

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SUBJECT: University of Minnesota Southwest Research and Outreach Center
Organic Field Day

EVENT DATE: Wednesday, July 11, 2007

SWROC Organic Field Day to Highlight Organic No-till Systems

Lamberton, Minn. – The outlook for organic farming is good. It is one of the fastest growing segments of United States agriculture. As consumer interest continues to grow, producers are turning to certified organic farming systems as a way to lower input costs, decrease reliance on nonrenewable resources, capture premium prices, and boost farm income.

The University of Minnesota Research and Outreach Center in Lamberton, Minn., leads an extensive program dedicated to exploring organic agriculture production and the science of organic agriculture. On Wednesday, July 11, from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., the Center will host their annual organic field day to present the latest research-based information about organic weed management, cover and companion crops, soil quality, variety selection, vegetable crop trials, and no-till organic production.

“The Southwest Research and Outreach Center has been pioneering organic agriculture research for over 17 years. Research conducted at the Center has helped many producers successfully convert to organic farming and develop economically viable operations,” commented Jim Riddle, UMN Coordinator for Organic Agriculture Outreach.

Beginning at 8:30 a.m., several University of Minnesota faculty will conduct field tours to examine ongoing research of weed management strategies, organic soybean planting date and variety trials, vegetable variety trials, alternative crop rotations, forage establishment methods with companion crops, and forage effects on soil quality.

“This year’s organic field day will be a good one! The field tours highlight current organic research and show how to implement practical production applications,” said Riddle. “Our featured speakers are nationally-known experts on no-till organic systems, forage management, and organic vegetable research.”

Jeff Moyer has been the farm manager at the 333-acre Rodale Institute research farm for over 26 years, refining the farm's cover cropping and crop rotation systems. The farm has over 1,000 organic apple trees, a 3-acre CSA, 270 acres in a rotation of corn, small grains, hay, and edible soybeans, and 25 acres of experimental research plots that have been used to test and compare the yield, soil health and environmental impact of organic and conventional systems for the last 24 years. Jeff also serves on the USDA’s National Organic Standards Board. Jeff will speak about no-till organic production using a front-mounted roller/crimper ahead of the planter.

Erin Silva, PhD is the Organic Production Specialist at the University of Wisconsin. Erin has worked for years on selecting vegetable varieties for use in organic production. Erin will discuss organic vegetable variety selection and provide an update on organic research activities at the University of Wisconsin.

Dr. Craig Sheaffer is a forage expert at the University of Minnesota. Craig will discuss strategies to minimize risk on organic farms by expanding crop rotations and by utilizing a farm assessment tool that Dr. Sheaffer is developing for the USDA Risk Management Agency.

The field day will include a delicious organic lunch, with time to visit exhibits. The Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Services (MOSES) will offer books for sale all day.

The day will conclude with roundtable discussions of the UMN's organic research and outreach activities and a tour of the SWROC's land in conversion to organic production and native prairie restoration project.

The Organic Field Day is free and open to the public. A fee will be charged for the lunch. For more information, contact the SWROC at 507-752-7372 or online at www.organicecology.umn.edu. Anyone wanting to exhibit should contact Jim Riddle at riddl003@umn.edu or 507-454-8310.