

Manitoba Farm Mentorship



Connecting people, land, and local knowledge for a food-secure Manitoba

The Organic Food Council of Manitoba is excited to announce the launch of **Manitoba Farm Mentorship**, a program that steps up access to training, resources and local markets for farmers in Manitoba. Through full-season or part-time mentoring, aspiring farmers and seasoned producers can receive hands-on instruction and coaching from mentors skilled in smaller-scale, organic and environmentally sustainable farming practices. In addition to one-on-one mentoring, the Manitoba Farm Mentorship program will also provide workshops and farm tours, educational materials and resources, and a land-link listing connecting land-owners who want to see their land used for food production with producers seeking land. The program encourages Manitoba's burgeoning farm and food community to engage with one another, increasing market opportunities for farmers and access to fresh, vibrant, healthy food for Manitobans.

The Organic Food Council of Manitoba (OFCM-COG) is a chapter of Canadian Organic Growers. Heifer International, whose mission is to work with communities to end hunger and poverty and care for the earth, has partnered with OFCM-COG to carry out a five year pilot of the Manitoba Farm Mentorship program (MFM). OFCM-COG also counts on the support and contributions of the MFM steering committee, which is made up of successful organic and sustainable farmers and market gardeners, experienced farm interns and volunteers, and members of the Harvest Moon Society and the Farmers' Markets Association of Manitoba. The collective vision of the MFM community is a just, productive and stable agricultural system that supplies everyone with affordable, exciting and nutritious food.

MFM has been developed by successful farmers, for farmers. It has been designed to attract a broad audience while remaining focused on smaller-scale, ecologically-sound, and locally-based farming techniques. The goals of the program include increasing the number of organic/sustainable family farms in Manitoba, attracting youth to farming, creating demand and new markets for local sustainably-grown food, and increasing urban farming.

"This program will contribute to the efforts of the many groups in Manitoba that are working to improve the viability of family farming, increase our food security, and create stronger connections between farmers and eaters in Manitoba," says Sharon Taylor, Coordinator of MFM. "With so many farmers nearing retirement and issues like climate change and the price of fuel pressing us to find sustainable solutions, the time is right for the launch of the Manitoba Farm Mentorship program."

Information about MFM, application forms, and the 2009 mentor farm profiles are now available online and workshops and tours are being planned throughout the 2009 growing season. For more information, go to www.organicfoodcouncil.org, or contact Coordinator Sharon Taylor at manitobafarmmentorship@gmail.com or 204-785-8828.

