



NORTH DAKOTA FARMERS MARKET & GROWERS ASSOCIATION, INC

GROWING NORTH DAKOTA

FROM WITHIN

Spring 2008

www.ndfarmersmarkets.com

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Message from President Patti Patrie

Dear NDFMGA Members:

February and March have been filled with a myriad of conferences with topics from sustainable agriculture, agritourism, and farmers markets to local foods. I'm interested in them all and often see the same folks also attending the conferences. My North Dakota family has been raising raspberries for 18 years and many of the decisions we have made were based on information from conferences we attended or persons we met at the conferences. It seems that the same adventuresome spirit connects us all. Whether we are growing our produce for good health, taste, economics, biodiversity, curiosity, or passion we all have the desire to share the fruits of our (labor) harvest with others.

I say all this because the ND Farmers Market and Grower Association will make a huge impact on the future of the local foods movement in our state. We are the pioneers who are telling the public that we can grow a good deal of our diet right here in North Dakota.

Many of us attended the NDFMGA annual conference in Carrington on February 15-16. We learned the Basics of High Tunnel Production from Terry Nennich, Extension Professor with the University of Minnesota. High tunnels and solar heated greenhouses will be two ways to extend the production of vegetables and fruits in colder climates. Harlene Hatterman-Valenti shared the NDSU research on fruits and vegetables and Donna Anderson shared both production and marketing resources on the NDSU Extension website. There is no doubt that resources of information abound at our fingertips.

How will we convince the public that more growers must step forward to increase supply of local foods? I was fortunate to attend the Marketing and Food Systems Initiative in Ames on March 11. It was sponsored by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. Regional groups came together from across the state of Iowa to share the results of their work on local foods. Some regions were working on increasing farmers markets; others a distribution system by web orders; and another was pursuing food processing through a shared-use kitchen. I was invigorated. All regions stressed that demand for local foods was high and producers were needed to fill the demand.

So opportunity is here and the icing on the cake is the economic impact of money staying within communities when local food begins to appear in not only markets and restaurants but schools, universities, prisons, and hospitals. I'm looking forward to the future of our association as we plan to work around the state to build an agriculture industry that will feed our people, provide economic gain, save on transportation costs, and produce healthier diets. I hope you will join me.

- Patti Patrie

News from the ND Department of Agriculture

New Marketing Intern on Staff for Spring Semester

Nicolette Borlaug is a junior majoring in communication at the University of Mary in Bismarck; she joined NDDA in January to intern until the end of April. She is a native to Washburn, ND. Nicolette is graduating next spring and she hopes to find a job working with marketing and public relations in Bismarck. Nicolette can be reached at our office from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. at (701) 328-4763 or at mktg@nd.gov.

NDFMGA 4th Annual Member Conference

The 4th Annual Member Conference was held Feb 15-16, 2008 in Carrington, ND. This year's focus was on season extension and featured Terri Nennich, a University of Minnesota Extension Professor. Throughout his career, he has specialized in vegetable and small fruit production and marketing. Terri spoke on high tunnels and the various production possibilities available to North Dakota vegetable producers who chose to use a high tunnel for their growing.

This year's conference was well-attended and members enjoyed the time to network and visit with other growers and market managers from around the state.

For more information on high tunnels, contact Terri at (218) 280-7713 or e-mail nenni001@umn.edu

NDFMGA Featured Grower

Marvin and Ilene Baker - North Star Farms

CARPIO - Marvin and Ilene Baker were informed March 3 they are one of 23 finalists in the Innovate ND competition that will conclude May 20 in Fargo with prizes for the top Idea Champions.

Innovate ND, in its second year, is an entrepreneurial competition in which innovative ideas are developed into business plans. Jeffrey Stamp, a professor at the University of North Dakota, chairs the competition.

The idea the Bakers entered was a certified organic greenhouse using renewable energy to operate. The Bakers, who own and operate North Star Farms in Carpio, currently raise certified organic produce for North Prairie Farmers Markets in Carpio and Minot, the Capitol Farmers Market in Bismarck and Mouse River Park near Tolley.

The North Star Farms greenhouse will use a combination of wind and geothermal energy for heat and lighting and solar energy for pumping water. A water recycling system will be implemented the second year primarily for increasing conservation efficiency.

Should their greenhouse venture materialize, it will be among the first of its kind, not only in North Dakota, but in the United States. The greenhouse idea is designed to supply North Star Farms with timely seedlings in the spring and seedlings for other organic growers sold through the web site www.northstarorganic.com.

Eighty-seven ideas were entered Nov. 30, 2007 and the 23 finalists were named earlier this month.

The Bakers have until April 25 to turn in a final business plan and they will make an oral presentation to a panel of judges May 19 in Fargo. The winners will be announced at the Governor's Innovate ND Awards Banquet held May 20.

For more information on North Star Farms, log on to www.northstarorganic.com.

NDFMGA Market Feature

Cando Farmers Market

A New Market! - By Joleen Johnston, Chair & Market Manager

Taking the "can-do" spirit to heart, a group of interested gardeners organized to form Cando Farmers Market in April 2007. The behind the scenes details to establish the market proved to be frustrating, but the end result was a thirteen week market from July through September. Establishing detailed Market Standards allowed all vendors to know up front the expectations to provide high quality produce at competitive prices, homemade handicrafts and baked products. A core group of vendors and a variety of others joining on and off throughout the season, averaged eight vendors per week. While the market was enthusiastically welcomed by the community, the largest complaint was that those coming at the early part of the market hours purchased most of the produce. A decision to not allow any sales prior to the advertised opening hour helped alleviate some of the complaints. Most of the vendors were "home gardeners" rather than "growers", so there was a somewhat limited amount of produce available for purchase and while the vendors understood the seasonal aspect of produce, there were requests for out-of-season items.

While the focus of the season was on produce, homemade handicrafts and baked products, the final market day was an "End-of-the-Season Event." This flea-market type event was well received by vendors and customers.

The first season seems a distant memory as the planning begins for the second season. The second vendor newsletter contained a survey that will be reviewed to help fine tune last year's market and perhaps incorporate a new idea or two. For the 2007 season, Cando Farmers Market operated from 4 -6 p.m. at the Main

Shelter of the Cando City Park. Vendors and customers may well find the market there again for the 2008 season.

Help with Food Handling Guidelines

As you begin planning for your 2008 season, remember that food safety is an important key to market success! "From the Field to the Table" is a guidebook authored by Catherine Drake & Beverly Swango which was designed to help market organizers and managers understand the language for safe food handling at farmers markets.

If you have any questions about food safety, please call our office. You can view this book online at <http://www.marketumbrella.org/index.php?page=from-the-field-to-the-table>.

Solar Greenhouse Research

A recent study found on the Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives web site (www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/research/ardi/projects/04-534.html), conducted by Dr. Qiang Zhang of the Department of Biosystems Engineering at the University of Manitoba, showed the results of an evaluation of a solar energy greenhouse for winter greenhouse production in Manitoba. The study was completed in May, 2006.

What they concluded through their research was that greenhouse growers in Manitoba can make use of the solar energy greenhouse technology to significantly reduce the cost associated with winter greenhouse heating. This may make the greenhouse production of vegetables in winter feasible in Manitoba.

For farmers who start their greenhouses in early spring for bedding plants, the solar energy greenhouse technology may provide a way of eliminating the need for heating.

To find out more about this study go to:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/research/ardi/projects/04-534.html>

Free Magazine for Growers, Owners and Vendors

Farmers' Markets Today is a must-have magazine for successful planning, implementing and selling of farm produce direct to customers. Get your free subscription today by calling 1-800-959-3276 or by going to <http://www.scissortailproductionsllc.com/FMTHome.htm>.

2008 Advertising & Promotion Options for You

The following products are available to member markets and their vendors for the 2008 season; these are great tools for getting the word out about your farmers market!

Plastic t-shirt style grocery bags made of recycled plastic are available for NDFMGA member vendors to purchase. The bags are clear plastic with the Dakota Grown logo printed on them in black. Bags are .05 cents each and are available in boxes of 1,000 bags per box. Sales tax will apply.

Also available are **re-usable grocery bags**. These are green canvas bags with the Dakota Grown logo printed on them in white. These are available for \$2.00 each and come in boxes of 50, state sales tax will apply to each purchase. Use these for special market promotions, reward your faithful customers with a gift bag, hold a drawing at your market asking each vendor to donate one item for the bag and the lucky customer name drawn gets the bag full of goodies. Sell them at your own market or start a punch card system at your market and for every customer's 10th purchase they get a free re-usable bag. The possibilities are endless and these bags are great advertising as well as great items your customers will love!

¼" Round produce labels with Dakota Grown logo are available for purchase in rolls of 100 ct for \$4 per roll. Adhesive is FDA approved so that you may apply it directly to edible surfaces - great for use on melons, tomato bunches, zucchinis or other larger items.

Please call Stephanie Sinner to order your items today and be ready to market your locally grown produce in 2008! (701) 239-7211



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