



Illinois Small Farm News

Landwise—Featuring Innovative Illinois Farmers

Starting Small, Dreaming Big

Debra Levey Larson

Godwin Akpan has a dream—a dream to revitalize a struggling community in Central Illinois using specialty vegetables, pastured poultry, and goats.

Akpan is executive director of United Human Services Center (UHSC), a not-for-profit organization that has been operating within Chicago for more than three years. “UHSC caters especially to abused women and involves citizens in gardening activities,” he says. “In the summer of 2007, the gardens produced enough vegetables for everyone and to share. Participants learned simple and effective techniques of vegetable production in small spaces, weeding, trellising, and storage of produce.”

From this experience, UHSC recognized the need to educate more people in a larger area, so they purchased a 25-acre plot in Pembroke Township—a community about 60 miles south of Chicago in the southeast corner of Kankakee County. A

number of the residents are African-American organic farmers.

Through organic farming, Akpan says he hopes to help create a community that will improve the general lives of youths and adults in Pembroke Township economically, socially, and educationally.

The interest in organically grown vegetables, herbs, and livestock is growing in



Godwin Akpan (UHSC) and Tom Spaulding (Angleic Organics Learning Center)

Chicago and surrounding cities. The Muslim and Hispanic populations are a particularly strong niche market for goat meat.

With that in mind, Akpan and UHSC intend to develop a mixed-farming operation consisting of livestock and vegetables on a 3- to 5-acre

model farm within the 25-acre farm—using the SARE grant to jumpstart his dream. The goal is to have a self-sustaining system in three years.

His plan is to start small and trust nature.

“We’ll start with four does and a buck,” says Akpan. “Assuming that they are good mothers, they will each produce twins. Half of those are expected to be females, ready to breed in a year.”

By the end of the second year, he expects there to be approximately 20 goats in the herd. The males will be sold for meat and the income reinvested in the farm.

Vegetables to be planted in raised beds will include peppers, tomatoes, garlic, greens (turnips, mustard, collard, kale, and Swiss chard), okra, sweet potatoes, peanuts, and various herbs. Plans also include planting blackberries, blueberries, and peach and apple trees. A major market will be the

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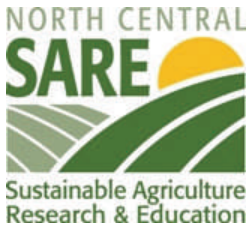
Resource Spotlight:

New Publication Summarizes Health and Environmental Benefits of Organic Food Production

eOrganic certification group leader Jim Riddle and Bud Markart of the University of Minnesota recently released a 6-page publication entitled *What is Organic Food and Why Should I Care?* which explains USDA National Organic Program requirements in simplified terms. It also presents foot-noted summaries of scientific studies about the health and environmental benefits of organic food and farming. The full publication is available at: <http://swroc.cfans.umn.edu/organic/whatisorganicfood.pdf>



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Resource Spotlight:

Farmer Grant Writing Workshop October 26, 2010

The University of Illinois Extension, in collaboration with the [Central Illinois Sustainable Farming Network \(CISFN\)](http://www.extension.illinois.edu/cisfn/), will host a grant writing workshop from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Information will be presented on the basics of grant writing as well as specifics on grants available through the NCR SARE Farmer Rancher Grant Program and the Illinois Department of Agriculture (AgriFIRST, Specialty Crop Grant Program and the C-2000 Sustainable Agriculture Grant Program). Online registration is available at <http://central.illinoisfarmbeginnings.org/central/cisfn/fieldDays.aspx> or by calling Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant at 217-968-5512 by October 25. Cost is \$15 (there is no charge for CISFN members).

SARE Corner

Information and Resources about the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program

2010 NCR-SARE Youth & Youth Educator Grant Call for Proposals is now available

These grants are a part of the Farmer Rancher Grant Program. Their purpose is to provide opportunities for youth in the North Central Region to learn more about Sustainable Agriculture. Sustainable agriculture is good for the environment, profitable, and socially responsible. A total of approximately \$34,000 is available for this program.

There are two options:

1. YOUTH GRANTS.

These grants are for on-farm research, demonstration, or education projects by youth ages 8-18. Research and demonstration projects are for hands-on efforts to explore Sustainable Agriculture issues and practices. Education projects can involve teaching others about Sustainable Agriculture or attending a Sustainable Agriculture conference, workshop, or camp. \$400 maximum.

2. YOUTH EDUCATOR GRANTS.

These are grants for educators to provide programming on sustainable agriculture for youth. \$2,000 maximum.

Interested applicants can find the call for proposals online as well as useful

information for completing a proposal at <http://www.sare.org/NCRSARE/cfp.htm>.

Proposals are due by 4:30 pm, Friday, **January 14, 2011** at the NCR-SARE office in Jefferson City, MO.

2010 NCR-SARE Farmer Rancher Grant Call for Proposals is now available

Farmers and ranchers in the North Central Region are invited to submit grant proposals to explore sustainable agriculture solutions to problems on the farm or ranch. Proposals should show how farmers and ranchers plan to use their own innovative ideas to explore sustainable agriculture options and how they will share project results. Sustainable agriculture is good for the environment, profitable, and socially responsible.

Projects should emphasize research or education/demonstration. Grants can range from \$6,000 for individual farmers up to \$18,000 for groups of 3 or more farmers. NCR-SARE expects to fund about 50 projects in the twelve-state North Central Region with this call.

Interested applicants can find the call for proposals online as well as useful

information for completing a proposal at <http://www.sare.org/NCRSARE/cfp.htm>

Proposals are due on Thursday, **December 2, 2010** at 4:30 p.m. at the NCR-SARE office in Jefferson City, MO.

Potential applicants with questions can contact Joan Benjamin, Associate Regional Coordinator and Farmer Rancher Grant Program Coordinator, at benjaminj@lincolnu.edu or 573-681-5545 or 800-529-1342 or contact Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant, Illinois SARE Coordinator, cvnghgrm@illinois.edu, 217-968-5512. For information about Illinois SARE funded projects, <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/smallfarm/sare/>

A hard copy or an emailed copy of the call for proposals is also available by contacting Joan Benjamin. We make slight revisions to our calls for proposals each year, which means it is crucial to use the most recent call for proposals.

NCR-SARE has funded more than 700 farmer rancher grants worth more than \$4,300,000 since the inception of this program.

See sidebar for information about grant writing workshop.

Organizations and Programs Supporting Small Farms

National Small Farm Trade Show & Conference

Join a host of SARE grant recipients plus staff from the USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program at the largest annual small farm trade show in the United States-The National Small Farm Trade Show & Conference. Now in its 18th year, the Conference takes place on Thursday, November 4th through Saturday, November 6th, 2010, in Columbia, Missouri, at the Boone County Fairgrounds.

Can you farm or ranch while protecting the environment, making a profit, and benefiting your community? These speakers say, "Yes!" and will show you how to do it. There

will be more than 30 Farmers Forum talks featuring North Central Region SARE (NCR-SARE) Farmer Rancher Grant and Youth & Youth Educator Grant recipients. Sessions are 25 to 55 minutes long and run continuously throughout the three-day event. You'll hear about composting, beneficial bees, agroforestry, heritage turkeys, community gardens, local food systems, freshwater shrimp farming, weed control with goats, elderberries, and much more. After the talks, meet the speakers and pick up free sustainable agriculture resources at the SARE Trade Show booths. Call NCR-SARE for Farmers Forum details: 1-800-529-1342.

Choose from 19 one-hour seminars at the show. Don't

miss the Financial & Technical Opportunities for Your Farm seminar on Nov. 4 by Lauren Cartwright, NRCS Agricultural Economist, or the Improved Egg Quality seminar on Nov. 5 by Kelly Klober, poultry producer and NCR-SARE grant recipient.

Six short courses give you the opportunity to get in-depth information on topics ranging from sweet potato production to building a parasite resistant sheep flock. .

The National Small Farm Trade Show & Conference is sponsored by Small Farm Today and sustained by Missouri Department of Agriculture, NCAT-ATTRA, SARE (USDA-NIFA), and Truman State University.

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farmers market in Kankakee. Vendors at the farmers market can buy from the farm and eliminate transportation costs.

Structures on the small farm will be kept to a minimum. A water source will be established by sinking a borehole. Because of the presence of predators, dog- and coyote-proof fencing will be erected on two of the acres. A simple shed for a goat refuge during adverse weather and pasture poultry hoops will be constructed. Additionally, a simple set-up for vegetable washing and packing will be located

within the farm. Although it will be necessary to purchase some equipment to work the farm, the bigger machinery will be leased as needed.



Summer Vegetables
Photo by Ginny Lee
www.ginnyleepphoto.com

"The people of Pembroke are organic farmers, and they will learn some simple techniques such as trellising for higher productivity from this project," says James

Theuri, Extension educator at the Kankakee County Unit. "

Godwin Akpan will also be an inspirer of younger people to get into farming. A lot of Pembroke people are aging and do not have young farmer entrepreneurs to take on the land after them." Akpan is realizing his dream to bring sustainable agriculture practices to the residents of Pembroke Township—starting small in hopes of benefiting the environment and improving the lives of an underserved population in Central Illinois.

Show times are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Thursday, and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. Pre-registration is \$8 for 1 day, \$12 for 2 days, or \$15 for all 3 days, allowing attendance of the trade show, seminars, demonstrations, exhibits, shows, meetings, and Farmer's Forum. Three-hour short courses are an additional \$35 each (\$25 in advance before October 27). To register, call Small Farm Today at 800-633-2535 or see <http://www.smallfarmtoday.com> for more information.

Illinois Farmers Market LINK Guide

This manual was developed by Heartland Local Food Network, Inc., based on its experience supporting implementation of a LINK program at the Downtown Bloomington Farmers' Market in Bloomington, Illinois. By sharing this information, we hope to make it easier for other markets to achieve the same goal – and to expand access to fresh, healthy food for low-income residents throughout the state of Illinois.

<http://www.hlfn.org/LinkGuide.pdf>



Photo by Ginny Lee
www.ginnyleephot.com

Additional events may be found on University of Illinois Extension's small farm website at: <http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/smallfarm/events.cfm>



University of Illinois Extension
Small Farm Program

www.extension.uiuc.edu/smallfarm



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If you have any questions or comments, please contact Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant at (217)968-5512, cvnghgrn@illinois.edu.

University of Illinois - U.S. Department of Agriculture - Local Extension Councils Cooperating

University of Illinois Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.

If you need a disability accommodation to participate in any University of Illinois Extension program listed in this newsletter, please contact Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant at (217)968-5512, cvnghgrn@illinois.edu.

Calendar

October 16, 17, 18, & 19 Living Downstream

Illinois screenings of the new documentary that explores the connections between chemicals in our environment (including agricultural chemicals) and cancer.
http://www.thelandconnection.org/?page_id=169

October 26, 2010 Intro to Organic Production Workshop

This intensive 3-hour (1:00-4:00 pm), farmer-led workshop will educate both new and current farmers interested in growing and marketing organic products, and the agricultural professionals who work with them.
Location: Dunn-Richmond Economic Development Center, Carbondale, IL
Visit: web.extension.uiuc.edu/smallfarm/ag_tours.cfm focusing on tomatoes and

January 29, 2011 Creative Approaches to Distribution Partnerships

A comprehensive look at a viable working model of education, marketing and delivery for local food system. Legal structure, bylaws and operating procedures will be shared.
Location: University of Illinois Extension, McLean County Unit Office, Bloomington, Illinois <http://central.illinoisfarmbeginnings.org/central/cisfn/fieldDays.aspx>

Season Extension and High Tunnel Webinar Series Offered - Introduction to Pest Management for Season Extension (November 1, 3, 8, 16, and 18)

Learn more about pest management in season extension production systems such as high tunnels by registering for a new webinar series sponsored by the Great Lakes Vegetable Working Group, the University of Illinois Extension, and a NCR SARE PDP grant. There will be five 1-2 hour webinars produced on November 1st, 3rd, 8th, 16th, and 18th. The first three webinars will focus on an introduction to pest management in various season extension systems,

focusing on tomatoes and winter crops. The last two webinars will be geared toward soil, water, and nutrient management, plus a summary of the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) high tunnel pilot project initiated in 2010.

Pre-registration for this webinar series is mandatory and can be found at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/season_ext. The cost for the series is \$30 whether you attend one or all five

webinars. Each webinar will be recorded and available on several state IPM or vegetable oriented websites for viewing soon after its original airdate. For people who do not have a broadband connection, we are identifying several sites throughout each state to host the webinar series.

For more information contact: Martha Smith, University of Illinois Extension, 309-734-5161, smithma@illinois.edu

Illinois Small Farm News is published by University of Illinois Extension's Small Farm Program. This newsletter is designed to inform its readers (both the commercial small farmer as well as the small acreage landowner) about the latest small farm programs and about people and activities in the state of Illinois, as well as in the Midwest region and our nation. Edited and produced by Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant.

University of Illinois Extension is the flagship outreach effort of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, offering educational programs to residents of all of Illinois' 102 counties—and far beyond.

Through learning partnerships that put knowledge to work, U of I Extension's programs are aimed at making life better, healthier, safer and more profitable for individuals and their communities.