: "If funding wasn't an issue, how likely would you be to do more research in the area of sustainable agriculture?" About half said that the level of research would increase. The rest thought there would be no change or had no opinion.

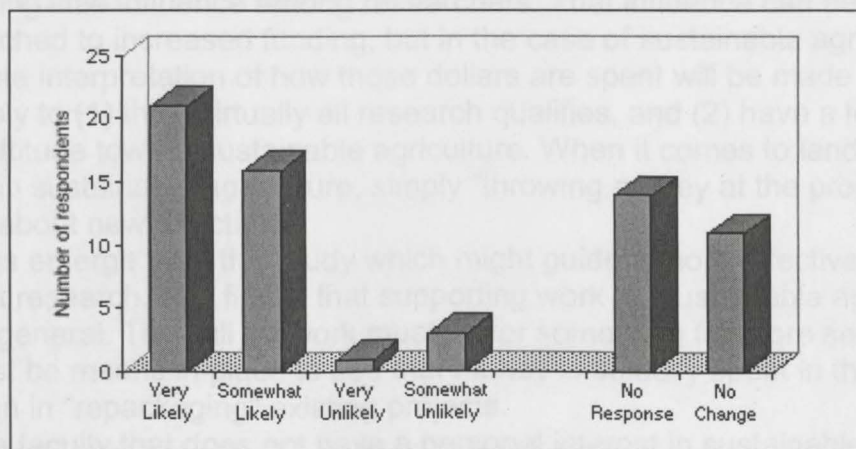


Figure 11. With unlimited funding, likelihood of additional sustainable agriculture research

Discussion

We now have some context in which to evaluate the effectiveness of an administrative call for more research in sustainable agriculture at a land grant college. If Minnesota is any example, there is little reason to expect such a call will be successful.

For one thing, the call for any change in research directions will be made to a group that generally does not consider itself to be influenced by policy and priorities at any external level, the College least of all. The group is most

influenced by money, but only insofar as that money can be spent in ways consistent with personal interests of its members.

When the particular priority being called for is sustainable agriculture, a new set of complications is brought into play. On one hand, the accepted definition of sustainable agriculture is so general that virtually everyone in the group thinks they are already doing work in the area. But at the same time, individual members have apparently formed different definitions or impressions of sustainable agriculture, for only about half hold a positive view of it.

Read "lack of positive view" as "lack of personal interest," and the problem for research in sustainable agriculture becomes clear. Money is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for new research directions in the eyes of most. Almost half of the group would do no more research in sustainable agriculture no matter how much money was devoted to it. Members of the group are not interested, and there is nothing in place to change that interest.

Conclusion

An administrative call for more work in sustainable agriculture is made from a level holding little influence among researchers. That influence can be increased if it is attached to increased funding, but in the case of sustainable agriculture, the ultimate interpretation of how those dollars are spent will be made by a group that is likely to (1) think virtually all research qualifies, and (2) have a less-than-positive attitude toward sustainable agriculture. When it comes to land grant research in sustainable agriculture, simply "throwing money at the problem" will not bring about new directions.

Two things emerge from this study which might guide a more effective program to redirect research. The first is that supporting work in "sustainable agriculture" is far too general. The call for work must be for something far more specific and there must be means in place to see that money is actually spent in these areas rather than in "repackaging" existing projects.

Second, a faculty that does not have a personal interest in sustainable agriculture will not produce research in that area no matter what else is done. Programs must be put in place to change basic faculty attitudes if progress is to be made. This, in our opinion, is the greatest challenge of all.

Appendix I: The Survey Instrument

Introduction: This interview is part of research I'm doing for my graduate studies in Agricultural Economics. I'm researching the incentives that are in place here in the University, specifically in the College of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Science that affect decisions concerning the type of research being conducted.

1. What is the most important factor that affects your choice of research?

2. What are some other factors?

3. Please rank the following variables in terms of degree of influence over your research decisions:

	Major Influence	Moderate Influence	Minor Influence	No Influence
Department policy and priorities	4	3	2	1
College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences	4	3	2	1
National policy	4	3	2	1
State policy	4	3	2	1
Personal interest	4	3	2	1
Interest of colleagues	4	3	2	1
Funding sources	4	3	2	1
Potential for journal publication	4	3	2	1

4. In general, what factors/changes would lead you to undertake research in a different direction or with a different focus?

Segue: Many organizations are suggesting new directions that university researchers should pursue. I would like to see what specific factors could lead to a change of focus of your research, specifically using the example of sustainable agriculture. 5. How would you classify your project relative to sustainable agriculture?

Evaluation Scale:

+5 = Extremely consistent with the ideas of sustainable agriculture

0 = Neutral relative to the ideas of sustainable agriculture

-5 = Extremely inconsistent with the ideas of sustainable agriculture

Score:

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
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6. Do you have any other research that varies significantly from your experiment station project relative to sustainable agriculture? Please rank them on the same scale.

7. What are your feelings in general toward sustainable agriculture?

8. What would induce you to do more/any research in the area of sustainable agriculture?

9. If funding wasn't an issue, how likely would you be to do more/any research in sustainable agriculture?

Scale: very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely, very unlikely

10. What is the greatest deterrent to research in sustainable agriculture?

11. Other deterrents to/problems with sustainable agriculture research:

12. Is there anything else pertaining to research decisions in general or relative to sustainable agriculture that you think would be valuable to this study?

Demographic Info:

What age category do you place yourself in?

26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	65+
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What year did you get your Ph.D.?

Definition of sustainable agriculture to accompany survey instrument:
(the working definition suggested by the American Society of Agronomy)

A sustainable agriculture is one that, over the long-term:

1. enhances environmental quality,
2. provides for basic human food and fiber needs,
3. is economically viable, and
4. enhances the quality of life for farmers, farm workers and society as a whole.

Supporting a Few Large vs. Many Small Projects

A key organizational issue that is emerging at this stage in the Partnerships' existence is achieving the right balance between many small and a few big projects. Though not specific to Food and Farming projects, the issue still warrants some discussion. The advantages to each, as the Regional Directors enumerated for me in our initial conversations, are more or less clear:

	Approach A: Supporting a Few Large Projects	Approach B: Supporting Many Small Projects
Goal 1: Reducing administrative paperwork	reducing the total time spent on paperwork by Regional Directors and Board. For Community and University partners, this means less time spent on paperwork <i>per dollar received</i> . Partners who have received \$20,000 seem to find the standard evaluation form more reasonable and less onerous than Partners who have received \$2,000.	Less administrative organizing prior to start-up. There are already banks, charitable foundations, and initiative funds that take on large projects; the partnerships fill a small-scale niche by making funds available quickly for projects that don't need or want a lot of money and don't want to spend a lot of time.
Goal 2: Reducing Risk	Reducing Risk through Better follow-through – being responsible for fewer projects enables Regional Directors to provide projects with the ongoing support that they need. This should help to prevent projects from “falling through the cracks.”	Reducing risk through diversification – by being diversified, the Partnerships can still demonstrate positive results even if one project stagnates or flops.
Goal 3: Using funds responsibly	focusing on a few pre-determined priority areas ensures that money will go toward issues of most importance to citizens.	letting the funding agenda be dictated by whatever proposals come in ensures that these are the projects that people care about.
Goal 4: Leveraging Matching Funds	Possibility to leverage matching funds from large foundations – donors such as the Blandin foundation, Kellogg, and others are much more likely to contribute to large projects than to small ones. They often look for projects that already have significant outside support before they will contribute.	Possibility to leverage matching funds from a variety of sources – providing small amounts of funding rather than large lump sums will encourage community groups to solicit financial backing from several supporters.
Goal 5: Building University - Community linkages	Creating partnerships that are more enduring – bigger projects with longer time horizons are more likely to foster lasting relationships between University and Community partners.	Creating a greater number of connections – the more individuals who benefit from the work of the Partnerships, the greater the base of local support. In other words, more small projects spread the wealth and give more people a chance for a piece of the pie.

TIPS FROM CAP PROJECT SUPERVISORS

(Advice given by previous project supervisors)

- ◆ ◆ The hiring process can easily turn out to be more time-consuming than expected. Don't let this surprise you. Finding the right student for the project is worth a little extra time. For example, asking applicants for writing samples or other relevant materials can often be helpful when you have doubts or questions.
- ◆ ◆ CAP student research assistants are expected to work independently, and most of them find this to be rewarding; however, there are limits to their independence. Even the best students cannot meet the needs of the community organization without being given clear objectives at the beginning and constructive feedback throughout the project.
- ◆ ◆ Projects with realistic expectations as well as clearly defined parameters and goals are the most successful.
- ◆ ◆ Be clear about the role and what is expected of the student researcher from the start.
- ◆ ◆ Make sure both you and the student agree that the desired outcome can be achieved in the time available.
- ◆ ◆ Do your best to anticipate supports the project will need (computer access, printed materials, mailing lists, etc.). Having them ready can prevent the project from getting slowed down.
- ◆ ◆ The students are better able to stay focused on the objective if they understand the context of the research and the intended use of their results. Fill them in on the relevant background as much as you can, and share the organization's vision with them. If they know why they are working on a project it will result in a better product.
- ◆ ◆ If the project needs to be adjusted, always remember to layout clear guidelines for your researcher.

Other Web Resources

- ◆ ◆ Continue to make sure everyone understands the purpose of the project. Regular meetings allow the research assistant to ask questions. You will also have the chance to evaluate together the work your researcher is doing and the progress of the project. If you sense confusion - talk about it.
- ◆ ◆ Encourage the students to make use of their community and faculty mentors. These advisors are intended to be resource people for the project; consulting with them is part of the student's job and an important part of the project.

For more CAP info, see the website:

612-251-7304 | Jan Joannides

Community Assistantship Program Orientation Packet

About CAP

Roles & Responsibilities

Selecting A Student

RAssistant Tips

Supervisor Tips

Work Plan

Final Report

CAP Process

Participants

Midpoint Assessment

WHO WE ARE
ASSISTANTSHIPS
APPLICATION PROCESS
STUDENT APPLICATION FORM
COMMUNITY APPLICATION FORM
PROJECT SAMPLES
ORIENTATION PACKET
STUDENT EVALUATION FORM
COMMUNITY EVALUATION FORM
CONTACT INFORMATION

To Print the Whole Packet: [CAP Orientation Packet](#)
(PDF file; requires [Adobe Acrobat 4.0](#))

Other Web Resources

MAPS

Minnesota river basins, County land use and land cover, Minnesota Legislative Districts, Crime, Population Distributions, and the "Minnesota Mapper."

Create and print a simple state map with your choice of features including county boundaries, county seats, highways, major lakes and rivers. (web-based mapping tool). Published by the state of Minnesota Planning Department.

<http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us/data.html>

Forest Resources maps.

Maps of forest cover and results of forestry studies in various parts of the state. Published by the Forest Resources Council.

<http://www.frc.state.mn.us/>

Farm Expenses and Income, Crops, Farm Size, Chemicals Used, Land Rented/Owned.

Based on USDA Agricultural Census data from 1997.

<http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/census97/atlas97/menu.htm>

Population, Poverty, Jobs, Education, Health and Safety, Crime, and other indicators.

Covers states of Idaho, Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. Published by the Northwest Area Foundation.

<http://www.indicators.nwaf.org/>

1990 Demographic and Economic Patterns in the Upper Midwest: A Study in Maps.

Population Change and Age Structure, Employment, Income, and Housing for North and South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin. Published by the Minnesota Extension Service's Project Future.

<http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/resourcesandtourism/DB6400.html>

Minnesota County outline map.

Click on a county for more information about it. On the State of Minnesota website.

<http://enrupload.sos.state.mn.us/oss/countymap.asp>

General maps of Minnesota.

Shaded relief, county, black and white, satellite image

<http://geography.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http://fermi.jhuapl.edu/states/mn%5F0.html>

CHARTS, DATA TABLES, AND DATA SETS

U.S. Census Bureau State and County Quick Facts.

Age, gender, housing, race, etc, by county.

<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/27000.html>

Minnesota Farm real estate sales.

Graphs and tables summarizing Minnesota farm real estate sales over the past 10-15 years; published by the Department of Applied Economics.

<http://www.apec.umn.edu/faculty/sjtaff/salesstudy>

Farmland sales, Timberland sales, Land values, Land productivity, Soil Rental Rates, and RIM easements.

Published by Steven J. Taff, University of Minnesota Department of Applied Economics.

<http://apecon.coafes.umn.edu/faculty/sjtaff/landdata/index.html>

OTHER STUDIES AND REPORTS - General

Faculty Incentives for Land Grant Research in Sustainable Agriculture.

By Richard A. Levins and Michele Beck.

www.misa.org, click on "Publications." (Also in Appendix D of this report.)

Attracting Consumers with Locally Grown Products.

Survey and Analysis of prospective buyers in several states. Published by the North Central Initiative for Small Farm Profitability.

<http://www.farmprofitability.org/research.htm>

USDA Farmers Market Info, the experience of using WIC at Farmers Markets.

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/directmarketing/publications.htm>

Faces of the future: Minnesota County population projections (1998).

Published by Minnesota Planning.

<http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us/pdf/cntypop2.pdf>

OTHER STUDIES AND REPORTS – Northeast Region

Northeast Minnesota Industry Cluster study.

Published by the State and Local Policy Program at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities and the Bureau of Business and Economic Research at the University of Minnesota–Duluth. Additional support provided by the Northeast Partnership and University of Minnesota Extension.

<http://www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/slp/projects/edweb/neclustr.pdf>

Research on farm populations in the Northeast Region.

Data collected by David Smith, UM-Duluth Anthropologist, and his students. Summary in the Annual Report at:

<http://www.nffi.net/reports.html>

OTHER STUDIES AND REPORTS – Northwest Region

Northwest Minnesota Industry Cluster study

Published by the State and Local Policy Program at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities. Additional support provided by University of Minnesota Extension.

<http://www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/slp/projects/edweb/nwclust.htm>

Alternatives to Crisis: Models of Resilience In the Red River Basin of the North.

Administered through the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) and funded under a grant from the National Science Foundation's (NSF) BioComplexity Research Program.

<http://www.iatp.org/AEAM/RRV/>

OTHER STUDIES AND REPORTS – Southeast Region

Southeast Minnesota Industry Cluster Study

Published by the State and Local Policy Program at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities and the Initiative Fund of Southeastern and South Central Minnesota.

<http://www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/slp/projects/edweb/seminn.htm>