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Deep Roots

Thoughtful, Comprehensive, Community- Based Beginning Farmer Development

John Mesko

Sustainable Farming Association

Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development
Program Award No [2015-70017-04785]



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Project Audience

- Beginning and Aspiring Farmers
 - Online curriculum reaches a national audience, hands on curriculum targets Upper Midwest, MN, IA, WI, ND, SD
 - Open to all demographics, most students are mid-career, or career re-starts
 - All types of farming from homesteads to commercial grain operations.
 - Most students are just beginning, or are under 5 years into farming.



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Partners/Collaborators

- Who are the key people on your team?
 - John Mesko, SFA, Project Director
 - Dr. Sue Wika, SFA, Design Leader
 - Dr. Tom Prieve, SFA, Instructor
 - Kent Solberg, SFA, Instructor



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Partners/Collaborators

Educational team comprised of farmer-educators who have a history of working with beginning farmers.

Student quote: “I’ve been on lots of farms and sat in many classes, but it’s different being taught by farmers who are also experienced teachers.”



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Key Approach(es)

We support beginning farmer success through:

- Intensive, Practical Skills Training
- Cultivation of Self Confidence
- Introduction to the Classic Literature of Sustainable Farming Systems
- Supportive Networking and Mentoring



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Key Approach(es)

People are hungry for genuine human interaction and authentic validation.

Our curriculum and pedagogy stress community, as “sustainable” farming occurs in the context of neighborhood.

SFA, with its network of experienced farmers, provides a welcoming and supportive “nest”



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Overall Target Outcome

By the end of this project, we will have:

- Introduced 40 people to the foundational principles of sustainability.
- Taught 15 people the very basic skills needed for beginning farmers.
- Trained 15 people in intermediate skills in sustainable agriculture.
- Connected 12-20 people to a learning network.



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What do you have to share?

- Networking best practices.
- Making beginning farming training community based.



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What do you hope to learn from other projects?

- Program sustainability
- Participant return rates





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Keep in touch!

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