



Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy



Press Release

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Sow the Seeds Announces Grants to Support Local Food Systems in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa

Minneapolis - Sow the Seeds, a project of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) in partnership with the Wedge Co-op, announced a series of small grants today to support farmer education and outreach on season extension for fruit and vegetable production in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa. Season extension strategies like low-tech hoop house/high tunnel structures enable farmers to start growing earlier in the spring and extend their harvest later into the fall.

"Season extension can be a great opportunity for farmers to diversify their income while expanding the supply of fresh, locally grown produce," said JoAnne Berkenkamp, Director of the Local Foods program at IATP. "The organizations receiving support from Sow the Seeds are some of the region's leaders in helping build our local food system and strengthen our local farm community."

Generous support from individuals, natural food grocery retailers, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and other organizations helped make these awards possible. The grants ranged from \$450 to \$5000, with all funded activity to take place in 2009. More information about Sow the Seeds is available at www.sowtheseedsfund.org. Funds are being awarded to the following organizations:

Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI)

PFI will organize a two-day on-farm high tunnel construction workshop. The workshop will address topics ranging from site selection, site preparation, orientation of hoop house structures and actual construction. Adam Montri, Hoophouse Project Manager at Michigan State University, will lead the event. <http://www.practicalfarmers.org>

Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association

The Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association, in partnership with the Silver Creek Institute, will host an on-farm season extension field day. The field day will be farmer-taught and will showcase season extension options, production performance, return on investment, and other aspects related to floating row covers, plastic and other ground mulches, low tunnels and high tunnels. <http://www.lakesuperiorfarming.org>

Growing Power

Growing Power will provide scholarships for five limited resource farmers from Minnesota, Wisconsin and/or Iowa to attend a Growing Power weekend workshop in Milwaukee, Wis. The workshops include: Living Biological Growing Systems—An Innovative Approach to Sustainable Production, Hoop House Construction, Year Round Production and Marketing. <http://www.growingpower.org>

Land Stewardship Project (LSP)

LSP will host two on-farm workshops in southeast Minnesota. Each workshop will take place on a farm where a greenhouse is already established or is being built, and will be followed by facilitated “farmers-for-farmers” troubleshooting roundtables. Workshop presentations include: Establishing a Budget, Fertility/Soil, and Design/Construction. The project will also generate a tip sheet for prospective greenhouse growers and will support post-workshop networking among participating farmers. <http://www.landstewardshipproject.org>

University of Wisconsin – Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems (UW-CIAS)

UW-CIAS will coordinate two 6-hour workshops in Wisconsin on ways to extend the marketing season by selling storage crops like carrots, potatoes and onions through the winter. The workshops will cover storage requirements of different crops, variety selection, post-harvest handling practices for long-term storage, how to build sound and energy efficient storage facilities, and marketing strategies. The workshop will feature presentations from growers, along with UW faculty and staff. <http://www.cias.wisc.edu>

Minnesota Food Association (MFA)

MFA will provide technical assistance and training to socially disadvantaged farmers in rural Minnesota and western Wisconsin on season extension and the use of hoop houses. MFA’s Big River Farms Training Program will deliver three training sessions between August and November 2009 focused on season extension planning and preparation, production, and harvest management. <http://www.mnfoodassociation.org/>

Sow the Seeds was initiated by the Wedge Community Co-op and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy to educate and engage members of the public while supporting local, sustainable food production.

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems. www.iatp.org.