

Planning and Design of a Sustainable Farm **An Interdisciplinary Special Topics Course, Spring Quarter 2008**

Course Description and Objectives:

This special topics seminar, discussion and practicum course will focus on planning and designing a sustainable farm for Ohio. Immediate and severe economic pressures can encourage “tunnel vision” decision-making that disregards critical components of long-term success. For the short-term, farm profitability can be enhanced by chasing economies of scale. However, this narrow approach hampers the planning and design of farms that are sustainable in multiple dimensions. Alternative approaches to agriculture can help farms remain economically viable while enhancing their inherent ability to drive off-farm economies, enrich quality-of-life and maintain environmental health. Such approaches: a) take advantage of scope economies and ecosystem services, b) integrate farms into local communities and food systems, c) spur the development of value-added products and services, and d) reduce capital and external input needs to great effect. Far from being regressive, these approaches make use of farmer ingenuity and modern science and technology to maximize production efficiency while maintaining environmental quality, economic viability and social responsibility. *The intent of this course is to provide students with wider and more demanding visions of farm planning and design and an interactive forum in which they use their own creativity in the planning and design of a sustainable farm for Ohio.*

In this course, students will gain:

- A broadened view of agriculture including field, farm, community, watershed and regional scales, and farmer-consumer linkages;
- A perspective on how Ohio farmers seek compatibility and synergism between social, economic and environmental objectives.
- Both conceptual and applied understanding of farm planning and design criteria;
- A holistic and useful framework for addressing agricultural issues; and
- Experience employing this framework in multidisciplinary teams addressing real-world issues.



In 2008, students will have the opportunity to contribute to the design of the Mellinger Farm, a 300-acre farm in Wayne County that is being donated to OARDC. The Mellinger Farm could be an excellent venue for demonstrating, developing, adapting and educating about the technology devoted to small scale, entrepreneurial and ecological approaches to farming. In future years, Ohio farmers seeking to improve the sustainability of their enterprises may be engaged so that their farms serve as the focus of student planning and design.

Time/Location/Credit: Spring Quarter, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3-4 PM, Fisher 121 (Wooster) and Kottman 244 (Columbus) by video link, 2 credit hours, open to graduate students and to undergraduate students with at least junior class standing and permission of course instructors.

For more information and to register:

Contact Casey Hoy (hoy.1@osu.edu) or Matt Kleinhenz (kleinhenz.1@osu.edu) for more information on the course and how to register.

Participating faculty members are from the departments of: Agricultural, Environmental and Development Economics, Animal Sciences, Entomology, Horticulture and Crop Sciences, Human and Community Resource Development, and Plant Pathology. Participating instructors and course contacts: Molly Bean, Mark Bennett, John Cardina, Thad Ezeji, Francis Fluharty, Bill Flinn, Parwinder Grewal, Sally Miller, Richard Moore, Deborah Stinner, Barry Ward, Meike Wollni