

Women, Food, and Agriculture Network

Linking and empowering women to build food systems and communities that are healthy, just, sustainable, and that promote environmental integrity.

A Quarterly Newsletter

Spring 2009

Why Health Care Reform = Ag Reform

by Steph Larsen

When we talk about local food, it means more than just proximity to a farm. We associate supporting "local food" with supporting specific values, such as family ownership, local control, small scale, environmental stewardship, community, and ecological diversity. These values are what motivate people to buy their food directly from the farmer who grows it.

The sustainable local-food system we are trying to build relies on an abundance of small, diverse, sustainable family farmers scattered all across the United States. For this kind of farm to exist, sustainable must mean more than environmental sustainability: it must also include economic viability. Farming is a dangerous and risky business, and it becomes a whole lot less attractive when a farmer knows that he or she is one fall from the hay loft away from losing their land.

We hear frequently about the need for new and younger farmers, but there are many barriers to attracting young people to farm in a way that will foster sustainable local food systems. One of them, however, looms bigger than the rest: access to affordable, dependable health care.

In order to attract more farmers to grow food for a sustainable food system, we need meaningful health care reform that addresses the needs of

farmers, rural communities, and small business owners. The stark reality of health care costs for farmers, who often must purchase insurance as individuals and pay more for it as a result, is enough to make anyone waver in their desire to start a farm.

Here are some statistics from a [report by the Access Project](#):

- While 9 in 10 farm and ranch operators have health insurance, nearly one-quarter (23%) report that insurance premiums and other out-of-pocket health care costs are causing financial difficulties for them and their families.

Those respondents who reported financial problems were spending on average **42% of their incomes** on insurance premiums and out-of-pocket health care costs.

- In addition, 44% report spending at least a tenth of their annual income on health insurance premiums, prescriptions, and other out-of-pocket medical costs.

The health care dilemma farmers face is getting some attention. [NPR](#) has featured several very personal stories of farmers struggling to embrace small scale, sustainable practices while also making enough money to support themselves. [One such episode](#) features a family with insurance discussing

[Health Care, continued on p.5]

DO YOU WANT TO FARM?

If you are interested in becoming a full- or part-time farmer or making a living as a rural entrepreneur, we want to hear from you. We can provide you with information and resources to help you get started.

DO YOU OWN FARMLAND?

Did you know that in Iowa, women own or co-own nearly half of the farmland today? And this percentage is rising nationwide. If you own land, and would like to connect with prospective farmers who share your values of conservation and environmental stewardship, contact us.

WFAN CAN HELP YOU CONNECT!

WFAN is creating a database of women landowners and beginning farmers to help match you with one another and with resources in your region that can help. Email us at info@wfan.org, or call 515.460.2477.



ED's Update

Spring is on its way, in fits and starts; the "teaser season" has arrived – 60 degrees one day, snow and howling wind the next, and through it all, my boys play soccer.

A highlight of late winter for me was the Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference in LaCrosse, WI. I got a huge jolt of energy out of two days with more than 2,600 people gathered *just to talk about sustainable farming and food systems*. WFAN board member Steph Larsen was there too; you can read her report and reactions at the Center for Rural Affairs' Blog for Rural America, www.cfra.org/blog. Thanks to Steph and other writers nationwide, some of the smartest and most up-to-the-minute information and analysis on changing our farming and food systems can be found in the blogosphere. A sampling of other favorites: [Civil Eats](#), [Ethiurian](#), [Food on Grist](#), [Mulch](#), and [Green Options](#).

WFAN's email list is growing steadily, thanks in part to buzz about us generated by co-presenter Lisa Kivirist during the "See Jane Grow" workshop at the organic farming conference. I'm thrilled to include the first installment of "Female Fare" in this issue of the

newsletter, an overview of federal farm and food policy that Lisa will be writing for us regularly.

As we've mentioned before, current figures show that women own or co-own nearly half of the farmland in Iowa right now. That's huge. That means women can change the landscape of the state! We can, as farmers or landowners,

implement conservation and farming practices that will improve our air and water quality. We can also – and this is even more crucial – determine who will farm our land for the next generation, and who won't. We can lease our land to beginning farmers who share our values of community and conservation. WFAN is beginning to collect names of women landowners and prospective farmers (both women and men) who would like to begin farming in a sustainable way and who need access to farmland. Many women say they are more concerned with sustainability than profit as landowners, and these are the landowners who can help a young woman, man, or family get started in the increasingly challenging career of agriculture. Sustainable ag is where the world's future lies, and those of us in WFAN have been preaching that gospel for a long time. This year, maybe due to changes in Washington, DC, even mainstream media are listening. Women have been leading the movement toward sustainability and we will continue to lead. Read about our conservation project involving women landowners in eastern Iowa on page 7.

Closer to home: when my dad died three years ago, I became co-owner with my mother of our family farm in northwest Iowa. She's no slouch when it comes to supporting progressive principles, and she knows the damage ag chemicals do to the environment. For now, however, she continues to lease the farm to a neighbor who farms conservatively and conventionally. He's farmed the land for 20 years, and is a conscientious businessman and a good friend; he farms several other properties for retired farmers who don't want to lease to corporations; he scoops the snow out of Mom's driveway so she can continue to live on the farm seven miles from town. He has no desire, not so many years away from retirement himself, to talk about organics, or diversification, or food-grade soybeans. I like him, and appreciate that he takes care of Mom and the farm. But my dream is to make this 360 acres profitable with a different kind of agriculture. I'll be exploring my options over the next couple of years; periodically I will share my journey with you here. Comments or suggestions for me? Please get in touch: leigh@wfan.org, 515.460.2477.

Iowa 2008 Flood Relief Program Assists 80 Farmers

WFAN took the lead in organizing the Iowa Farm Disaster Relief Coalition of more than a dozen sustainable agriculture and faith-based groups during the flooding of 2008. The coalition formed in order to collect and channel funds from donors to Iowa farmers who had lost crops, equipment and sales as a result of the storms and flooding of last spring and summer. We focused initially on helping market farmers who typically have little or no crop insurance. When those families had been helped, we moved on to providing relief to family farmers with any type of farm operation who either had no insurance at all or had many expenses not covered.

Working closely with Farm Aid, the coalition collected more than \$40,000 from donors including Farm Aid, the Small Planet

Fund, Operation USA, the Des Moines Presbytery, the Motley Cow Café of Iowa City, National Farmers Union, Center for Rural Affairs, several Catholic orders, and many individual donors.

Each eligible family received up to \$500 from the fund, to offset household expenses while they dealt with the disaster damage. The Center for Rural Affairs in Lyons, NE, served as the fund's fiscal agent and screened all applications with the help of coalition members.

We will let you know if the coalition is reactivated because of Iowa weather disasters in 2009. So far, flooding here has been localized and much less severe than in 2008. Our neighbors to the north have not been as fortunate; see, p. 7 for information on donating to disaster relief for flood-stricken Minnesota and North Dakota farmers.

Excerpt from a thank-you letter to the Iowa Farm Disaster Relief Coalition: "Thank you for helping my family and me after the flood this past summer. We received \$500 and the money was greatly appreciated. We are pretty much back to normal now and looking forward to a new farmers' market season. Again, thank you so much. Sincerely, Mark."



This newsletter is a quarterly publication of **Women, Food, and Agriculture Network**, a Tides Center Project. We welcome suggestions, stories, and news from your part of the world. Our emphasis is on women's lives, their relationships, communities and families as they related to sustainable agriculture and food systems. We welcome first-person articles, research summaries, book or video reviews, original poetry and art, and letters to the editor.

The newsletter is published each March, June, September and December; submission deadline is the 10th of the prior month.

Email submissions to leigh@wfan.org, or mail to WFAN, PO Box 611, Ames, IA 50010.

WFAN website: www.wfan.org

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Female Fare

Editor's Note: This marks the debut of a series of timely updates on national agriculture policy issues identifying key action steps that we as individuals within the WFAN network can take to advocate for changing our food system.

"As women in agriculture, we each understandably manage busy schedules individually, yet we realize the importance of collectively raising our voices on national policy issues that advocate for sustainable farming," explains Lisa Kivirist, a Wisconsin farmer and author writing this new WFAN column, "Female Fare."

"Female Fare provides a quick snapshot of key national sustainable agriculture policy priorities with a simple 'to-do' checklist of actions we can each quickly take that collaboratively will raise the WFAN voice." Lisa welcomes comments and ideas at lisa@innserendipity.com.

Plant Spring Change: Two Ways Women Can Stimulate National Ag Policy Reform

by Lisa Kivirist

Spring inspires an annual dose of hopeful change. From tilling the fields to celebrating that first pea tendril, this time of year ushers in a fresh breeze of energy and optimism for us women in agriculture. Remember to take some of that vernal enthusiasm and voice your opinion to your elected officials in Washington, D.C., to keep sustainable farming a top funding priority.

"Individual phone calls and letters to your representatives take just minutes of your time, but they collectively add up to a very strong influence on Congressional priorities," explains Aimee Witteman, Executive Director of the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC). "The voice of women in agriculture needs to be heard in Washington, D.C., particularly this spring when key funding issues will be decided."

Two things we can each do this spring to plant seeds for national change:

1. Tell your representatives and senators to fund sustainable ag priorities in FY10 appropriations

Over the next two months, members of the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee will be finalizing the list of programs they will champion for FY2010. "Congress needs to hear why sustainable agriculture programs that support innovation and economic prosperity are so important and must be adequately funded, especially during our current tough economic situation," adds Witteman.

Call or fax a letter to your senators and Congressional representative (enter your zip code at www.house.gov to find your representative) and express your support for two important yet potentially vulnerable sustainable agriculture programs: SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education) and the Value-Added Producer Grant Program. Specifically, we want to ensure:

- * \$30 million for SARE (\$25 million for research and education and \$5 million for extension and outreach)

- * \$30 million for the Value-Added Producer Grants Program

SARE is a competitive grants program funding farmer-driven research, education, and extension initiatives on profitable, environmentally and socially sound practices. Its research and education grants help first-time farmers get started and succeed, help farmers find ways to be more profitable, and help new businesses get started.

The Value-Added Producer Grant Program (VAPG) offers competitive grants to farmers and ranchers developing new farm and food-related businesses that boost farm income, create jobs, and increase rural economic opportunity. Despite growing demands for these grants, VAPG funding has been cut seven years in a row!

When calling your senators' and representative's office, be specific and personal when leaving a message, as you will probably be talking to a staff

member: "I am Lisa Kivirist, a farmer outside of Monroe, Wisconsin, in Green County. I am calling to express to Senator Kohl my strong support of funding sustainable agriculture during the appropriations process. Specifically, I want to see . . ." Be polite yet personable. Sharing your farming story and experiences adds deeper meaning and authenticity to your message.

Another way of expressing your opinion directly is to attend in-district or in-state "town hall" or other open public meetings sponsored by your representative or senator. As Congress will be on spring recess the first two weeks of April, many representatives will be in their home states and hosting such gatherings; keep an eye open for announcements in your local newspaper.

2. Promote and use new Farm Bill programs

Some of these new Farm Bill programs will be starting the granting process in the next couple of months by issuing RFPs (requests for proposals) – that detail exactly what types of applications may qualify for funding and application deadlines. The [NSAC website](http://www.sustainableagriculture.net) (www.sustainableagriculture.net) will have updated information as these RFPs go public.

[Female Fare, continued on p. 4]



Lisa Kivirist picking pea pods in the Inn Serendipity garden.

Feeling Good About Food Motivates Iowa CSA Farmer

by Sarah Long

"I'm a sponge and love to try new things!" That's what Julie Wilber has to say about her life as a central Iowa fruit and vegetable grower.

Julie and her husband, Scott, have been farming since 1995 and in 2001 started Wilber's Northside Market in Boone. By 2008 the Wilber's had a 22-member CSA, a booth at the Boone Farmer's Market, and an on-farm retail stand.

Julie has always liked to be outdoors and enjoys the rural life. She loves being outside in the fresh air, seeing wildlife, exposing her children to the farm life, and cherishing every moment in the fields. She looks forward to the adventure every day brings and enjoys not working in a cubicle.

When her husband suggested they farm full time and he leave his employment outside the home, she knew she was ready for the challenge. Julie set out to learn all she could about farming from her husband, books, seminars, the internet, other farmers, and whatever other materials she could get her hands on. On Julie's farm you will find mainly vegetables, melons, and strawberries, as well as the ever popular sweet corn.

It is obvious that Julie has a passion for local, healthy food, and community-based agriculture. Her customers, family, and children inspire her to do good work and grow good food on her farm, and Julie enjoys spreading the happiness that healthy food gives to others in her community. She and her husband are involved in many local-food oriented groups. Julie is presently a board member for the Women, Food, and Agriculture Network.

When asked what venue Julie likes the best for her produce she responded, "I'd have to say CSA just

because they are a group of people that feel good about our food. There is definitely incentive to work hard when you know that there are going to be people coming to your farm looking forward to the produce they are picking up." She enjoys the slower pace of the CSA market as well and she has more time to relax and isn't rushed to help the next person in line as she would at the farmer's market.

Some of Julie's favorites from her farm are fresh sliced tomatoes, strawberries, melons, and sweet corn. She claims to have become "a real onion lover" last year. In June, a favorite of Julie's children is her fresh strawberry pie. She also likes to stir-fry her vegetables and enjoys finding new recipes and ideas for using her produce in her home, such as a new recipe for butternut squash soup she found this year.

When asked in what way had farming influenced her world view and life style she responded, "Well, it's definitely not a life-style of the rich and famous! I've always been who I am and farming allows me to be that person and live like I want." Julie is simply happy that her family can spend time together and they are healthy. They have plenty of space to roam and fresh air to breathe.

At the moment Julie and Scott are getting geared up for this growing season. If you would like to know more about the Northside Market, visit www.wilbersproduce.com.



WEAN advisory board member Julie Wilber, her husband Scott and their children raise fruits and vegetables for central Iowa markets, including a CSA, farmers' market and retail stand.

[Female Fare, continued from p. 4]

"Tell the organizations you are connected with about these new funding opportunities, particularly new Farm Bill programs such as the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) and the Rural Microenterprise Assistance Program (RMAP)," sums up Witteman. "Now that these programs are part of the Farm Bill, we need to take advantage of these resources to support sustainable agriculture projects."

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 14 - Conservation of Native Pollinators Workshop, East Troy, WI. Visit www.mosesorganic.org or call 715-772-3153.

April 22 - Earth Day! Get on the internet or read your local newspaper and get involved in celebrations in your community.

Coming up: Practical Farmers of Iowa on-farm field days! Hands-on learning, various topics and locations, statewide. Visit www.practicalfarmers.org or call 515.232.5661.

[Health Care, continued from front]

how much health problems cost their family:

Paula Floriano, a 43-year-old dairy farmer, lives in the California Central Valley town of Atwater. She and her husband, Paul, have two teenage kids. The couple and son Nicholas work the farm seven days a week, starting at the crack of dawn to tend their 125 cows.

Right now, Floriano pays about \$1,000 a month for her family's health insurance — excluding dental or vision coverage. Her coverage pays for only a few doctor visits a year, she says. There's also a \$10,000 deductible for medical care before insurance kicks in. With all these costs, Floriano says sometimes other bills have to wait. Insurance costs eat into the family's limited income, she says.

The problem has shown up in other regional papers across the nation too, such as the [Bismarck Tribune](#), [Columbia \(MO\) Missourian](#), [Delta Farm Press](#). The [Great Falls \(MT\) Tribune](#) reports:

Montana wheat farmer Dan Works felt so strongly about the impact that health insurance costs have on his business operation and

family that he spoke out at a rural health forum held by Montana Sen. Max Baucus.

Works, who has been farming for 27 years, pays \$9,000 a year for a catastrophic health insurance plan with a steep \$5,000 deductible and 50% co-pays after the deductible has been reached.

"Those payments are a lot of money in anybody's realm," he said, "and represent more than 10 percent of my income."

During the presidential campaign, Barack Obama promised to reform the broken health care system, and legislators in Congress are starting to work on proposals. Coalitions like [Health Care for America Now!](#) are organizing, and they need you to show your support and push our elected officials to ignore the deep pockets of corporate insurance lobbyists and build a health care system that works for everyone.

Please get involved in the fight for health care reform. You can [sign this Center for Rural Affairs petition](#) calling for incoming Secretary of Health and Human Services Tom Daschle to make reforms that work for all of America; join, support, or volunteer for a group in your area doing health care reform work such

as [these members of Health Care for America Now](#); and of course, [call your legislators](#) and demand that they reform the health care system.

If local and sustainable food is the goal, health care reform must be included to get there. It's not only the farmer at the market you buy your eggs from who needs you. It's also the office assistant or factory worker who would love nothing better than to grow the food that feeds our movement.

With health-insurance reform, the tallest barrier between new farmers and their land crumbles.



Steph Larsen is a member of the advisory board of Women, Food and Agriculture Network. She is currently the Rural Policy Organizer for the [Center for Rural Affairs](#) in north-

east Nebraska, before which she spent three years in Washington, D.C. working with [Community Food Security Coalition](#). She holds an MS in geography from her home state of Wisconsin.

Wisconsin Farm Women Want Better Conservation Assistance

Ag census data shows that the number of women operating farms in Wisconsin is increasing, especially of those who sell direct market or value added products. SARE has funded a project to study whether Extension is adequately serving this population. The focus of the project is on conservation and environmental management practices. At the recent MOSES Organic Farming Conference, approximately 35 women met to discuss these issues over lunch.

Women described plenty of situations where they still experience sex discrimination; such as at the local equipment dealer, the FSA office, and the veterinarian's office. Women who farm on a smaller scale than their neighbor farmers discussed the difficulties they had being understood and taken seriously by Extension and other government agencies and also by the local ag supply dealers.

The women farmers described a wide variety of ways they gather information, including 4-H project guides, email list serves, grower association farm tours, conferences, neighbors, and parts suppliers.

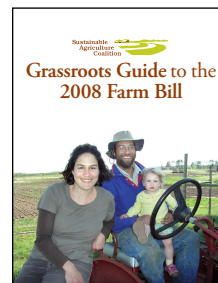
Researchers Astrid Newenhouse and Sharon Lezberg of the UW Environmental Resources Center will continue to

collect data for a few months. If you are a Wisconsin farmer and would like to add your story to this project, please email or call Astrid at astridn@wisc.edu, (608) 262-2635. At the end of the project we will share our results with WFAN.

~ Astrid Newenhouse, UW Environmental Resources Center, 445 Henry Mall, Madison WI 53706.

Grassroots Farm Bill Guide Available

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition has published an excellent new resource, "The Grassroots Guide to the 2008 Farm Bill." This easy-to-use booklet walks you through each of thirty-four 2008 Farm Bill programs most important to sustainable agriculture, serving both as a "report from the trenches" of what survived the most recent farm bill fight, and as a guide to new policies and funding opportunities for farmers, ranchers, and grassroots organizations. View, download or order the guide at www.sustainableagriculture.net.



Thomas Farm in Minnesota Raises Organic Food, Offers Lots of Hands-On Experiences for Kids and Families

by Noreen Thomas

Thomas Organic Farm is a family farm north of Moorhead, MN. We are certified organic and also provide by volunteering tours of our farm to classrooms as well as tour groups. We average 250 to 650 children through the farm a year. We have many of the teens lead the classes/sessions/tours here on the farm.

Our other passion is *Going Green: a Day on a Farm*. We do this for hands-on learning for families and for the The Gifted Learning Project that works with kids with learning challenges. We have everything from soy diesel making to composting to GPS and everything in between. We usually get about 200 participants. The kids lead the a lot of the sessions, from pony rides to GPS!

http://www.giftedlearningproject.org/day_on_the_farm.html

The youth and young women farmers I volunteer with are able to have summer jobs and stay on the family farm. In rural areas there just aren't many jobs, so we have to be clever and "rural source." Sadly otherwise they would be working the late-night shift at a gas station alone. I currently work with about 12- 15 youth and some of them are selling goods at the farmers' market in Moorhead once a month in winter. I am collecting kids as I go and they really are



Noreen

a joy – although coffee is required so I can keep up! We also recycle everything. The teens and school age children

are able to recycle goods such as food-grade screenings from an organic farm which otherwise might be a problem for farmers to mess with; the youth use the organic screenings as poultry feed. I am also working on several organic places to help with niche markets for the kids. So beef, heirloom veggies, etc., are coming on fast. We have several restaurants in the area that buy exclusively from the kids.

It is so important for us to mentor to the next generation. There was or is someone that usually helped us along. Part of our lives, my family and I grew up on the reservation, and if it would not have been for the helping hands I shudder to think about what would have become of us! It was that "what you can do" verse that helped all of us along. Please pass it along!

~ Noreen

www.seethefarm.com

"Don't let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do." ~ John Wooden

Flooded...Again

Editor's note: On March 21, 2009, Noreen posted this note to the WFAN listserv: "Say a prayer, light a candle, send a positive thought out to your neighbors up north. We are bracing for another flood. If it rains Monday and Tuesday, we could be in more problems than the 1997 flood. Many of the families are scrambling. We are working with the wonderful aid of many of the college students – instead of spring breaks, they are volunteering and spreading acts of kindness everywhere.

"Our farm was blessed; in two days we had over 28,000 pounds of sand moved with these wonderful helpful students. The roads as I write this are being taken over by the waters. Take care."



Noreen and friend near her farm. Waters receded after the initial flood, but a second crest is expected as additional rain and snow are forecast for the northern plains.

On March 25, she wrote: "Flooding is awful. Everything, everyone is scrambling. I am surrounded by water each direction, on an island."

On April 2, Noreen sent this update:

"We finally got out yesterday from the flood; it was about 10 days since we were surrounded. We were dumped on by snow (some areas 22 inches) and are bracing for another storm. Many of the roads are washed out and travel is not advised – there are over 200 roads closed just in our county. The flood levels are moving north as the river goes toward Grand Forks; many little towns are under siege. The water levels were at all-time epic amounts. Many are moving back to homes with water in them.

"In the agricultural community the farmers are feeling more pressure, as fall work was late and this spring looks like it will be late. Our farm kids were key in the flood as many rescue operations of horses and animals were led by several teens. I am very proud of these kids and they are not my biological children but kids I know well.

"Recovery in rural areas will be slow. Several kids are now living with relatives outside the city. Most colleges

[Thomas Farm, continued on p. 7]

[Thomas Farm, continued from p. 6]

were out for close to two weeks because of the flood and evacuations. It looks like we will be taking some young adults so they can graduate from high school this year. They lost their homes and need a place to be. Many areas look like a war zone with national guard walking the perimeters.

“We plan again to have the community garden on our farm. The need for fresh produce will be even greater as families are feeling pinched. We provide about 1,000 pounds of fresh produce to low income families and assisted living facilities. So my seeds were lost but the master gardeners of Minnesota put a call out and sounds like I am able to get some help for seeds.”

Noreen recently learned that the community garden at the farm has been nominated for an environmental award.

HOW WE CAN HELP

Noreen suggests that a good way to help the young beginning market farmers she works with near Moorhead, many of whom have lost almost everything, is to donate money for supplies to the Gifted Learning Project. Send a check to: Gifted Learning Project, %Bremer Bank, 3131 Frontage Rd. South, Moorhead, MN 56560 or visit www.giftedlearningproject.org

To donate to a relief fund for flood-stricken Midwestern farmers elsewhere, visit www.ncdf.coop and click on “Disaster Relief Fund” on the left side of the homepage. You can also call the North Country Development Fund at 612-331-9103 or email info@ncdf.coop.

Iowa Women Landowners Share Information on Conservation through WFAN Pilot Project

About two dozen eastern Iowa women landowners are increasing their knowledge of conservation practices they can implement on their farmland, by participating in the Women Caring for the Land project sponsored by WFAN and USDA-NRCS with funding from the McKnight Foundation.

The women met first in county-based discussion circles in February; meetings were held in Johnson, Jones and Linn Counties. The landowners shared their situations and hopes for their land, and Laura gave them information on soil conservation programs and practices they can talk about with their tenants to improve soil and water quality.

In March the entire group was invited to take part in a field day, spending most of a

chilly spring day visiting various farms in the three-county area that are implementing conservation techniques.

The last event of the pilot project will be a full-group meeting scheduled for Wednesday, April 15. The meeting will begin at 6 p.m. with dinner at Gwen’s Restaurant in Lisbon. Women will learn about how to incorporate conservation values into their tenant leases. All are welcome to participate, whether or not they have attended previous meetings. The program is free and open to any woman who owns or operates farmland in the three counties.

For more information and to be added to the mailing list, contact Laura at 319-895-6924, or laura@abbehills.com.



Eastern Iowa women landowners view conservation practices on the ground at the Mt. Vernon farm of project facilitator Laura Krouse (not pictured).

Sustainable Options Hotline Now Offers New Farm Bill Information

The Center for Rural Affairs’ Sustainable Options Hotline provides information to farmers and ranchers, especially organic and sustainable farmers and ranchers, including those beginners looking to get started, on how they can use new farm bill programs for their operations.

The hotline can help you with programs such as the Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP), the Environmental Quality Incentives Organic Transition Provision (EQIP), the Value Added Producer Grants Program, as well as a host of beginning farmer and rancher programs and incentives.

Through the Hotline, the Center for Rural Affairs would also like to learn about your experience with signing up for these programs. That information can help all of us ensure these programs are being implemented on the ground as intended. If we learn there are problems, we can use that information to encourage USDA to make needed changes. Contact the hotline via the web at: <http://www.cfra.org/09/sustainable-options> or by calling Traci Bruckner at (402) 687-2100.



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WFAN News

Spring 2009

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