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Central Illinois Sustainable Farmer Training Program Enters Its Tenth Year
Early registration for scholarships due August 1st

CHAMPAIGN, ILLINOIS (July 11, 2014): The Land Connection is pleased to announce it has entered its tenth year of farmer training and is accepting applications for its Central Illinois Farm Beginnings course, which begins in October. This year-long farmer training program includes classroom, field day, and mentorship components that are designed to help new farmers plan and launch farm businesses that are economically viable and environmentally sustainable.

“Whether you’re interested in growing fresh fruits and vegetables for local markets, turkeys and geese for the holidays, or alternative grains for wholesale markets, The Land Connection staff, farmer-instructors, and farmer-mentors can help you jump-start your farm businesses,” said The Land Connection’s founder Terra Brockman.

Since 2005, Central Illinois Farm Beginnings has graduated nearly 200 people interested in sustainable farming, over two-thirds of whom are currently farming—leading successful small businesses that generate jobs, steward farmland, and meet the growing consumer demand for high-quality, locally grown food. Last year, the class moved to a new location at Prairie Fruits Farm and Creamery in Champaign, where students will have access to the expert knowledge and extensive experience of the Prairie Fruits staff, as well as high-quality in-class meals prepared by the farm’s chef, Alisa Demarco. “Joining forces has allowed both entities to achieve their overlapping objectives to help build a new food system to supply high quality, healthy local foods to our communities in Central Illinois,” said Wes Jarrell, co-owner of the farm.

Applications are now being accepted for 2014–2015 Central Illinois Farm Beginnings, with early registration and scholarship applications due August 1. For more information or to apply to the program, go to http://thelandconnection.org-central-illinois-farm-beginnings.

“Farm Beginnings is about taking your farm dream and turning it into a reality,” said Jeff Hake, The Land Connection’s Farmer Training Program Manager who will facilitate the course. “We need more farmers in this country and, luckily, there are a lot of people who want to so do. Our role is to make sure they are ready to be successful farm business owners. We give our students the opportunity to make meaningful connections with successful local farmers during each seminar and through mentorships. This farmer-to-farmer connection has proven immensely successful, as we are able to pair farmers and students who have similar interests, such as growing organic grain or keeping bees or processing fruits for preserves. Those connections wind up lasting far longer than the course itself and strengthen both the farm enterprises of our students and the food system itself.”

About The Land Connection:
The Land Connection is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting farmland, training sustainable farmers, and promoting a vibrant local food system.
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