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News Release

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Annual WAVA Conference Set for March 11

DECORAH -- Women involved in agriculture are invited to attend the annual Women Adding Value to Agriculture Conference, or WAVA. Entering its fourth year, the conference will be a one-day event held at the Hotel Winneshiek on March 11. This year's conference will focus on farm management issues and strengthening farm family relationships.

Four workshop sessions will be offered during the conference which runs from 1:30-7 pm. For the first hour, women can choose from a session on understanding cash rents and farm leases, or learning about the Iowa Farm On program. During the next hour, women will learn about the two sides of farm transfer—the business side and the relationship side.

The final session of the day will be a dinner theater presentation of “Dirt Court” where the conference committee members will act out a farm family dispute. Conference attendees will witness the proceedings, confer in their small groups, and offer solutions to the family. The evening will conclude with a wonderful meal.

The entire conference program and registration information is available online at www.extension.iastate.edu/allamakee or from your Iowa State University Extension office. Early bird registration is due March 5.

WAVA is for women involved in agriculture, whether they manage their own farm operation, are impacted by the farm economy, or just want to learn more about today’s cutting edge agricultural topics. The conference is funded in part by USDA Farm Service Agency, Iowa State University Extension, Northeast Iowa Community College and the Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative.
FastTrac® NewVenture Class Offerings

NORTHEAST IOWA – Anyone thinking about starting their own business or anyone in the early stages of owning their own business have the opportunity to develop their ideas in a new workshop series. FastTrac is a course designed to teach participants how to research, develop, and write detailed start-up business plans, which can be used to create successful businesses.

The course will help participants discover their entrepreneurial skills, it will provide tools to evaluate business ideas, and it will help participants develop plans for their businesses. Planning the Entrepreneurial Venture takes participants through the key elements of entrepreneurial success--passion, planning, and pursuit. Participants will be given tools to assess their own abilities as entrepreneurs, evaluate the feasibility of their business ideas, and plan for a successful business start-up.

These courses will be held in Fayette County on four Thursdays starting March 24 at Upper Iowa University in Andres Hall, Room 200 from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm and four Thursdays in Winneshiek County starting April 21, at a location yet to be determined.

These courses are sponsored by Iowa Foundation for Microenterprise and Community Vitality, Iowa MicroLoan, Iowa State University Extension, Northeast Iowa Business Network (NIBN) and your county economic development offices.

Please check the website www.neiabiz.com for more information. To sign up or for more information, please contact Robin Bostrom at Fayette County Economic Development at 563.422.5073 or Randy Uhl at Winneshiek County Development at 563.382.6061.

Preliminary Results Available from Forage Testing Project

AMES -- Thanks to an excess of rainfall this past summer, many producers had difficulty getting hay made in a timely manner, which resulted in over-mature forage. As forages mature, they decrease in both energy and protein, and over-mature forage can lead to long-term negative consequences in the herd, according to Iowa State University (ISU) Extension beef program specialist Denise Schwab.

With this in mind, the Iowa Beef Center requested help and financial assistance from ISU's Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, the Iowa Forage and Grassland Council, and the Southern Iowa Forage and Livestock Committee to initiate a forage testing project, Schwab said.

“As of mid-January, more than 400 samples had been submitted to Dairyland Labs as part of this project, with about 350 of those samples being conventional beef cow hay or corn stalks,” Schwab said. “The test results are important to producers.”

A quick look at the data shows that 13 percent of the samples were below 50 percent total digestible nutrients (TDN) and another 34 percent were between 50 percent and 55 percent TDN.
“While many variables can affect the beef cow’s nutrient requirements, the full feed of these hays would be considered ‘marginal’ to ‘deficient’ in meeting the needs of the average pregnant beef cow during the winter months,” Schwab said. “Another method of looking at forage quality is based on Relative Feed Value (RFV), with 100 being equivalent to full bloom alfalfa hay. Of the hays tested, 78 percent were below 100 RFV, meaning there’s a need for energy supplementation in those diets.”

What do these results mean to the cattle producer?

At the very least, Schwab explained, conventional hay feeding programs may not be providing the required nutrients for late gestation cows, meaning some form of energy supplementation is required.

“If your forages haven't been tested for nutrient content, it's critical that you closely monitor the body condition of your cows. Ideally, each cow would have a body condition score of 6 at calving time to improve the likelihood of her cycling and rebreeding for next year,” she said. “Keep in mind that first cutting hay made in June is likely to be deficient in energy for the gestating beef cow and likely would need significant supplementation.”

If you have questions on winter feeding of the beef cow or are interested in having your forages tested, contact your ISU Extension beef program specialist. Find your specialist online.

The Iowa Beef Center (IBC) was established in 1996 with the goal of supporting the growth and vitality of the state’s beef cattle industry. It comprises faculty and staff from ISU Extension, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and College of Veterinary Medicine, and works to develop and deliver the latest research-based information regarding the beef cattle industry. For more information about IBC, visit www.iowabeefcenter.org.

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**News Release**

Contact: Teresa Wiemerslage, ISU Extension program coordinator, wiemer@iastate.edu, 563-794-0599

**Local Food Directory Needs Producer Info**

NORTHEAST IOWA - The Northeast Iowa Food & Farm Coalition (NIFF) is updating the Local Food Directory for Allamakee, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Howard and Winneshiek counties. This directory is part of the Iowa Buy Fresh Buy Local campaign.

The directory includes listings for producers of fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy, eggs, baked goods, honey, herbs and syrups. In addition, local farmers markets, stores and restaurants featuring local food are also listed.

Any producers or businesses who would like to be listed in the 2011 directory should visit www.iowafreshfood.com for more information. Producers may also contact Teresa Wiemerslage, ISU Extension at 563-794-0599. Directory items need to be received by April 1 to be included in this year’s publication.

The NIFF Coalition and the Food & Fitness Initiative (FFI) are working together to create community environments that support access to fresh, locally grown, healthy, affordable food and safe environments for physical activity and play. More information about these programs can be found at www.iowafoodandfitness.org.

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New Supply/Demand Link Connects Farmers, Markets and Consumers

AMES – MarketMaker on the Web offers a free new tool to connect family shoppers with farmers – and with everyone in between – including restaurants and grocery stores. That’s good for consumers who wonder where to find fresh local products and good for small farms with no marketing budget. For everyone, it’s Internet easy – just visit agmrc.org and click the MarketMaker link.

States already part of MarketMaker’s growing network include Arkansas, Colorado, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and South Carolina. Alabama, Texas and other states are expected to join soon.

“MarketMaker began as an online database of Illinois businesses and was so successful that now other states have joined the effort,” said Iowa State University Extension specialist Craig Tordsen. “University of Illinois developed and owns the tool but the multi-state partnership that is able to pool large amounts of food industry data and provide it to the public really adds value to the resource.”

Family shoppers can use the MarketMaker website to search for restaurants or places to buy everything from freshly picked or pick-your-own produce, to maple syrup and wine. Farmers can search for farmers’ markets, grocery stores and other outlets to sell their food products.

The Iowa website is located at ia.marketmaker.uiuc.edu. From there, visitors can search for restaurants, grocery stores, farms and other production facilities across several states. “It’s more than a directory of information because it has interactive features like mapping and search capabilities so users can really target and focus on the data that they need,” Tordsen said.

Each state has a unique site, but all the data from other MarketMaker states can be accessed from any state MarketMaker location. The national MarketMaker link at agmrc.org is hosted by the national Agricultural Marketing Resource Center at Iowa State University. The AgMRC link provides a clickable map of the entire United States. Participating states are highlighted, making it easy for users to navigate from state to state or to regionalize their data searches.

Iowa farms and businesses can sign up for a free listing by registering on the MarketMaker website at ia.marketmaker.uiuc.edu. For assistance with registration, northeast Iowa farmers can call Teresa Wiemerslage, ISU Extension at 563-795-0599.

“Our goal is to make the site a resource for all farmers and businesses in the food supply chain,” Tordsen said. “We are as interested in helping a grocery store find farm-fresh eggs as we are in helping the farmer find a place to sell them, so it’s important to include as many producers in our database as possible.”

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This information has been sent to you by Teresa Wiemerslage, Regional Communications Coordinator for Region 4 ISU Extension, wiemer@iastate.edu, 563-794-0599.

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