

NewsWatch

100-mile lunch puts focus on local food production

By JENNIFER VINCENT

ON the last day in January, the 10th annual Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference attracted more than 700 people, who spent the day learning about everything from hoophouses and pastured poultry to food safety and delivering a local food supply.

So, when it came time for lunch, organizer and Antrim County Extension Director Stan Moore says it was only fitting to “walk the talk,” and serve a 100-mile lunch, meaning everything on the menu was grown within a 100-mile radius of the conference at Grayling High School.

“We’ve always tried to serve local foods, but this is the first time we’ve had the strict 100-mile lunch,” Moore says. “It’s been well-received.”



STAN MOORE

Key Points

- Northern Small Farm Conference attendees get taste of northern Michigan.
- Farm-to-consumer sales rise 49% between ag censuses.
- New ruling allows schools to contract for more local foods.

The menu included pulled chicken parmesan sandwiches, or white bean and garlic hummus sandwiches (for the vegetarians); potato and sweet corn chowder; roasted chestnut soup; roasted root vegetables; apple cider; and milk. Dessert included Apple Brown Betty and yellow cake with cherries.

Moore says planning for the next conference and luncheon begins almost as soon as they are over with. “Everything served — every ingredient — comes from within a 100-mile radius,” he says. “We have to line up the producers well in advance to be able to supply the quantity we need.”



LOCAL FLAVOR: The 100-mile lunch at the Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference features a bounty of locally grown foods.

That quantity keeps going up, as the conference attendance jumped from 500 last year to a sold-out 700 this year — including 117 youths who attended specially designed breakout sessions.

For Tom and Waneta Cook of Gaylord, who raise 2,000 pastured chickens and 250 Thanksgiving turkeys, that meant making sure they had the capacity to deliver enough chickens for the lunch and informing other buyers of potential lags in availability.

“The producers have been really wonderful to work with,” Moore adds. “It’s extra work and there are transportation issues, but it’s been a great learning experience. The meal was prepared by school staff, who had to adapt to a slightly different way of doing things. “It’s not like you call up and order boneless chicken,” Moore explains. “These were whole chickens that had to be cooked, the skin pulled off and deboned. In the end, we provided a healthy, nutritious and locally grown lunch.”

The only glitch in the menu were the carrots, part of a roasted vegetable medley. “The carrots that were set aside for us froze in the ground,” Moore says. “Thankfully, the Michigan State University student organic farm was able to supply us.”

The public’s interest in where their food comes from and how it’s produced is reflected in the new 2007 Census of Agriculture, where direct farm-to-consumer food sales at farm stands and farmers markets reportedly rose 49%.

The state Legislature has also opened the door for more farm-to-school food. In December, legislators passed a new law easing state bidding requirements,

They said it



“The food is great, and this conference is great. I’m a gardener and I teach at Kirtland Community College. We’re surrounded by Jackpines because that’s about all that grows there. I’d love to see our sandy soils for greater good, such as food production or biomass.”

Joseph Fields, Roscommon

“I moved here three years ago from Tennessee. So, I’m adapting to a shorter growing season and sandy soils. I belong to a community-supported agriculture program, which is a network of small gardeners. I’m interested in sustainable gardening throughout the year and in organic gardening.”



Charlotte Seager, Northport



“I’m impressed with this 100-mile lunch; this is northern Michigan. I’m interested in starting a community supported agriculture program at the school where I teach [Bloomfield] and developing a farm-to-school program. We’re not going to stop eating, but let’s not eat from China or Australia.”

Holly Glomaki, agriscience educator at Bloomfield Schools

which were stricter than federal law required. Schools can now buy \$100,000 worth of food, the federal limit, in a year without developing a formal bid process. Prior, the state had enforced a much smaller limit, less than \$20,000 a year. The law also directs the state departments of Education and Agriculture to help connect schools and farms.

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New management team takes control at GreenStone FCS

AS of Jan. 2, the management team for GreenStone Farm Credit Services is complete after four appointments were made to executive positions within the association.

Leading the team is Dave Armstrong, who assumed the role as president and chief executive officer when Jim Schiller retired after 37 years with the Farm Credit System.

Armstrong brings 27 years of Farm Credit experience with him to his new position. His tenure includes serving as a loan officer, branch manager, vice president of sales and marketing, and chief executive officer of FCS of east-central Michigan. In 1999, when the four Farm Credit associations in Michigan merged to form GreenStone Farm Credit Services, he assumed his most recent role of executive vice president of cus-

Key Points

- Dave Armstrong is new president and chief executive officer.
- Jack Kelly takes over as executive vice president of customer delivery.
- Brook Walsh and Pete Lemmer also fill new positions.

tom delivery.

Now holding Armstrong’s former position is Jack Kelly, who is a 22-year veteran with Farm Credit. He takes on the position of executive vice president of customer delivery after most recently serving as the chief information officer and executive director of BGM Technology Collaboration for GreenStone. He began as a loan officer and has held several other positions including manager of credit processing,

director of audits, director of information services and senior vice president of customer support systems.

In conjunction with these positions are two additional executive appointments: the chief information officer and executive director of BGM Technology Collaboration for GreenStone, and the chief legal counsel.

The chief information officer and executive director of BGM Technology Collaboration for GreenStone has been filled by Brook Walsh. He has more than 17 years of information technology experience.

Peter Lemmer will be GreenStone’s chief legal counsel. He has 24 years of experience as an attorney, of which he served 17 years in the position of chief legal counsel, primarily at diversified financial organizations.