

Resources for Wisconsin Farmers

The following web-based resource links can get you started in identifying sources of information for your farm. This is a short list focused on Wisconsin sustainable agriculture. Please note that web sites do change over time. We'll do our best to keep this list up to date.

Funding Sources for Agriculture Businesses

Agriculture Innovation Center, “Looking for Money?”

This site lists several locations where an agricultural entrepreneur can go to get loans or grants, and provides information about business planning and start-up.

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/agmarkets/aic/startup.cfm#funding>

Included in the above web site is a link to a **Department of Agriculture publication, “Got MOO-LA?”**. This publication provides a compilation of grants, loans, equity capital and other financial resources.

http://www.datcp.state.wi.us/mktg/business/business_resources/pdf/Wisconsin_Business_Resources.pdf

The Wisconsin Farm Center (1-800-942-2474) can provide business planning assistance to farmers. They can be of help in identifying ways to capitalize your operation.

(www.datcp.state.wi.us)

Farm Service Agency (FSA): farm loan programs

FSA makes direct and guaranteed farm ownership (FO) and operating loans (OL) to family-size farmers and ranchers who cannot obtain commercial credit from a bank, Farm Credit System institution, or other lender. FSA loans can be used to purchase land, livestock, equipment, feed, seed, and supplies. Loans can also be used to construct buildings or make farm improvements. FSA is the lender of choice for the majority of the state's beginning farmers.

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=fmlp&topic=landing>

The Farm Service Agency has programs that give preference to beginning farmers and ‘socially disadvantaged’ farmers. If you make an appointment with an FSA agency representative, they'll help you sort through the various programs and find the best financing packet to put together.

There are some interesting programs with low down-payment plans in the 2008 Farm Bill.

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=fmlp&topic=bfl>

Grant Opportunities (usually for on-farm research and outreach):

USDA Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES): web site lists information sources and funding opportunities through the federal government:

<http://www.csrees.usda.gov/familysmallfarms.cfm>

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Extension (SARE) grant programs: Note that Wisconsin is in the North Central Region. Web-site provides information on sustainable agriculture research, outreach activities, and grants.

General website: <http://www.sare.org/>

Grants website: SARE is a competitive grants program providing grants to researchers, agricultural educators, farmers and ranchers, and students in the United States.

<http://www.sare.org/grants/>

Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES): Moses has put together an excellent web site with information about a wide variety of grant programs for producers in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa. Includes federal, state, and independent funding sources. Bookmark this website, as it has a comprehensive list, and will be kept up to date.

<http://www.mosesorganic.org/fundsforfarmers.html>

Help for Beginning Farmers

The Wisconsin Farm Center (1-800-942-2474): The Beginning and Transitional farm program offers assistance in developing financial projections and feasibility assessment, writing farm business plans, matching beginning farmers with late-career farmers, developing operating agreements, and providing on-going mentoring. Contact Frank Friar.

The following information on sources of assistance to beginning farmers was provided by the Wisconsin Farm Center. The center can be contacted for more information on any of these programs:

1) Milk Volume Production (MVP) Loan Program - This is part of the Department of Commerce's Dairy 20/20 Initiative <http://www.commerce.state.wi.us/BD/MT-FAX-0912.html>. The MVP loan provides financing of \$500/cow for a minimum of 50 cows at 2% interest. There are no payments or accrued interest in Year 1 of the loan, interest-only in Year 2, then principal and interest payments from Year 3-7.

2) Dairy 20/20 Early Planning Grants - This is a program also offered through the Department of Commerce Dairy 20/20 Initiative that provides cost-sharing to hire a consultant to write a business plan. For more information, contact Irv Possin at Department of Commerce, (920) 322-1888.

3) Wisconsin School for Beginning Dairy and Livestock Farmers (SBDF)

<http://www.cias.wisc.edu/dairysch.html> - This is part of the UW-Madison Farm and Industry Short Course but it is targeted specifically to people who are planning to start their own farm operations. There is a heavy emphasis on business planning and also on management-intensive rotational grazing.

4) UW-Madison Farm and Industry Short Course (FISC) - FISC tends to draw more students who intend to return to their home farms.

5) WI Tech College System farm management classes - These courses are offered around the state and the sessions are usually held either mid-day or evenings during the winter months. The course cover a variety of topics; typically with a strong emphasis on farm accounting and record-keeping. FSA commonly requires their beginning farmer loan borrowers to enroll in their local tech college farm management course.

6) UW-Extension <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/> - The local county agriculture agent is an extremely valuable resource for beginning farmers. They offer educational programs, technical assistance, and the ability to connect with campus-based specialists on a wide range of topics.

7) Utility company programs - If a farmer is going to be doing any remodeling of buildings that will include rewiring or new electrical equipment, they should contact their local utility provider to inquire about programs. Many of them offer combination grant and loan programs at very attractive rates for upgrading electrical infrastructure on the farm.

8) Agrability <http://bse.wisc.edu/agrability/> - If a farmer has any sort of physical limitations or disability, it would be worth a call to Agrability; funds may be available for accommodation equipment.

9) School for Beginning Market Growers <http://www.cias.wisc.edu/wisconsin-school-for-beginning-market-growers/>: The school is a three-day survey course that gives students a realistic picture of what it takes to run a successful small-scale produce operation—including capital, management, labor, and other resources. Topics include soil fertility, crop production, plant health and pest management, cover crops, equipment needs and labor considerations at different scales of operation, and marketing and economics.

Conservation Organizations

County-based Departments of land and water resources provide conservation implementation services to private landowners and land users in order to protect and enhance soil and water resources.

The **Natural Resources Conservation Service** is the federal agency that works with landowners on private lands to conserve natural resources. NRCS is part of the [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#). We were formerly called the Soil Conservation Service or "SCS". The agency provides technical assistance to help farmers and ranchers develop conservation systems uniquely suited to their land and individual ways of doing business.

<http://www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov/>

Organic and Sustainable Agriculture:

ATTRA – Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas is a USDA sponsored educational site providing resources and articles on organic and sustainable farming practices. <http://attra.ncat.org/>

CIAS – the Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, is the University of Wisconsin sustainable agriculture research center. CIAS has many projects and reference materials on integrated cropping systems, local food, rotational grazing, and organic agriculture. CIAS sponsors the School for Beginning Dairy Producers and the School for Beginning Market Growers. Their web site can link you to regional Community Supported Agriculture and local foods groups. <http://www.cias.wisc.edu/>

DATCP: Wisconsin's Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection has a wide range of information, programs, and services. For information about DATCP's **Organic Agriculture Program**, contact Laura Paine, Grazing & Organic Agriculture Specialist, at 608-224-5120, Laura.paine@wi.gov <http://www.datcp.state.wi.us/>

Grassworks, Inc. provides information about grazing and sponsors pasture walks, workshops, and an annual grazing conference. <http://www.grassworks.org/>

Moses – The Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES) provides resources on organic and sustainable production. They sponsor the annual 'Organic Farming Conference' and 'Organic University,' three days of educational and conference programs for farmers throughout the Midwest and beyond, as well as farm field days, workshops, and mentorship programs. <http://www.mosesorganic.org/index.html>

Organic Valley Family of Farms, is the largest organic farmer-owned cooperative in North America. Their website has a large amount of educational information for farmers and consumers. <http://www.organicvalley.coop/>

SARE – Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education, sponsors competitive grants for researchers and farmers. SARE's national outreach office publishes practical, how-to books, bulletins and web resources for farmers, ranchers and educators. www.sare.org

Direct Marketing, Value-added, and Local Foods Initiatives

The **Wisconsin Local Food Network** is a network of University, non-profit, and producers creating Statewide connections for learning from the experiences of Wisconsin local food initiatives. <http://wisconsinlocalfood.wetpaint.com/>

The website of the Wisconsin Local Food Network provides the following links to groups working to promote local food production, marketing and consumption in Wisconsin.

[Buy Fresh Buy Local Southern WI: http://www.reapfoodgroup.org/BFBL/index.htm](http://www.reapfoodgroup.org/BFBL/index.htm)

[Madison Area CSA Coalition \(MACSAC\): http://www.macsac.org/](http://www.macsac.org/)

[Savor Wisconsin: http://savorwisconsin.com/](http://savorwisconsin.com/)

[Something Special from Wisconsin: lois.federman@wi.gov](mailto:lois.federman@wi.gov)

[Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association: info@visitdairyland.com](mailto:info@visitdairyland.com)

[Wisconsin Eat Local Challenge: http://www.eatlocalwisconsin.com/](http://www.eatlocalwisconsin.com/)

The **University of Wisconsin's Agriculture Innovation Center** offers resources on direct marketing, developing specialty food products, and business feasibility planning for agricultural entrepreneurs and the people who serve them.

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/agmarkets/aic/index.cfm>

Marketing Strategies for Farmers and Ranchers

<http://www.sare.org/publications/marketing.htm>

Direct marketing resource guide

<http://www.sare.org/publications/dmrg.htm>

Direct Marketing Meat: A resource for direct market meat producers in Wisconsin. Revised Oct. 2004. UW Extension Emerging Ag Markets Team & DATCP.

Publication is available from your Wisconsin County Extension office or from Cooperative Extension Publishing. To order, call toll-free: 1-877-WIS-PUBS (947-7827) or visit the web site: cecommerce.uwec.edu

Specific Tools

University of Wisconsin Extension Publications: for a wide range of publications on horticulture, gardening, marketing, animal husbandry, etc.

<http://learningstore.uwex.edu/index.aspx>

Keeping Energy Costs Down

http://attra.ncat.org/newsletter/atranews_1108.html

“Building a Sustainable Business: A Guide to Developing a Business plan for Farms and Rural Businesses,” Minnesota Inst. For Sustainable Agriculture.

<http://www.misa.umn.edu/vd/bizplan.html>

Transitioning to organic production

<http://www.sare.org/publications/organic.htm>

A whole-farm approach to managing pests

<http://www.sare.org/publications/farmpest.htm>

Wisconsin Healthy Farmers, Healthy Profits fact sheets (tools for safe farming)

<http://bse.wisc.edu/hfhp>

Food Entrepreneur Resources, Penn State

<http://foodsafety.cas.psu.edu/processor/resources.htm#Before>

New Resources:

Crop Rotation on Organic Farms: A Planning Manual, NRAES-177, will be available in July 2009. This new 150-page book will be a boon to organic farmers, farm advisors, and educators interested in learning how to plan and manage an effective crop rotation system. Working with expert organic farmers, the authors have developed crop rotation guidelines and strategies that can be applied under various field conditions and with a wide range of crops.

Through June 15, NRAES is offering pre-printing prices that are 30-40% off the \$24 list price.

For more information on this book and to place a secure order online, visit

<<http://www.nraes.org/>>www.nraes.org