National organic farming conference takes place next week in La Crosse

SPRING VALLEY, WI – More than 3,000 people will be in La Crosse Feb. 22-24 for the 29th Annual MOSES Organic Farming Conference—the country’s largest educational event about organic and sustainable farming. On-site admission will be available at the La Crosse Center in La Crosse, Wis.

The three-day event starts Thursday, Feb. 22 with full-day, intensive courses known as “Organic University.” Courses run from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and focus on topics such as hoophouse production, transitioning large-scale operations to organic, ecological weed management, and innovative ways to obtain land to farm. Courses are $220, and include a handbook, breakfast and lunch. See the course descriptions at OrganicUniversity.org.

The MOSES Organic Farming Conference opens at 5 p.m. that Thursday, with access to the two-floor exhibit hall with 178 vendors. Growers can find organic seeds, farming tools and equipment, and meet crop buyers, USDA agencies, organic certifiers, and other farm-support organizations. The official conference “kick off” is at 7 p.m. when the MOSES Board of Directors announces the Organic Farmers of the Year, the prestigious award that recognizes a farm family for outstanding land management, innovation, and outreach to promote organic agriculture.

On Friday and Saturday, innovative farmers and experienced ag professionals present 66 workshops over six sessions. Topics cover practical information about field crops, livestock, dairy, vegetables and specialty crops, as well as soil health, farming issues, and strategies to help farmers manage and grow a farm business.

Keynote speakers for the 2018 MOSES Conference are John Mesko, Melinda Hemmelgarn, and Chris Blanchard. Mesko heads MOSES and owns a grass-fed beef operation in Minnesota. He’ll explore the influence the organic movement has had on agriculture, and how it could impact the future of farming. Hemmelgarn is a registered dietitian and host of the nationally syndicated “Food Sleuth” radio show. She’ll share ideas for improving the nation’s food system. Blanchard hosts the “Farmer to Farmer Podcast.” He’ll draw on insights gleaned from the podcast to talk about ways farmers can create a positive work-life balance.
Conference registration includes admission to the exhibit hall, workshops, keynotes, and the organic research gallery, organic meals, and entertainment. Admission is $160/day or $300 for the full conference (Thursday evening through Saturday).

Organic University and the conference are organized by MOSES, the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service, a nonprofit that promotes organic and sustainable agriculture by providing farmers with education, resources, and practical advice.

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