



sustainable
farming
association
www.sfa-mn.org

BEGINNING GRAZIER HANDBOOK

sfa-mn.org/soil

Introduction

Designed to assist the beginning grazier in designing and implementing a grazing system, this handbook is a starting place for you to quickly and easily find pertinent information. Most of the resources listed include website links – explore these links to find additional grazing information that is specific to your interests.

In the appendices are lists of businesses that supply equipment and seeds for grazing systems. Use this list to find suppliers and negotiate the best value when purchasing. The goal of the handbook was to provide information; listing does not mean we endorse any of these suppliers.

This handbook was compiled in 2015 and updated in Summer 2021 by the Sustainable Farming Association.

NOTE: A list of vendors who sell and install products and fencing for grazing systems is available for download at sfa-mn.org/beginning-graziers-handbook.

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Technical Assistance

Contact any of these experts for technical assistance when planning a grazing system.

NRCS Grazing Specialists

Lance Smith, Southwest Minnesota	218-255-0348
Jeff Duchene, Central Minnesota.....	218-346-4260 Ext. 101

Others

Jared Luhman, SFA Soil Health Lead.....	507-271-5968
Kent Solberg, SFA Senior Technical Advisor	218-445-7580
Doug Voss, SFA Grazing Lead.....	763-213-9978
Angie Walter, SFA/DGA Central Minnesota Coordinator	320-815-9293
Bonnie Haugen, DGA Minnesota Education Coordinator.....	507-421-7170
Dean Thomas, Fillmore SWCD, Preston	507-765-3878 Ext. 128
Kelly Anderson, MN Department of Agriculture, Grazing Public Lands	320-424-2222
Howard Moechnig, Midwest Grasslands	507-319-1412

Sustainable Farming Association (SFA) | sfa-mn.org/soil

The Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota advances environmental stewardship, economic resilience and strong, diverse communities through farmer-to-farmer networking, education, demonstration and research.

Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship (DGA) | dairygrazingapprenticeship.org

Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship links experienced dairy graziers with those who want to farm and provides a guided pathway to independent farm ownership. DGA is composed of 4,000 paid hours of training over two years (the equivalent of a full-time job). 3,712 of these hours are on-farm employment and guidance under a Master Dairy Grazier. Info: Angie Walter, angie@sfa-mn.org or 320-815-9293.

Minnesota Dairy Initiative | mn-dairy-initiative.org

Minnesota Dairy Initiative helps existing and potential dairy producers succeed through team-based on-farm education, resources and networking.

Pasture Project | pastureproject.org

The Pasture Project works in the Upper Mississippi River Basin to increase the number of acres of farmland that are sustainably managed by expanding grass-based systems of livestock production and introducing cover-crops and periodic livestock grazing into row crop farming.

Grazing Lands Conservation Association (GLCA) | mnglca.org/mentors

GLCA has established a grassroots based network with Minnesota grazing land managers who provide guidance and counsel on grassland management to interested farmers, ranchers, and agency personnel.

Land Stewardship Project (LSP) Farm Beginnings | landstewardshipproject.org

The Farm Beginnings® Program works to get more successful farmers on the land and organize for a system in which family farmers can flourish. Farm Beginnings provides wide range of trainings.

Practical Farmers of Iowa | practicalfarmers.org

Practical Farmers of Iowa is an open, supportive and diverse organization of farmers and friends of farmers, advancing profitable, ecologically sound and community-enhancing approaches to agriculture through farmer-to-farmer networking, farmer-led investigation and information sharing.

North Dakota Grazing Lands Coalition | ndglc.wildapricot.org

The North Dakota Grazing Lands Coalition has established a grassroots based guidance and council to interested ranchers on grassland management. The advice the mentors provide is based upon knowledge and experience gained on their operations and interaction with ranchers across the region.

GrassWorks | grassworks.org

GrassWorks provides leadership and education to farmers and consumers for the advancement of managed grass-based agriculture to benefit present and future generations.

Minnesota Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts | maswcd.org

MASWCD provides leadership and a common voice for Minnesota's soil and water conservation districts and to maintain a positive, results-oriented relationship with rule making agencies, partners and legislators; expanding education opportunities for the districts so they may carry out effective conservation programs.

Production Resources

SFA 'Dirt Rich' Podcast | sfa-mn.org/podcast

Dirt Rich brings you seasonal conversations about food and farming. There's a wealth of knowledge in the farmer-to-farmer network, and plenty of people who want to share it. Find it wherever you get your podcasts.

SFA Soil Health Portal | sfa-mn.org/soil

Sustainable Farming Association compiles all its soil health resources here, including videos, fact sheets, Soil Health Case Studies, Silvopasture Handbook, Silvopasture Case Studies, and much more.

Crow Wing River Basin Forage Council | sfa-mn.org/forage-council

Crow Wing River Basin Forage Council, a SFA Networking Group, has provided thousands of people with opportunity to learn, explore, and network through winter workshops and summer land and water tours.

Ecological Service Livestock Network | sfa-mn.org/ecological-service-livestock-network

A Networking Group of the Sustainable Farming Association, the Ecological Service Livestock Network seeks to advance the art and science of profitable livestock-based, land management businesses.

Minnesota Department of Agriculture | mda.state.mn.us

Website with links to numerous resources for new and existing farmers, including beginning farmer tax credits, emerging farmer resources, and best management practices. MDA also supports the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program; those who implement and maintain approved farm management practices will be certified and in turn obtain regulatory certainty for a period of ten years.

Cropland Grazing Exchange | mda.state.mn.us/cropland-grazing-exchange

The Cropland Grazing Exchange matches livestock farmers with crop farmers who have forage to harvest, creating mutually beneficial relationships, managing resources, and improving soil health.

MN Natural Resources Conservation Service | nrcs.usda.gov/mn

NRCS provides products and services that enable people to be good stewards of the Nation's soil, water, and related natural resources on non-Federal lands.

Minnesota Soil Health Coalition | mnsoilhealth.org

Two key goals of the coalition are to provide farmer mentoring and soil health testing that uses management, economic, and agronomic data to more quickly provide real world information to the producers of Minnesota.

South Dakota Soil Health Coalition | sdsoilhealthcoalition.org

South Dakota Soil Health Coalition is a producer led, non-profit, membership organization created to promote soil health through education and research.

Green Lands, Blue Waters | greenlandsbluewaters.net

There are a number of good resources on contract grazing on the Green Lands Blue Waters website, including information about its Midwest Perennial Forage Working Group.

Minnesota State Cattlemens Association | mnsca.org

MNSCA has 20 chapters, providing the greatest opportunity for producer input and support.

Sustainable Farming Association Adjust 2015: New Farm Reality Check

SFA's Adjust 2015 project reviewed the key difficulties experienced farmers faced early in their farming careers. The New Farm Reality Check curriculum gives farmers tools to help avoid the most common of those pitfalls, which will strengthen business plans and ultimately improve chances of long-term success – financial benchmarks you should be incorporating into your plan, considerations for business plan assumptions, dealing with and planning for changes in family structure and function, and tools for building a team of experts to help you launch your business.

Minnesota Institute of Sustainable Agriculture

MISA unites the diverse interests of the agricultural community with interests from across the University community to develop and promote sustainable agriculture in Minnesota and beyond.

Grazing on Public Lands

Conservation grazing is the use of livestock grazing as a land management tool to improve wildlife habitat or other conservation objectives. This Conservation Grazing Map application provides information about potential grazing opportunities on public conservation lands within the state and connects livestock owners to agency personnel who can help them initiate grazing contracts.

MN Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

This website provides information on the effects of grazing on natural resources. The DNR has many Wildlife Management Areas that are available for grazing; Cattle farmers who need additional forage are encouraged to email their DNR area wildlife manager to discuss options in their area.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

This website provides information on the effects of grazing on natural resources. The USFWS has Waterfowl Production Areas and National Wildlife Refuges that are available for grazing.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

TNC has much information on the effects of grazing on prairies. TNC also owns prairies for conservation benefits and allows grazing on some of their conservation lands.

Greg Judy from Green Pastures Farm

Greg Judy is from Rucker, Missouri and rotationally grazes livestock on rented lands. Greg has written how-to books as well as gives on-farm tours and presentations.

Graze

Graze is a print magazine devoted to promoting management-intensive rotational grazing and family-scale livestock farms.

The Stockman Grass Farmer – The Grazer's Edge

The Stockman Grass Farmer is the grazing publication of North America. Since 1947 it has been devoted solely to the art and science of making profit from grassland agriculture. Each month it brings its readers the latest information on high profit grassland ideas from all over the world.

Funding: Loans and Grants

Loans and Grants may help with financial support for installing the infrastructure of a grazing system. Many grants are for demonstration and research on grazing management and may not help with purchasing equipment.

Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MDA)

Among other benefits, participants receive priority for technical assistance: producers seeking certification can obtain specially designated technical and financial assistance to implement practices that promote water quality.

Beginning Farmer Loan Program (MDA)

The Beginning Farmer Loan Program was established to help people who want to farm in Minnesota. The program offers affordable financing, a reasonable down payment and built-in safeguards, such as farm management training and financial planning to help minimize the risk all farmers face.

Agricultural Best Management Practices Loan (MDA)

The AgBMP Loan Program is a water quality program that provides low-interest loans to farmers, rural landowners, and agriculture supply businesses. The purpose is to encourage agricultural Best Management Practices that prevent or reduce runoff from feedlots, farm fields and other pollution problems identified by the county in local water plans.

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) Microloan Program

Loans up to \$50,000 for emerging farmers, especially those from historically underserved communities, to consider farming as a way to become independent businesspeople. FSA also has loans for farmers and ranchers that are unable to obtain credit elsewhere. Contact your local office for information.

Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant (MDA)

The AGRI Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant supports innovative on-farm research and demonstrations. It funds projects that explore sustainable agriculture practices and systems that could make farming more profitable, resource efficient, and personally satisfying.

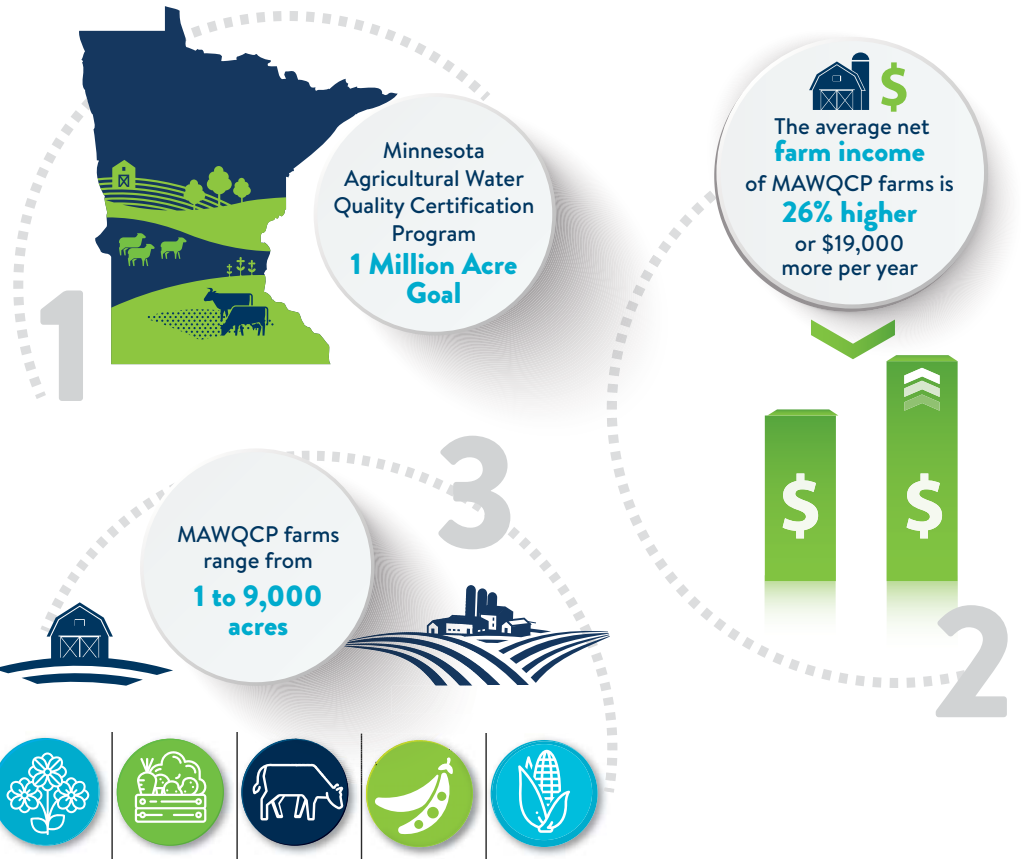
Livestock Investment Grants (MDA)

The AGRI Livestock Investment Grant encourages long-term industry development for Minnesota livestock farmers and ranchers by helping them improve, update, and modernize their livestock operation infrastructure and equipment.

Dairy Business Planning Grant (MDA)

This program covers 50 percent of the cost of completing a business plan for a dairy operation. Producers who have applied for this grant are exploring the feasibility of expansion, environmental upgrades, stray voltage testing or transferring the operation to the next generation producer.

Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program



mylandmylegacy.com



mn DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, this information is available in alternative forms of communication upon request by calling 651-201-6000. TTY users can call the Minnesota Relay Service at 711. The MDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider.





Local food. Local farms.
Local organization.

Sustainable Farming Association.

SFA hosts statewide and regional conferences, meetings and events to promote sustainable agriculture in Minnesota. 2021 Events include farm tours, field days, educational field training and much more. And watch for our Annual Conference and Midwest Soil Health Summit in early 2022.

Join us and learn more at sfa-mn.org.



NFWF

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