March 2014 E-Newsletter

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Featured Farmer

Meet Matt Kilgus of Kilgus Farmstead
By: Molly Gleason
Matt Kilgus leads me out behind his store front to the barns out back. 50 curious cows turn their heads and blink as we walk by, many of them ambling up to the fence for a closer look. Are they nodding their heads at us, or am I imagining it? That's weird, I think, it's like they are saluting us. But then I realize it's not me they care about, it's Matt. And maybe they ARE saluting him.
They know they've got it good: a warm barn, a free place to roam, fresh grass and grain to eat, and they know Matt is a big part of the reason for that. These are the definition of happy cows.

In fact, if I was wearing a hat right now, I'd be tempted to tip it in salute to Matt Kilgus as well. His family's dairy, beef, pork, and goat farm, along with their bottling plant, are downright inspirational when it comes to sustainable
Policy News

Local Food Awareness Day Success
On Wednesday, March 26, thirty-five farmers, foodies, and citizens gathered at the capitol to support local food policy and speak with their representatives about pressing local food reforms as part of ISA's 5th Annual Local Food Awareness Day.

The day began with a welcoming address from Representative Mike Tryon, a key supporter of local food policies in Springfield. The address was followed by lobby training and a discussion of this year's important pieces of legislation:

- **House Bill 5657/Senate Bill 3380**: Aims to create consistent and uniform regulations for farmers' markets throughout the state, including a simplified process for offering samples, as well as creating new labeling requirements to help consumers identify "re-sellers" at the farmers' markets.

- **House Bill 5907**: Aims to create a new microloan program for beginning farmers

- **Senate Bill 1666**: Aims to mandates the labeling of genetically modified food.

- **House Bill 4036**: Aims to ban the sale of raw milk throughout Illinois
After the discussion, participants fueled up on a lunch of local foods provided by American Harvest Eatery and then descended upon the capitol to track down and speak with representatives and distribute local Illinois honey to help lawmakers keep local food policies in the forefront of their minds. Overall, the day was a huge success, and many of the participants had the opportunity to speak directly to their representatives. Read More

Weren't able to join us for Local Food Awareness Day? You can still do your part by emailing your legislators now and asking them to support Smarter Rules for Farmers Markets.

![2014 Local Food Awareness Day Participants](image)

**ISA seeks Outreach Intern**

ISA is happy to announce the creation of a new part-time Outreach Intern position. The Outreach Intern will work closely with the Program Director and Conservation Associate to carry out duties within ISA's local food and sustainable agriculture programs. This is an excellent opportunity for someone looking to increase skills, knowledge, and abilities in community outreach and event organization. An understanding of local food systems and sustainable agriculture is preferred. Find out more.

**Farm Storage Facility Loans- Easier than Ever!**

Farm Service Agency (FSA) had made new changes in the Farm Storage
Facility Loan program, making the program more accessible to diversified producers looking for low interest loans for fruit and vegetable cold storage and some handling as well.

The experiences Lindsey and Ben Shute of Hearty Roots Farm in Clermont, NY helped the Farm Service Agency revise the Farm Storage Facility Loan to make the program more accessible for small and midsize farmers.

Visit NSAC's blog for an explanation of the rule change and how it may affect you.

USDA Loan Program Participants Can Help Reform Farm Policy.
Attention Farmers: have you received a loan from the USDA's Down Payment Loan Program? If so, the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) would like to hear from you! NSAC, a DC-based non-profit organization, advocates for programs and policies that support and invest in sustainable farmers across the country -- including helping farmers access land and capital.

Illinois Stewardship Alliance is an active member of NSAC, and we encourage any participants in the Down Payment Loan Program to email intern@sustainableagriculture.net or call 202-547-5754 to discuss ways to share your story. Personal stories from farmers like you can help us make the case on Capitol Hill for important federal farm and food programs, and can help us make improvements to these programs so that they work for farmers. Know other Down Payment Loan Program participants? Spread the word!

Grassroots Policy Committee
Calling all policy wonks, farmers and advocates interested in legislation and
policy that supports local food and sustainable agriculture. Join ISA's Grassroots Policy Committee, learn more here or email Wes King at wes@ilstewards.org for more information.

**Local Food News**

**Grow your Garden: What to do in March**

April is just around the corner (Woohoo! It’s ok, you can yell too, I know you’re excited) and it's time for all hands on deck in the garden. So bust out those spades, fire up your tiller, and pull on those gardening gloves....things could get messy. But then again, you've been waiting for this all year, a little mud can't scare you!

- Harden off transplants before planting outdoors. Gradually expose plants to outdoor conditions over a 5-7 day period.
- Plant late varieties of potatoes on top of the ground in straw.
- Start cucumber, cantaloupe, summer squash and watermelon seeds indoors.
- Plant spring crops from seeds-carrots, radishes, spinach, peas, turnips, kohlrabi and beets. Use vermiculite instead of soil to cover seeds. It will not crust over as soil can.
- Start tomato and pepper seeds early in the month. If using fluorescent lamps, keep them 1-2 inches from the soil line until the plants germinate, then move them up as the plants grow.
- Erect climbing material for vining crops like peas, pole beans, gourds and cucumbers.
- Add compost to soil.
- Plant fruit trees, grapes, raspberries and blackberries.

Tip Source: [Chicagoland Gardening Magazine](http://nprfreeskool.wordpess.com)

**Recipe of the Month:**

**Soybean Crostini with Spring Asparagus**

*By: Molly Gleason*

I stumbled upon a package of dried soybeans in our office yesterday. Actually, I didn't stumble upon them; they’ve been sitting on top of our office mini-fridge,
staring me in the face every time I've grabbed my lunch ever since I started my job at the Illinois Stewardship Alliance three months ago. What I mean to say is, I really didn't take notice of them.

I mean who really notices soybeans anymore? I see those almost every day in the spring, summer, and fall. There are hundreds and hundreds of acres of them all across rural Illinois. So it's not hard to imagine that a little package of them would escape my attention.

But as I was pulling my soggy salad out of the fridge yesterday, dreaming of sunshine and fresh greens, I realized, it's not spring, summer, or fall. It's still winter here. And what the heck do we have packages of dried soybeans sitting on top of the fridge for anyways?

A closer look revealed that these soybeans are for eating. Have you ever eaten a dried soybean? Me neither.

We live in a land literally dominated by soybeans, and I've never even eaten one; couldn't even point to a single recipe that uses dried soybeans. What the heck?

So I started doing some research on the internet to see if I could find some dried soybean recipes there. I found a smattering of Indian and Korean recipes, but nothing with familiar ingredients. How can Illinois not have any soybean recipes, folks? So I'm making up my own. Read more.
We are looking for farm fresh, seasonal recipes. If you have a recipe you'd like to share, please email molly@ilstewards.org with the recipe and photos for a chance to be featured in our enewsletter.

**Conservation News**

**Value-Added Producer Grant Program Deadline Extended**

Today, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development retroactively announced that the deadline for applications for the Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program would be extended by two weeks in order to incorporate a change from the recently enacted 2014 Farm Bill. Coming over one month from the original February 24 deadline for VAPG applications, the announcement allows the incorporation of a new priority category for veteran farmers and ranchers. Applicants who filed proposals by February 24 may now refile their applications if the new veteran priority applies to their proposal. Continue reading on the NSAC blog. View the Farmer's Guide to VAPGs

**2014 Cover Crop Business Directory**

The 2014 Cover Crop Business Directory is now available online, complete with an extensive list of cover crop seed providers and aerial applicators to help you with all your cover crop needs.
Mark Your Calendars for the 2015 Conservation Cropping Seminars

Curious about Cover Crops? Want to learn more about soil health? Mark your calendars for three new Conservation Cropping Seminars coming to your area in 2015:

- Dekalb on January 27th
- Mattoon on February 4th
- Macomb on February 18th

Don't miss out on these great opportunities to learn more about cover crop best practices and implementation.
March 31 Chef-Farmer Mixer: Champaign-Urbana
Calling all farmers and chefs! Illinois Stewardship Alliance is happy to host a second round of Chef-Farmer Mixers. Participants will have the opportunity to make new business contacts, learn some tricks of the trade, enjoy local wine, beer and appetizers and enjoy ample networking time. This Mixer will be held in Cafeteria and Company from 3:00-5:00 p.m.
Learn More

March 31 Women Caring for the Land: DeKalb
Women who own or manage farmland in DeKalb and surrounding counties are invited to participate in a free conservation discussion and field tour in Sycamore. The program is called Women Caring for the Land and is sponsored in part by a sustainability grant from the Illinois Department of Agriculture.
Learn More

March 31 Cover Crop Farmer Education Meeting: Palestine
Participants will have the opportunity to visit fields with existing cover crops and hear presentations from soil and cover crop experts. Registration is $10.
Learn More

April 3 Cover Crop Field Tour for Fruit and Vegetable Production: Alto Pass
Learn more about how local fruit and vegetable growers are enhancing their production with cover crops! The outdoor field tour will begin at Rendleman Orchards and continue to Bass Farms near Cobden. Participants will be transported by bus to Bass Farms and the tour will conclude back at Rendleman's Orchards around noon.
Learn More

April 5 Getting the Most Out of Small Acres Workshop: Springfield
Putting a few extra acres to work can bring in additional income, provide an opportunity to experiment with a new enterprise, or develop an interest or hobby for its educational or entertainment value. How to get started is the question. University of Illinois Extension is sponsoring a series of workshops to help cultivate ideas on how to develop and manage a small farm entity
Learn More

April 7 Market Ready: Learning to Connect with Commercial Markets: Westchester
MarketReady is a program designed to help small and mid-sized producers understand the evolving commercial market opportunities for locally produced foods. Cost for this program is $15 per person and includes lunch and handouts.
Learn More

April 7 Farm Dreams Workshop: Champaign-Urbana
Have you ever dreamed of starting your own farm business? Farm Dreams is an interactive workshop designed to help you learn what it takes to do just that. Participants meet experienced sustainable farmers, learn about different successful farm enterprises, and ask questions about the genesis and development of local sustainable farm businesses.
Learn More

April 8-9 Midwest Cover Crop Council Meeting: Warsaw, IN
Come participate in the annual working meeting of the MCCC. This year will include a field trip to a farm with many different cover crop plots and fields, with a grower (Jamie Scott) who has long experience with cover crops and who hosts many visitors.
Learn More

April 10-12 Illinois Lake Management Conference
The Illinois Lake Management Association's 29th annual lake conference is being held in Sandwich on April 10-12, 2014. If you are a lake manager, recreational lake user, researcher, public water supplier, in a lake home owner association, or interested in lakes/watersheds in any capacity, this is a conference for you. The conference offers two full days of presentations from over 30 experts in the water quality field, and a third day of workshops. Come take advantage of having the opportunity to learn and network with persons throughout the industry.
Learn More

April 12 Illinois Sustainable Living and Wellness Expo: Illinois Wesleyan University
Explore the many aspects of Living Well & Living Green at the upcoming Illinois Sustainable Living and Wellness Expo with up to 100 exhibitors and 20 presenters. This interactive event celebrates Creating Healthy Communities by blending ideas for green alternatives and embracing the many services that promote health and healing. 9:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.
Learn More

April 19 Bloomington Indoor Farmers' Market: Bloomington
The Downtown Bloomington Association Farmers' Market is a popular Saturday morning meeting place. Not only does the market give customers a colorful venue to buy locally grown farm products, it also puts them in touch with local artists, musicians, and community organizations. This is a producer-only market offering a wide array of farm products -- including vegetables, fruits, cheeses, pork, beef, free-range poultry and eggs, flowers, plants, herbs, artisan bread and more. Most products are chemical-free and grown using sustainable practices.
Learn More

April 21 Farm Dreams Workshop: Effingham
Have you ever dreamed of starting your own farm business? Farm Dreams is an interactive workshop designed to help you learn what it takes to do just that. Participants meet experienced sustainable farmers, learn about different successful farm enterprises, and ask questions about the genesis and development of local sustainable farm businesses.
Learn More

April 26-27 Barefoot Gardens Intermediate Gardening Workshop: Macomb
The intermediate class is designed to help people who have some experience in gardening take the next step. Learn the tricks of the trade from a professor and gardener with over 15 years of experience training students and interns on what really works.

Learn More

May 2 and 3 Maldaner's Morel Dinner
The cost is $68 for the 5-course dinner, coffee or tea, tax, and gratuity. A vegetarian version will be available both nights. You can make online reservations and payment on our website. Don't Delay!

Learn More

May 5 Farm Dreams Workshop: Kankakee
Have you ever dreamed of starting your own farm business? Farm Dreams is an interactive workshop designed to help you learn what it takes to do just that. Participants meet experienced sustainable farmers, learn about different successful farm enterprises, and ask questions about the genesis and development of local sustainable farm businesses.

Learn More

May 10 Farmland Access Field Day: Heyworth
The Land Connection is partnering with the Central Illinois Sustainable Farming Network and Eric Marshall of Homestead Harvests to present a comprehensive Farmland Access Field Day on Saturday, May 10. Come learn about all aspects of farmland access from experts including a soil specialist, attorney, loan officer, and farm appraiser.

Learn More

For a complete listing of upcoming events, please checkout our Events Calendar on the ISA website.

Have an event that should be included on our event lineup? Email Molly at molly@ilstewards.org

Get Involved

Donate
ISA is a non-profit organization. Your donations help us to continue our work in promoting local foods, fair policies, and conservation agriculture.

Donate Now

Become a Member
Be part of an Alliance of consumers, farmers and other local food system stakeholders working to increase production and consumption of local foods in Illinois

Learn More

Spread the word!
When you send this email to a friend, like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, or connect with us on LinkedIn, you are helping to increase awareness about local food causes in your community. Be a part of the movement and spread the word!