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May-June 1994 CSAS Newsletter

The Center for Sustainable Agricultural Systems (CSAS) in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) is an interdisciplinary center formed in 1991 for the purpose of bringing together people and resources to promote an agriculture that is efficient, competitive, profitable, environmentally and socially sustainable for the indefinite future. Electronic versions of the CSAS bimonthly newsletter are sent to SANET, PENPages, and the internal IANRNEWS 10-14 days before those on our mailing list receive their hard copy. They are also available along with other sustainable ag information on the gopher: IANRVM.UNL.EDU.

Note: The electronic version is not sent to individual e-mail addresses. To be added to the "hard copy" newsletter mailing list, or for questions or comments, contact the newsletter editor, Pam Murray, Administrative Coordinator, Center for Sustainable Agricultural Systems, 221 Keim Hall, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE 68583-0949, 402-472-2056, e-mail CSAS001@UNLVM.UNL.EDU.

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KELLOGG GRANT TO PROMOTE INTEGRATED FARMING SYSTEMS IN NEBRASKA

A \$920,000 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation will help support formation of at least ten farmer innovation groups across Nebraska and make funds available to them on a competitive basis for their specific projects. The CSAS, Center for Rural Affairs, and Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society are the grant recipients and will provide project leadership.

Participants in the groups will be farmers and ranchers, Extension Educators, and other interested community members. Groups will design projects in the area of integrated farming systems, including on-farm research and demonstration fields as part of a community education program.

Another objective of this four-year project is leadership development and preparing farmers for service on key decision-making committees and organizations throughout Nebraska. Focus will be on agricultural policies and the mechanisms for farmers to become more involved in the political process.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation was established in 1930 to "help people help themselves" by providing seed money to organizations and institutions that have identified problems and have designed constructive action programs aimed at solutions. This project addresses three of the foundation's focus areas: food systems, rural development and leadership.

If you are interested in establishing a group in your area, getting involved in the project or learning more about activities, contact your local Extension Educator, Wyatt Fraas at the Center for Rural Affairs, 402-254-6893, Charles Shapiro or Tim Powell at the Northeast Research and Extension Center, 402-584-2261.

JOB OPENINGS

The following position openings are related to the above project:

#1 Extension Educator, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
On-Farm Research Coordinator, joint leader in a four-year Integrated Farming Systems project located in Hartington, NE. As part of a three-organization team, incumbent will be responsible for helping organize farmer and rancher initiated research. In addition, the project will have components that focus on leadership development and public policy analysis. The Extension Educator will be part of the Nebraska Cooperative Extension Division and report to the Northeast Research and Extension Center District Director. Salary and benefits are based on experience and follow University of Nebraska guidelines. This is a grant-funded non-tenured position. For more information about application contact: Lavon Sumption, Extension Human Resources Officer, UNL, 211 Ag Hall, Lincoln, NE, 68583-0703, 402-472-1577. Deadline August 1, 1994.

#2 Executive Director/Project Leader, Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society
Work with an active board of directors for a private non-profit membership organization located in Hartington, NE that advocates adoption of sustainable farming systems. Will be expected to solicit funding, organize farmers and tours, publish organization newsletter, coordinate annual conference, as well as other activities. In addition, will be joint leader in grant funded four-year Integrated Farming Systems project with two other

organizations. Salary competitive and based on experience. Benefits package offered. For more information, contact: NSAS, P.O. Box 736 Hartington, NE 68739, 402-254-2289. Deadline August 1, 1994.

#3 Western Project Organizer, Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society

Work with NSAS Executive Director and board of directors. Solicit funding, organize farmers and tours, contribute to organization newsletter, coordinate western conference, as well as other activities. Position location is in western Nebraska. Funding for 1/2 time but can work into full-time position for the right person, pending new funding. Salary ... (same as #2) Deadline September 1, 1994.

SEEKING SITE ON SUSTAINABLE FARM FOR WHEAT RESEARCH

Dr. Stephen Baenziger, UNL agronomist, is looking for a 2-3 acre site on a sustainable agriculture farm in south central Nebraska. The purpose is to test advanced experimental lines and released varieties under sustainable cropping practices. Ideally the site should be east and south of Clay Center, not have been in wheat the previous year, and allow the use of Round-up herbicide for trimming back plots. All other cropping practices should be those of the regular farm operation. For more information, contact Dr. Baenziger, Dept. of Agronomy, U. of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE 68583-0915, 402-472-1555.

SYSTEMS ANALYSIS AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

The following is a summary of a presentation at a symposium at Indianapolis April 11-12, "Applied Research and Education in Sustainable Agriculture: What Have We Learned?"

A basic tenet of sustainable agriculture has been enterprise diversity. In practicing sustainable agriculture, enterprise diversity is generally linked to a systems concept in which a combination of crops or crop and livestock enterprises results in outcomes different than might be expected from averaging them. These different results are usually hypothesized to take the form of lower input use, reduced risk, and greater economic returns.

Study of the integration of enterprises into systems is more difficult than the study of single enterprises. Reactions to this include increased interest in involving farmers in research, multi-disciplinary analysis, and concern over philosophical narrowness of past research. These may well be useful to better understanding of agricultural systems, yet some major conceptual problems accompany systems analysis.

Systems analysis is more complex than combining enterprises and achieving average outcomes. Some progress occurs using whole farm planning (linear programming) in which efficiencies in the use of defined fixed resources (resources which can be used by various enterprises) are included in the analysis and solving for a

system. However, this format is often deficient because 1) results are site-specific, 2) enterprise yield interactions are often ignored, and 3) long-run resources optimal to each potential system are not selected in the analysis but are specified.

Another approach to systems analysis has been to economically compare two or more predetermined systems in which data are available for each system. Two weaknesses of this approach are 1) other systems not included may be superior, and 2) the long-run resources optimal for each enterprise mix system generally are not included in the analysis.

A temptation exists to allocate system advantages or disadvantages back to individual enterprises. This is most evident when cost budgets for specific enterprises are constructed from costs of multiple enterprise farms. This allocation process defeats the purpose of systems analysis and can lead to errors when analyzing systems different from those from which the results were derived.

Needed for comprehensive systems optimization are 1) a whole farm analysis (determining the optimal resource mix), 2) yield interactions, and 3) differences in annual operating inputs resulting from integrating enterprises. In Nebraska research it appears that all three components are important to optimum system choice by farmers. A challenge for the future is to quantify these system advantages to better assist in the integration process and to provide decision support tools to farmers.

Submitted by Glenn Helmers

COSPONSORSHIP FUNDS AVAILABLE

The CSAS is interested in cosponsoring Nebraska-based seminars, workshops, conferences, tours and other special events that are related to sustainable agriculture and are open to the public. The amount of funds available will depend on the number of requests received and our budget, but should range from \$50 to \$300 per activity. Your request should include information about the event, the amount requested, and the contact person. Allow at least two months for a reply.

WES JACKSON, PAUL EHRLICH HIGHLIGHT GREAT PLAINS GRASSLANDS SYMPOSIUM

Wes Jackson described our need to learn about the culture of a place before we launch into farming and ranching systems. By "culture" he means the accumulated genetic information that is contained in the plants, animals and microorganisms that abound in each ecosystem--not only the people who live there and the society that they have created. At the April Great Plains Grasslands Symposium in Lincoln, Jackson outlined his ideal for the study and understanding of a sense of place. Without this

basis, "we don't know what we are doing because we don't know what we are undoing," he quoted from Wendell Berry. In the research and education program at The Land Institute in Salina, Kansas, Jackson said they are beginning to better understand the complexity of the prairie ecosystem and are creating combinations of plants in what are called perennial polycultures. In the future these will supply food, hold the soil in place, and approximate the native vegetation of the place. Such a system will be more sustainable than today's extractive cultivation of a few crops based on high inputs of fossil fuels and other scarce resources.

Jackson went on to describe the Matfield Green community in Chase County, Kansas, where a project is underway to restore the infrastructure and vitality of the place. With minimal investment in old houses, the school, a lumber yard, and other buildings, a group of interested partners is working under Jackson's direction to reinvent community in the plains. He envisions a bio-sufficient community that produces much of its own food and supports small business to the degree necessary to sustain the local population, as well as relating to society at large. This is another project of The Land Institute.

Other speakers in the conference described ongoing research and educational efforts in the Great Plains grasslands. The restoration of buffalo herds in Native American homeland areas is one current project that is finding success. Use of native species for specialty food items was described by Kay Young, who gave examples from her new book, "Wild Seasons" (Nebraska Press, 1993). Our Center for Sustainable Agricultural Systems had a two-day display that featured photos of current research and books from the series, "Our Sustainable Future." There was great interest in the new book by Jim Bender, CSAS advisory committee member, "Future Harvest: Pesticide Free Farming" (Nebraska Press, 1994).

Paul Ehrlich of Stanford University, author of "The Population Bomb" and other more recent titles, described the changes in global demography over the past centuries. The predictions made in the 1960s in their first book were gloomy, but have turned out to be optimistic. There continues to be a wide disregard by many nations, especially in the developed world, for the magnitude and urgency of world population management. He called for the U.S. to take a role of leadership in funding population planning around the world. We have been slow in responding to this great need, he said, and have just emerged from 12 years of near total disregard for one of the world's most severe problems.

Submitted by Charles Francis

Editor's Note: The spring 1995 (Vol. 15, No. 2) issue of "Great Plains Quarterly" will contain most symposium presentations. Scientific papers will be published in Vol. 5 of "Great Plains Research." For more information, contact the Center for Great Plains Studies, U. of Nebraska, PO Box 880314, Lincoln, NE 68588-0314, 402-472-6058.

LAW PROFESSOR COMMENTS ON INDUSTRIALIZATION OF U.S. AGRICULTURE

The April issue of "Successful Farming" magazine contains an opinion piece by Neil Hamilton, professor of law and director of the Ag Law Center at Drake University, in which he said industrialization is restructuring American food production--making farmers employees on their own land. He added that contract production gives farmers limited control over the production or marketing of their crops.

NEW USDA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COUNCIL

Secretary Espy has created the Agricultural Council on Environmental Quality to promote coordination in resolving problems and developing policy, and serve as the focal point for USDA interaction for issues with other departments, agencies, environmental groups and the agricultural community. For more information contact Carole Florman, 202-720-7173.

CONGRESSIONAL SUSTAINABLE AG WORKING GROUP

May 4 was the first meeting of the House Working Group on Sustainable Agriculture, established by Congressman Sam Farr (D-CA) to keep Members of Congress informed of the progress of the National Organic Standards Board and the compliance of the Federal Organic Foods Production Act of 1990, and to ensure that the organic foods industry is fully acknowledged in the 1995 Farm Bill. This working group is interested in hearing from anyone having ideas on sustainable agriculture. Contacts: Linda Delgado, 202-225-2861; Brad DeVries, 202-225-6416, bdevries@house.gov.

AQUACULTURE NETWORK ON INTERNET

AquaNIC--an electronic information center providing the latest word on state, national or international aquaculture, is maintained at Purdue University. For an overview and access instructions, request document "aqua" from jhorigan@esusda.gov.

DATABASE OF STATE ALTERNATIVE AG LAWS

For over a year, The Center for Policy Alternatives has researched state laws pertaining to alternative agriculture. The result of this study is a comprehensive database encompassing a wide range of legislative issues in all fifty states. Included in each entry is the law's title, cite, year enacted, purpose, and a brief summary of the law's elements. Excluded from the database are laws found in every state such as those establishing soil conservation districts or pesticide registration. The database is available in hard copy and electronically. For more information contact the CSAS office.

MORE INFO ON GOPHER

In the last issue of the CSAS newsletter you learned that the new IANRVM gopher contains information about and created by the CSAS. Now you can find information generated by the UNL Water Center/Environmental Programs unit. The path is:
IANRVM.UNL.EDU IANRVM Information Sustainable Agriculture.

NATIONAL FOREST STEWARDSHIP CONFERENCE

Over 100 non-industrial private forest landowners made recommendations on how best to increase the number of dedicated forest stewards at the first National Conference on Forest Stewardship April 26-28 in Nebraska City. Conference proceedings will be available through the Forest Service; contact Larry Biles, 202-720-5119, lbiles@esusda.gov.

NEW TREND: BOUTIQUE MICROFARMS?

"The Trends Journal" predicts the next big fad to face U.S. agriculture will be small "boutique farms" offering such staple items as organic poultry, fish, meats, produce and dairy products. Others will cultivate heirloom vegetables, which are grown from seeds that have been passed down throughout generations.

Primary Source: "Small to Be Beautiful in Farming's Future," GANNETT NEWS SERVICE, April 21, 1994.

Secondary Source: "Sustainable Agriculture Week," Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Minneapolis, April 27, 1994.

MADDEN SPEAKS ON SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

At a recent conference in Orlando, Florida, Dr. J. Patrick Madden, Executive Vice President of the World Sustainable Agriculture Association, gave a speech titled "Goals and Realities of Attaining a More Sustainable Agriculture." Topics addressed included Alternative Concepts of Sustainable Agriculture, On the Nature of Pests and Pest Control, Synthetic Chemical Pesticides and Fertilizers, Biological Approaches to Pest Control, and The LISA, SARE and ACE Grants Programs. For a copy of the speech, contact the CSAS office.

WANT TO REDUCE YOUR JUNK MAIL?

Americans receive 2 million tons of unwanted mail each year, some of which is on slick non-recyclable paper. Before you order something, ask that your name and address not be sold to other companies. To get your name off of some mailing lists, write: Mail Preference Service, Direct Marketing Association, 11 West 42nd St., P.O. Box 3861, New York, NY 10163-3861. Ask that your name be removed from existing and future mailing lists. Contact companies not covered by DMA directly.

ORGANIC FARMERS LIST TOP RESEARCH PRIORITIES

A national survey of certified organic farmers conducted by the Organic Farming Research Foundation found that their top three research priorities are: 1) to increase consumer demand for organic products, 2) study the relationship of growing practices to crop quality and nutrition, and 3) study the relationship between plant nutrition and pest resistance. For more information, contact OFRF, P.O. Box 440, Santa Cruz, CA 95061, 408-426-6606. Sidenote: The National Organic Standard Board is expected to complete its recommendations on suggested standards in early June.

DID YOU KNOW...

An Oklahoma firm has licensed ARS' patented process for making 100% vegetable-oil-based printing inks.

In an effort to demonstrate techniques for maintaining fish and wildlife habitat while producing sustainable supplies of wood products, Boise Cascade Corp. (UNL's office products supplier) is undertaking three ecosystem and biodiversity studies covering more than one million acres of forest and costing an estimated \$8 million over five years.

According to USDA, over 50% of the nation's fruit, vegetable and major field crop producers are applying some level of IPM; monitoring for all crops and crop rotation for corn are among the most widely practiced IPM strategies, use of beneficial insects the least practiced. President Clinton hopes to see the number raised to 75% by 2000.

The Environmental Working Group said the CRP has saved more than 32 million tons of topsoil every year in Missouri alone since it started in 1986.

Offers to enroll land in the Wetlands Reserve exceeded expectations by 75,000 acres, which the ASCS head said shows the environmental commitment of American farmers.

USDA-SCS chief Paul Johnson has organized a wetlands team composed of career SCS officials; its mission is to raise visibility of wetlands programs and enhance coordination with other agencies.

A survey by Progressive Farmer magazine shows 72% of farmers who responded would choose farming again because of the lifestyle.

Smokey Bear turns 50 on August 9.

Purdue U. researchers have developed "the grain chiller," a portable air conditioner that kills pests in grain bins with cold air, eliminating the need for pesticides.

EPA says barely half the nation's rivers, lakes and wetlands

contain water suitable for all uses by humans and nature.

U. of Missouri economists said nitrogen and phosphorus fertilizer will cost 10-14% more this year than last.

Leaders of a wildlands movement say 10% of the contiguous 48 states remains "wild," an amount declining by 2 million acres/yr.

RESOURCES

"SARE 1994 Project Highlights." For a copy of the annual report, contact the communications official of the nearest regional SARE office (North Central: Lisa Jasa, Lincoln, NE, 402 472-7081).

"Protect Your Groundwater: Education for Action," \$6.95 + \$3.50 s&h, Publications Dept., League of Women Voters, 1730 M St., NW, 10th floor, Washington, D.C. 20036; 202-429-1965.

"Pesticides and Groundwater: A Guide for the Pesticide User," \$4, payable to NRAES, from Northeast Regional Agricultural Engineering Service, Cooperative Extension, 152 Riley-Robb Hall, Ithaca, N.Y. 14853-5701, 607-255-7654.

Database of over 400 community-supported agriculture farms around the U.S. Contact Bio-Dynamic Association, PO Box 550, Kimberton, PA 19442, 215-935-7797.

"1994 National Organic Directory," \$34.95 + s&h, Community Alliance with Family Farmers, PO Box 464, Davis, CA 95617.

"How to Control House and Stable Flies Without Using Pesticides," free, USDA-ARS, Rm 120, Bldg. 305, BARC-E, Beltsville, MD 20705, 301-504-8274. (Note: The March 1994 issue of USDA-ARS' "Agricultural Research" contains a good article on this topic.)

"RTD Updates: Pest Scouting," (Feb. 1994), USDA-ERS, 1301 New York Ave. NW, Rm 524, Washington, DC 20005-4788, 202-219-0436.

"Environment and Agriculture: Rethinking Development Issues in the 21st Century," \$24.95, Winrock Publication Sales, PO Box 0363, Arlington, VA 22209-0363, 703-525-9430.

"Wetlands Walk" materials provide the lay person with an introduction to wetlands, EPA, Susan Handley, 206-553-1287.

"1994 National Organic Directory: A Guide to Organic Information and Resources," Community Alliance with Family Farmers, 916-756-8518.

The UNL Center for Biotechnology has a library of materials (print and video) to lend or make copies of for IANR staff. For a list of materials, contact the Center for Biotechnology, 402-472-2635.

"Clean Water and Thriving Farms: Mutual Goals in Sustainable

Agriculture," \$5, the Minnesota Project, 1885 University Ave. W., St. Paul, MN 55104, 612-645-6159.

"Understanding the Human Element in Agricultural Resource Conservation," Soil and Water Conservation Society, 7515 Northeast Ankeny Road, Ankeny, IA 50021-9764, 515-289-2331.

"Future Harvest: Pesticide Free Farming" with accompanying teaching manual, \$21 + \$2.50 s&h, University of Nebraska Press, PO Box 880484, Lincoln, NE 68588-0484, 402-472-3584. (Ask for information about other books in the "Our Sustainable Future" series.)

COMING EVENTS

Contact CSAS office for more information:

July 5-9 - 5th International Symposium On Earthworm Ecology, Columbus, OH.

Aug. 4 - Leopold Center Annual Conference, Ames, IA.

Aug. 7-10 - Agroforestry and Sustainable Systems Symposium, Fort Collins, CO.

Aug. 7-10 - "Catch the Conservation Wave," Soil and Water Conservation Annual Meeting, Norfolk, VA.

Aug. 8-11 - Applied Aspects of Insect Biological Control (for graduate students and biological control implementers), Hickory Corners, MI.

Aug. 18-21 - Symposium on Sustainability of Range Livestock Production in the West, Billings, MT.

Aug. 13-21 - International Conference on Organic and Sustainable Agriculture, Beijing.

Sep. 6-8 - National Symposium, "Allelopathy in Sustainable Agriculture, Forestry and Environment," Rajasthan, India.

Sep. 18-21 - Sustainability of Range Livestock Production Systems in the West, Billings, MT.

Oct. 2-6 - International Conference on Modern Agriculture and the Environment, Rehovot, Israel.

Oct. 23-31 - International Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security Week, Washington, DC.

Nov. 1-3 - North Central Biological Control of Insects Conference, Lincoln, NE.

Nov. 21-25 - Systems-Oriented Research in Agriculture and Rural Development, Montpellier, France.



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cfrancis2@unl.edu