2004 NOFA Conference: Big Names and More!

Even the partially-carried through threat of hurricane-like conditions couldn’t stop the festivities or dampen the spirit of a record number of participants, as the 30th Annual NOFA Summer Conference hosted renowned speakers and seemed, by its size and atmosphere, to signal a growth in interest in the movement for organic agriculture and healthy living. Though heading into the conference there was much anticipation and controversy about one of the figures in the debate, the conference was clearly much more than one or two big names, with many folks more concerned about how to increase their carrot production or eliminate pesticide use in their town than with what Ralph Nader had to say about legalizing raw milk (which, incidentally, was nothing).

The NOFA Summer Conference began as a way for northeast growers and homesteaders to share their knowledge with each other and bring new folks into the fold and back to the land. That remains its basic function, and, based on all those for whom this was their first conference, it is functioning quite well.

But that is not to say that we didn’t enjoy the presence of the bigshots, who added some excitement to an already exciting event. The long weekend started off for more than 200 folks with the reflections, musings, and nitty-gritty shop talk of longtime New England grower Eliot Coleman, who has gained acclaim for his durability and innovation, as well as his popular book Four Season Harvest. Over the course of the eight-hour, two-day workshop he also demonstrated how detail-oriented he is, and impressed participants with the numerous tools and instruments which he has designed and uses on his coastal Maine farm. Reactions to Coleman’s preconference event ranged from effusive to satisfied.

Of those who had the pleasure to hear Dr. Vandana Shiva speak, no one I spoke to was disappointed. I don’t think it was because she praised the audience as “the heroes of tomorrow” and said that they were worth her putting a little more carbon dioxide into the air via jet flight across the globe. What they heard was a little bit of biography, as Shiva traced her path to Punjab in 1982 to investigate the reasons for the strife caused by the so-called Green Revolution. Over the course of the eight-hour, two-day workshop she also demonstrated how detail-oriented he is. Further endearing her to me, she celebrated the “lovely sounds of babies in (the) hall,” which to my mind should put to rest the yearly complaints in evaluation forms about baby noises at the keynote.

Although the almost 1400 people at the conference came for much more than Nader, there was a large crowd to hear him debate congressman Ron Paul of Texas on Saturday night. Folks seemed to enjoy the event, which was skillfully moderated by the humorous and self-effacing Willie Lockereetz. Evidence of ill feelings toward Nader was scant, and the debaters exhibited no ill feelings toward each other, as they agreed on many issues (corporations control the government) and laughed away some of their differences. A question posed by an audience member brought up the possibility of libertarians like Paul and progressives like Nader collaborating on the many issues on which they agree, and both men were fairly open to the idea, bringing up instances in which they’ve already worked together. It was difficult to say if these men adequately expressed a wide range of political views among NOFA members (it was certainly not the full range), but it seemed people were glad for the opportunity and enjoyed themselves.

(continued on page 39)
Dear NOFA, 
I read with interest letters to the editor, summer 2004. I have subscribed to NOFA 2 years now and love your paper. The conference last year looked great and there were lots of activities, but not being a farmer we chickened out we didn’t go. This year however, I signed up the entire family April 25th (would have done so earlier if it had been possible) and made sure it was scheduled in the family calendar. I am a (part-time) Hospice nurse, a mother of young teenagers, a wife, daughter, grandmother and gardener. My idea of gardening is the “English cottage look” - sort of the wild, don’t have to weed, so incorporate the weed into the garden variety of gardener without upsetting (too much) my mother who is a master gardener, master composer and landscaper with whom I share the yard. Hmmmm. One of my caregiving duties is to provide healthy sustenance to my family, with harm to none in the process. This goal evolved over time. I read with interest letters to the editor, summer 2004. I am a (part-time) Hospice nurse, a mother of young teenagers, a wife, daughter, grandmother and gardener. My idea of gardening is the “English cottage look” - sort of the wild, don’t have to weed, so incorporate the weed into the garden variety of gardener without upsetting (too much) my mother who is a master gardener, master composer and landscaper with whom I share the yard. Hmmmm. One of my caregiving duties is to provide healthy sustenance to my family, with harm to none in the process. This goal evolved over time. The comparison I like the best is comparing Bush and Gore (and now Kerry) to coke & pepsi. Coke loves their coke, and pepsi lovers drink nothing but... Yet our democracy pretends to represent all drinks. Well, Ralph Nader is apple juice. People may say he took away votes from Gore, but I doubt it, people who drink juice and don’t like colas are not going to drink any cola if that’s the only thing offered. Besides which, that election was a selection, even if Nader’s votes had gone to Gore, somehow or another Bush would still have been selected. Refusing to listen to, to support a variety of candidates limits our choices, our visions, our lives. If all we are allowed to choose from is pepsi or cola, what in the world of our teas, our coffees, wines, juices, etc. etc. etc. for one am absolutely thrilled to be able to hear and see a candidate with Ralph Nader interviewing of whether he is running for president or not. This is a phenomenal man - what an opportunity to hear his perspective and his ideas. I crave for a new angle, another view from what is constantly printed in the press.

The Organic Consumer

The Organic movement has gone through some major changes during the last 35 years. Started by back-to-the-landers with little experience growing food, it now boasts tens of thousands of viable farms, dozens of university-based degree programs, and millions in federal research funds. Originally self-certified, farms are now recognized by the USDA. At first retailed sporadically in rundown storefront-coops, organic produce is now spot-lit in beautiful, new upscale stores that often serve as mall anchors.

The agent for these changes is not so much the grower, the educator, the government official, the certifier, or the retailer. No, credit must be given to the lowly organic consumer. It is he, in fact more correctly, she, who recognized that there is a growing consensus in the wonderful world of cheap, industrial food. It was she who sought out food produced with care for the earth and with more concern for the end product - people’s health and nutrition.

Now, that consumer seems to be leading public opinion. A recent Organic Valley survey found that seven in 10 Americans have switched from non-organic foods to mostly organic foods in the past two years. Consumers are concerned about the health risks posed by pesticides, hormones and antibiotics in the production of nonorganic foods. Two-thirds said they would pay more for organically produced foods. As a result, Wild Oats earnings are up almost 12 percent this year over last. Whole Foods reported that same-store sales were up 17 percent from last year.

It is time to devote an issue of this paper to the organic consumer. There are many more of them now. What are they thinking? What questions should they be asking? How are they accessing local organic food? What changes are in store as a result of the growth in their demand? Is organic food reaching less affluent consumers?

We hope this issue stimulates you to appreciate that key player in our world, the organic consumer.

By Jack Kittredge
Letters (continued)

I tell my girls (12 & 14 yo) we’re going for the food and fun. I haven’t told them my idea of food and fun is Coleman, Shiva, Nader and Paul. They probably suspect it, but it sounds as though they’ll find plenty of their kind of food and fun at the conference as well!

Thank you from the bottom of my heart,
Eveline Hartz

Dear Eveline,

Thanks for your letter. I appreciate hearing from the other side on this! I’m not enough of a political scientist to know whether Nader hurt Gore or not, but I certainly believe people have the right to run for President outside the 2 major parties, and other people have the right to vote as they please.

This debate has been the most divisive thing in NOFA since the NOP. Perhaps more so! I hope everyone who attended had a great time, could express their views either at the debate itself or the follow-up session assessing NOFA’s role in sponsoring it, and we can now lay the matter to rest.

Thanks again,
Jack Kittredge

Dear Editor,

Just a little note to thank everyone at “The Natural Farmer”. I absolutely adore the journal and I am truly thankful, grateful, and most of all Blessed to know of the existence of such a fine publication.

Thanks again!
Sincerely,
Elizabeth McLean

Dear Elizabeth,

Thanks for the kind words! We do try to edit a good paper, but most of the credit has to go to the many contributors who give of themselves each issue to share ideas, pass along tips, bare their souls and their farming operations so that others may avoid the same mistakes. NOFA members are truly outstanding people and I am proud to be able to work for them!

Sincerely,
Jack Kittredge
The Center for Agroecology at the University of California at Santa Cruz offers a full-time, 6 month training course in organic gardening and farming. Apprentices are exposed to the different aspects of growing plants organically on both a hand-dug garden scale and tractor-cultivated field scale. Cultural requirements are covered, including the specifics of soil preparation, composting, sowing, cultivation, propagation, irrigation, pest/disease control and marketing. Several scholarships are available. Contact www.ucsc.edu/casfs, apprenticeship@ucsc.edu or 831-459-3695.

Nearing Stewardship, Coastal Maine. The Good Life Center is seeking applicants for its Residential Stewardship at Scott and Helen Nearing’s homestead on the coast of Maine. This is a one-year renewable appointment for two people, beginning March 2005. Applicants must be knowledgeable about sustainable living, organic gardening, and the Nearrings. For information and application (207) 326-8211, information@goodlife.org, or see www.goodlife.org Deadline: October 31, 2004.

At last, a totally organic grocery store. Yes, we are committed to starting an all-organic, employee-owned grocery store and cafe in Amesbury, MA. Amesbury Organic Market expects to open in the train depot this fall and we need general staff who are dedicated to organic living to help us realize our dream. We also need very creative chefs and cooks for our prepared foods section. We will offer locally grown and produced food whenever available and we support fair business practices. Please call Margot at 978-948-8112.

Exciting Opportunity with a Future! Ol'Turtle Farm in Easthampton, MA seeking experienced farmer(s) with commitment to sustainable organic practices. Position involves helping to manage all aspects of a 200 share CSA moving toward full ownership (we don’t have a mechanism for delivery!). All are in 4 and 8 inch pots $ 2.50 ea.; kaliteri oregano - rich and complex flavor without being overpowering; lemon verbena - wonderful lemon flavor & fragrance for sauces and desserts; lemons basil - fabulous cinnamon & citrus aroma and flavor for pastes & desserts. Craig & Kat, Bear Pond Farm, 89 Lake Shore Trail Glastonbury, CT 06033, Tel: 860-657-3830; toll-free 866-868-7404, Fax: 860-657-3830, Email: bearpondfarm@aol.com

Late Blight in Tomatoes. I am a breeder/researcher with the Organic Seed Alliance and I am interested in the geographic range of late blight on tomatoes this year. I have been breeding for horizontal resistance to late blight in several tomato populations over the past seven years and we have a project funded by the Organic Farming Research Foundation to continue this work. I currently have only moderate levels of resistance in these materials and am testing one population in North Central Vermont. I would be interested to communicate with anyone in the East who gets severe disease pressure this year. I will also be especially interested to speak with anyone who finds any tomato varieties (standard, hybrid, or heritage) in their fields that exhibit any level of resistance to the disease. Even if the resistance simply slows the rate of infection of the disease by a few days (or more!), this type of “rate reducing” resistance is exactly what we are looking for in our attempt to develop public domain tomato germplasm that will be distributed to independent seed companies and plant breeders in the future. John Navazio, Ph.D., Organic Seed Alliance, PO Box 772, Port Townsend, WA 98368, 360-385-7192, john@seedalliance.org

Looking for farm to buy. Sincere, committed and hardworking middle aged woman determined/eager to start own (grassbased rotational) livestock farm. Have some capital but hope to find someone who cares about keeping their land in sustainable use. Someone perhaps retiring, interested in either mentoring me while I work on your farm (towards buy out), or leasing or selling (reasonable $) ? Open to discussing all possibilities! Prefer SW or Central VT, NW Mass but will consider all locations. Contact PO Box 692 Salem NY 12865 518 854-9704 email dougnt@netheaven.com

I am a Ph.D. student at the University of Connecticut looking for a place to live, 30 minutes or so from Storrs. I am interested in organic agriculture and sustainability, and need access to a garden, yard or at least a deck. I would love to help with gardening, snow shoveling and other outdoor activities. Please e-mail Anna Marie Nicolaysen at annmarien@hispanichealth.com

NOFA Exchange

Blow Your Own Horn!

The NorthEast Herbal Association is dedicated to merging the ancient traditions of Herbalism with the needs and developments of the modern day herbalist through Networking, Education, and Resources for the Herbal Community. Membership in NEHA is open to all who wish to work with our Green Friends, the plants. If you work with the plant world in any capacity, it is your responsibility to respect and understand the plants. Our mission is to see herbalism flourish and thrive as a part of the world community. We strive to provide the highest quality herbal education and resources available.

All Membership Benefits Include:

- Tri-Annual Journal
- Membership Directory
- Annual Retreat

On the web at www.northeastherbal.org

e-mail: neha@northeastherbal.org
NEHA, P.O. Box 105
Muncie, IN 47302

Lamb and pullets for sale! All natural, pasture fed lamb for sale, no antibiotics or hormones used. Lamb is rotated on fresh pasture and are raised with love and respect. Our meats get rave reviews!! Average 40-50 pounds hanging weight, $6.00 per pound. Ready to go by 1st of September. Contact 518-627-0476.

Farm Stewards wanted at Knoll Farm. We are looking for an experienced individual or couple to partner with us to farm our land in the Mad River Valley of Vermont. Sixty acres of open pasture include sheep, PYO berries, and organic vegetables and we are looking for help on our farm staff. The farm is tied to our nonprofit educational retreat center, Whole Communities. Farmer’s market one mile away in active organic farming community. Great opportunity for the right person/couple who is dedicated, ambitious, hard-working and focused on farming and stewardship. Private housing included. Knoll Farm Peter Forbes and Helen Whybrow, Fayston VT 05657 www.wholecommunities.org, 802-496-5686.

We have 200 of each of the following certified organic herbs for sale. They’re greenhouse-grown in Connecticut and available for pick-up (we don’t have a mechanism for delivery!). All are in 4 and 8 inch pots $ 2.50 ea.; kaliteri oregano - rich and complex flavor without being overpowering; lemon verbena - wonderful lemon flavor & fragrance for sauces and desserts; lemons basil - fabulous cinnamon & citrus aroma and flavor for pastes & desserts. Craig & Kat, Bear Pond Farm, 89 Lake Shore Trail Glastonbury, CT 06033, Tel: 860-657-3830; toll-free 866-868-7404, Fax: 860-657-3830, Email: bearpondfarm@aol.com
NOFA Workshops

Thurs. Sept. 9  ORGANIC LAWN CARE
5-7pm  Oxbow Central High School, Bradford, VT
Have you been searching for an alternative to traditional fertilizers for your lawn? Worried about your children and pets but want a nice-looking yard? This workshop is for you! Paul Sachs of North Country Organics and Ecological Turf Consulting will share many tips to organic lawn care. Tour the athletic fields at Oxbow High School where Paul has applied strips of different organic fertilizers and compost treatments. He’ll answer your questions and provide you with the tools to make environmentally responsible decisions.

Directions: Take exit 16 off I-91. If you’re coming from the north, go left off the ramp, from the south, go right. At your first set of lights take a left onto Rt 5. Stay on Rt 5 for 1 mile into Bradford. Go through the center of town. In about 1 mile, you’ll see Oxbow High School on the left. Park in the back and meet at the athletic fields. The workshop will take place in the softball fields.

Sun. Sept. 12  WILD MUSHROOM IDENTIFICATION
1-5pm  Chickering Bog, North Montpelier, VT
Farmer Alan LePage has been hunting wild mushrooms for over 20 years and will lead this wild mushroom ID walk in the Chickering Bog Preserve. Sweet teeth, chanterelles, bluettes, matusakes, and giant puffballs could all be visible. Please bring your mushroom ID books, mudboots, and raingear (if needed). Note: The Nature Conservancy has asked us NOT to harvest any mushrooms in this preserve.

Directions: From Montpelier: Take Rt 2 east 6.5 miles to North Montpelier, where you will see the Riverbend Store and a pond on your right. From this store continue on Rt 14 for 1.1 miles to a crossroad on your left marked by a sign for the Calais Elementary School (Lightening Ridge Rd). Turn left and go 1.6 miles to a private driveway on your left marked by a green post with the initials “TNC”. The mailbox says MacKenzie. Please park along the road side of the road, NOT in the driveway.

Sun. Sept. 12  COOKING FROM THE GARDEN
3-5pm  Northshire Museum and History Center, Manchester Ctr., VT
Please pre-register with the NOFA office to ensure a spot for yourself at this workshop. Learn to prepare an herbed vinaigrette salad, a seasonal tart and a fruity dessert!

Directions: The Northshire Museum is located in the middle of Manchester Center on Main Street (Rt 7A directly behind the Ye Olde Tavern). If coming from the north on Rt 7A, it will be on the right. >From the south, the left. Park in the parking lot and come into the red house at the back of the parking lot.

Sat. Oct. 2  APPLES UNLEASHED!
1-5pm  Flag Hill Farm, Vershire, VT
*Please pre-register with the NOFA office to ensure a spot for yourself at this workshop.
Flag Hill Farm makes hard ciders and Vermont’s Apple Brandy. Participants will have a chance to walk with owners Sebastian Lousada and Sabra Ewing in their small orchard and discuss organic apple growing. Afterwards we will travel to the Gingerbrook Farm cidery in nearby Washington, VT where Sabra and Sebastian take all their apples to be pressed and the owners Bob and Joanne Liddell make apple juice and cider vinegar. Bring ID if you wish to sample hard cider.

Directions: From the north and west: Take Rt 113 towards Vershire. Look for sign to the Mountain School. Turn right and follow road through stop sign to a 4 corners. Take a right onto Red Rd. Follow for 2 miles and take a right onto Ewing Rd. You’ll see Flag Hill Farm up ahead. From the south: Take Rt 113 to Vershire. Take a left on Vershire Center Rd at the sign for the Mountain School. At top of hill take another left and then turn right onto Reed Rd. Follow directions from above.

For more information on the above workshops contact:
Northeast Organic Farmers Association of Vermont (NOFA/VT)
P.O. Box 697 Richmond, VT 05477
Telephone: 802-434-4122  Fax: 802-434-4154
www.nofavt.org

Saturday, September 18, COVER CROPS AND SOIL FERTILITY in Easthampton, MA. This workshop will cover the use of a variety of cover crops and how to use them to improve soil fertility and control weeds. 1-4 p.m. Pre-registration required, more info 413-243-6315, email mfaber5@yahoo.com, or at nofamass.org
The Germinator, July 2004

hay. It is pollinated largely by two varieties of bees, Originally from Turkey, alfalfa is a legume raised for has also been made for environmental release in Ja-
State University, have engineered a Roundup Ready . Monsanto and Approval of GE Alfalfa Pending .

absence of available documentation" supporting the
lems, including failure to test the riskiest animals,
IG audit of the
U.S. Department of Agriculture's Inspector General
organic farming in the EU.

European commission adopts action plan on
European Union's controversial ban on methyl bromide,

engineering of vegetable crops grinding to a halt. Anal-
USDA hijacked by agribiz, says report. A new

compiled by Jack Kittredge
Venenman backed down. Just after the last issue of this paper went to press, Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman announced that the administration was abruptly changing course and was "taking action to resolve industry complaints that the agency has made mistakes in its regulatory conclu-
sions by National Organic Program administrators in April, the changes, reported on page 10 of the last issue of The Natural Farmer, have expanded the use of antibiotics in organic dairy cows and pesticides in
in children and their parents in order to expand their business. Fliers have been mailed out to children in Youth Soccer across the nation offering financial support to their local teams if their parents will sign the "Waiver of Liability and Pesticide and pesticide services.

House Republicans seek US exemption from international methyl bromide treaty. At a Con- gressional hearing July 21, GOP Representatives


source: personal E-mail

USDA hijacked by agribiz, says report. A new report finds that the leadership of the USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) under Secretary Ann Veneman has been "hijacked" by the agribusiness industry, which has seen to it that many key policymaking positions at the agency are now filled by people who have previ-

USDA hacked in league with Youth Soccer. TruGreen / ChemLawn, the nationwide lawn-care giant that targets suburban homeowners and school systems, has a network of family farm and public interest groups. The report can be found online at www.agrribusinessaccountability.org/page/3251. "In


Lower prices for organic milk? As overall milk


USDA's promotion of weakened slaugh-
terhouse inspection practices in the face of a resurgence of
ranchers into so-called captive supply arrangements.

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Engineering of vegetable crops grinding to a halt. Although

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source: GM Watch, July 30, 2004

Engineering of vegetable crops grinding to a halt. Although

USDA's promotion of weakened slaughterhouse inspection practices in the face of a resurgence of

source: Reuter's, July 23, 2004

Are rats jumping off Posilac ship? In late January 2004, Monsanto announced a 50% reduction in

source: Associated Press, July 21, 2004

National Academy of Sciences admits safety of GE foods unproven. In a report released July 28 and titled "Safety of Genetically Engineered Foods: Approaches to Assessing Potential Health Effects," the Academy acknowledges that "our ability to interpret the consequences to human health of changes in food composition is limited." The group calls for rigorous post-market testing on a case by case basis for all new foods, a procedure which cannot be done scientifically without labeling or some other means of identifying the food to test. For example, and who did not source: US PRIRG Press Release, July 27

Lower prices for organic milk? As overall milk prices soar to record levels, in some cases the price contract paid organic dairies is as much as $2 per hundredweight under what conventional dairies are paying, according to National Organic Program Administrator Paul Welsh. Already far, he says, it hasn't hurt their milk procurement. In fact they expect to grow 25% to 30% this year. source: Acres, USA, August, 2004

Organic snacks are a big hit. OTA figures report about 30% growth in sales of organic chips, nuts, and cookies last year. The Organic Valley Cooperative, the leafcutter and alfalfa, and experts anticipate out-
USDA's promotion of weakened slaugh-
terhouse inspection practices in the face of a resurgence of

Anti-GE movement grows. In the wake of the Mendocino, California ban on growing GE organisms, 

source: Broadcaster, July-August 2004

source: The Organic Farmer Fall, 2004

source: The Organic Farmer Fall, 2004

source: Acres, USA, August, 2004

source: Acres, USA, August, 2004
Antibiotics linked to allergies

Valdese.

dumped in Prince William Sound by the Exxon

routine spills, etc. in a year exceeds the amount

ologist and expert on oil spills, says that the amount


developing countries. Proceedings and speeches are

farmers operating in local markets and/or living in

seed exchanges, seed breeding, farmer's rights, and

to discuss important issues around organic seeds

movement met alone prior and after the conference

pressed a willingness to take this up. The organic

and formulate a code of conduct.  The FAO ex-

standing committee to evaluate the current situation

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 genie engineering. IFOAM Executive Director

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Bioengineered crops have been approved for use in

in the US. Ferried tons of biotech maize to the starved

region. But Zimbabwean and Zambian governments

refused to distribute the maize to hungry popula-

tions for fear of its dangers. Malawi, however,

accepted the GE maize. But former agriculture

minister Aleke Banda expressed fears in Parliament

that problems were piling up in the GE food. He

dispatched officials from his ministry to uproot such

maize crops. source: Panafrican News Agency, 21 Jul 2004

Organic seed conference held in Rome.

From the 5th to the 7th of July the organic movement and the

seed industry met for the first time on a world level.

The conference attracted some 270 participants

from 57 countries and was jointly organized by the

International Federation of Organic Agriculture

Movements (IFOAM), the International Seed

Foundation (ISF), which represents seed breeders

and traders worldwide, and the United Nations

Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). The con-

ference focused on several key aspects of seed

production and propagation, including economics,

seed quality and biodiversity, in addition to harmoni-

sation and regulation within the industry.

The conference’s panel discussion addressed the pivotal

issue of co-existence of organic agriculture with

genetic engineering. IFOAM Executive Director

Zadok Lempert proposed that the FAO establish a

standing committee to evaluate the current situation

and formulate a code of conduct. The FAO ex-

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second California county bans GE crops. Trinity

County, California, has banned the growing of

generically engineered (GE) crops and animals. By

a vote of 3-1, the County Supervisors elected to ban

GE crops and animals in an effort to protect

Trinity’s local economy and environment. Trinity

County's decision reflects a growing movement

across America to defend local agriculture, local

biodiversity and human health. Four other Califor-

nia counties will vote in December to ban geneti-

cally engineered crops in their county, while dozens

of counties across the country are advancing "GE

Free" Zones. source: personal Email

EPA to drop consultations on endangered species.

The Bush administration has made it easier for the

government to approve pesticides used by farmers

and homeowners, saying it no longer will require

the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to first

consult other federal agencies to determine whether

a product could harm endangered species.

The change affects federal regulations that carry out the

Endangered Species Act, a law that protects about

1,200 threatened animals and plants. Conservation-

ists attacked the rule change as another example of the

Bush administration weakening protections for

endangered species, including Northwest salmon
that are sensitive to low levels of some pesticides.

source: Seattle Times, July 30

WTO establishes trade agreement “framework”.

Nearly a year after a revolt by developing nations

derailed global trade negotiations at Cancun, the

United States and other countries agreed early today to eliminate billions of dollars in farm export

subsidies. Developing nations, led by Brazil and

India, have contended that massive subsidies allow

rich nations to flood global markets with farm

products, depressing prices and impeding the
economic development of poor countries that rely

on agriculture as their primary source of exports.

Combined U.S. and European Union farm supports
total $150 billion a year. Under the latest accord,
wealthier nations agreed to eventually do away with a host of government export subsidies of agricul-
tural products such as cotton, rice, soybeans and
wheat. Other forms of government farm subsidies
would also be reduced or scrapped. In return for the concessions on agriculture, developing nations
agreed to support guidelines that would reduce tariffs and other barriers on manufactured products
as well as on services such as telecommunications and banking. Details of that process, however, were
left to further negotiation. source: Los Angeles Times, August 1, 2004

Biotec request alarms food industry.

A Texas-based biotech company, ProdiGene Inc., is seeking

federal approval to begin regular production of

pharmaceutical corn crops. The company is com-

merializing two medical products made from

bioengineered corn, and has asked the U.S. Agricul-
ture Department to allow cultivation of the crops in

Frio County, Texas, a thinly populated area south-

west of San Antonio. The Grocery Manufacturers of

America (GMA), which represents such brands as
Kellogg, General Mills, Kraft and Gerber, opposes the
application, saying that the government provides
inadequate oversight of crops engineered for
pharmaceutical and industrial purposes. The GMA
said that the Food and Drug Administration should
"evaluate the safety of pharmaceutical or industrial

crops before they are approved for cultivation.

Second California county bans GE crops. Trinity

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generically engineered (GE) crops and animals. By

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nia counties will vote in December to ban geneti-

cally engineered crops in their county, while dozens

of counties across the country are advancing “GE

Free” Zones. source: personal Email
The Public Seed Initiative is entering its third and final funded year. With our cooperators at the USDA and Cornell University we will be having many seed related events throughout the year. Also look for very useful updated information on seed production, seed cleaning, breeding, and new varieties on the PSI website (www.pbr.cornell.edu/psi).

Despite incredibly variable weather we received some good data out of the replicated and unreplicated variety trials in 2003. Complete results are available on our website. We have very successfully cleaned out the shelves at Cornell University of all new cucumber varieties for organic growers to trial. Many of the good ones are now available through seed catalogs and the poor performers are either headed back to shelf or are continuing to be improved by breeders. For 2004 we will mostly be focusing on new potato varieties. Working with breeders at Cornell and across the country we have replicated trials on 6 organic farms in addition to the Cornell organic research farm. These include release varieties to breeders and a number of new varieties. We will be traveling all over including the NOFA, PASA and MOFGA will be involved in outreach and farmer involvement.

A new opportunity this year is the availability of unfinished crop varieties to grow out on your own farm or garden and improve by selection and seed saving. This is a significant advantage to just growing a variety for evaluation. You will need to save seed from plants selected for certain traits. We have complete instructions for each breeding project, and PSI staff will be available to answer questions. We currently have the following populations and next year will have more advanced lines from each project.

**Conquest F2**
A joint project with the Maine based Restoring Our Seed (ROS). Conquest is a hybrid variety that is no longer available. The new variety grown at Cornell University is being replicated along with seed production of many of those from Alaska did well in 2003 and trials are being replicated at other sites as well. There are still many opportunities to participate in seed cleaning and seed saving educational opportunities over the summer and fall. If you have not gotten a chance to participate in one of the "community seed days" now is the year. The PSI mobile Seed Unit will be traveling all over including the NOFA Summer Conference in Amherst, MA, Common Ground Country Fair in Maine and at farms in Connecticut, Long Island, and Wayne and Sullivan County of New York. There will be the opportunity at all these events to use both the manual and motorized equipment of the mobile Seed Unit. Bring your own seed if you have it and get hands on seed cleaning training. If you have ever been frustrated trying to clean your own seed with little knowledge and an ancient piece of equipment then be sure not to miss one of these events! A belt thresher will effortlessly thresh out your seeds while the Clipper cleaner, air column, and velvet roller will help separate out the good seed from chaff.

**Pruden’s Purple Population**
A RO project. Objectives are to breed a tomato with improved horticultural traits (e.g., less cracking, better flavor, and yield) and early blight resistance.

**Marketmore 97 x Boothby Blonde F2**
Marketmore 97 and Boothby Blonde were crossed and then selfed to make an F2. This is an opportunity to improve Boothby Blonde for disease resistance (it is highly susceptible to mildew), or develop a new cucumber with resistance and novel type.

**Costata Romanesco x Cornell PMR squashes F2**
Costata Romanesco is an Italian summer squash with excellent flavor. However, it has a large vine and is not very productive. It was crossed to a number of Cornell PMR squash varieties and selfed to the F2. An opportunity to breed a PMR Costata Romanesco, or a novel summer squash.

One project that has come out of the PSI is an ORF (Organic Farming Research Foundation) funded project to improve the bell pepper King of the North. With one farm and a seed company the effort is in its second year of on-farm participatory plant breeding. Initial crosses were made at the beginning and now each year plants are grown out on organic farms and peppers selected for earliness, type, flavor, and good plant habit. Seed is saved at the end of each season and plants are grown from it in the greenhouse over the winter and they are tested for resistance to Cucumber Mosaic Virus. Seed is only saved from the plants that survive. This winter greenhouse generation is only used to test for susceptibility to CMV while the plants in organic farmer’s field are selected for ones that perform well under organic management and organic soil. This participatory approach allow farmers to be very involved in the selection decisions and provide assistance from the breeders for the extra work involved in data collection and seed saving and selection. The disease screening can also be done away from the farmer’s fields so there is no chance of on-farm contamination.

Recently we have been putting more effort into working on breeding for organic systems. We had a great workshop on on-farm crop improvement through seed saving and selection at the NOFA-NY winter conference in January of 2004. If you missed this workshop there will soon be another chance to learn all about on-farm breeding. Brian White is currently working on an on-farm breeding manual that will be an expanded version of the workshop in manual form. This will be published at the end of the PSI. Also, a breeding survey was sent out to growers in January of 2004 to get input on growers’ needs in breeding varieties for organic systems. Thanks to all of you that have returned it. If you did not receive a copy it is still online at www.nofany.org and your response will be very useful for helping organic breeding efforts. Results will be available in the fall of 2004.

As with the last two years we will have many seed production and cleaning events through the fall. Be sure to sign up for one or more of these opportunities to learn about seed production and seed cleaning. There are many opportunities to participate in seed cleaning and seed saving educational opportunities over the summer and fall. If you have not gotten a chance to participate in one of the “community seed days” now is the year. The PSI mobile Seed Unit will be traveling all over including the NOFA Summer Conference in Amherst, MA, Common Ground Country Fair in Maine and at farms in Connecticut, Long Island, and Wayne and Sullivan County of New York. There will be the opportunity at all these events to use both the manual and motorized equipment of the mobile Seed Unit. Bring your own seed if you have it and get hands on seed cleaning training. If you have ever been frustrated trying to clean your own seed with little knowledge and an ancient piece of equipment then be sure not to miss one of these events! A belt thresher will effortlessly thresh out your seeds while the Clipper cleaner, air column, and velvet roller will help separate out the good seed from chaff.

New SARE funded Organic Breeding Project
The Cornell Department of Plant Breeding has received a 3 year grant to do participatory plant breeding with potato breeders and organic farmers throughout the Northeast. The grant entitled “Collaborative Breeding for and in Organic Sys- tems” is funded by the USDA Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program (NSESARE). Through initial farmer roundtable discussions in the fall of 2004 breeding projects will start with final field trials involving farmers and seed companies during a fourth year. University breeders will work on organic farms and with organic farmers to breed varieties that are specifically bred for organic agriculture. This project has come out of successful efforts of the IAFS funded Public Seed Initiative. Input from growers to plant breeders made it clear that organic growers need varieties that are bred for their farming methods, their crop inputs, and their specific needs. Breeding roundtables, on-farm breeding, and field days will growers of all sizes an opportunity to get involved and help affect variety development. NOFA-NY, PASA and MOFGA will be involved in outreach and farmer involvement.

Some potatoes trialed by the Public Seed Initiative
**Organic evaluation of 470 heirloom potato varieties**
Researchers at the University of Wisconsin are in the second year of a massive project trialing potato varieties to evaluate their performance on organic farms. In 2003 researcher Doug Roose grew out 470 potato varieties on two organic farms. Two other sites were also used for seed production and additional data collection. He scoured the country for any and all traditional and heirloom varieties from Alaska to New York. The potatoes were evaluated on multiple characteristics for their performance in organic systems. The goal is to identify from the vast number of traditional and heirloom potato cultivars those that have superior performance in organic agricultural systems and that have market potential. The data collected to date suggests there are a number of heirloom and modern varieties with high yield potential under organic practices. This gives farmers a wider selection of cultivars to choose from. Yields with some varieties were much higher than normally associated with organic production and were within 20% of average conventional yields. Several varieties including those from Alaska did well in 2003 and trials are being replicated along with seed production of many of the varieties. Look for results in 2004 on unknown heirlooms that will do well for organic growers.

**Photo courtesy Michael Glos**
Public Seed Initiative Events Schedule

September 8: Seed Processing and Training 9:00–12:00 (The Green Thumb, Water Mill, NY). Come learn the basics of seed cleaning and processing with hands on manual and mechanized seed cleaning equipment. There will be the opportunity to clean your own seed in the afternoon. Please contact Michael Glos if you have your own seed to clean.

September 13 & 14: Seed Processing and Training (USDA-ARS, PGRU, Geneva, NY). The PSI Seed Production Team will be in coached by experts from the USDA-ARS, Plant Genetic Resources Unit will be hosting a two day event. Day one will be an “open house” for those interested in the PGRU; day 2 will be a seed cleaning day. The event will be held at the New York State Agricultural Experimental Station in Geneva, NY.

September 24 – 25: Common Ground Fair: (MOFGA, Unity, Maine). The PSI Seed Production Team will be displaying and demonstrating wet and dry seed processing. Fairgoers are encouraged to bring small lots of seed to clean. There will be farmers and gardeners of the seed cleaning equipment throughout the day.

October 7: Seed Processing and Training at Lockwood Farm (Hamden, CT). The PSI Seed Production Team will be in Hamden, CT from 9:00 am – 1:00 pm to train interested seed growers in small-scale seed production. Registration is mandatory. Please register with Teri Ferrin (315-787-2396) or on the PSI website. Many seed cleaning devices may be available to use by registered appointment only until October 13th.

October 22: Seed Processing and Training at Peacework Organic Farm (Newark, NY). The PSI Seed Production Team will be in Newark, NY from 9:00 am – 1:00 pm to train interested seed growers in small-scale seed production and seed cleaning equipment use. Registration is mandatory. Please register with Teri Ferrin (315-787-2396). Many seed cleaning devices will be available to use by appointment only until October 28th.

November 8: Gorynski’s Ornery Farm (Cochecton Center, NY). The PSI Seed Production Team will be in Cochecton Center, NY from 9:00 am – 1:00 pm to train interested seed growers in small-scale seed production. This will include a tour of production fields and how John does his own selection and breeding. Registration is mandatory. Please register with Teri Ferrin (315-787-2396). Many seed cleaning devices will be available to use by appointment only until December 7th.

January 28, 2005: NOFA-NY Winter Pre-conference (Syracuse, NY). Seedsaving: Preserving heritage varieties for the future of agriculture. Farmers & Gardeners, come spend the day learning all about seed saving from Diane Whealey (Seed Savers Exchange), staff at the USDA Plant Genetic Resource Unit, and skilled farmers and gardeners. Have you ever wanted to save seed but didn’t know where to start or are you an experienced seed saver that is curious on how you can improve your own varieties through seed saving? Are you interested in how back yard gardeners become experts and grow for seed companies or link up farmers with rediscovered heirloom varieties? Come expand your knowledge and share with others in this informative all day session.

For more information about the PSI Workshops, please contact Bill Garman (bgarman@pgru.ars.usda.gov) at 315-787-2396 or Michael Glos (michaelglos@nofany.org) at 607-657-2860. Or visit our website at www.plbr.cornell.edu/psi/index.html.

Organic Farming Survey Published

by Jack Kittredge

The Organic Farming Research Foundation has released the Fourth National Organic Farmers’ Survey. These results, from the year 2002, comprise the most detailed set of data currently available about organic farming operations in the U.S. The entire survey is available at: http://www.ofrf.org/publications/survey/

Among the more interesting marketing results:

- 80% of respondents who produced vegetable, herb, floriculture, mushroom and/or honey products sold them through consumer-direct channels; the estimated volume sold through these channels based on acres produced was 13%.
- 54% sold these products through direct-to-retail channels; the estimated volume sold through these channels, based on acres produced was 53%.
- 69% sold these products through wholesale markets; the estimated volume sold through these channels, based on acres produced was 34%.
- Respondents predominantly sold vegetable products locally; 79% of vegetable products were sold within 100 miles of the farm.

Organic livestock products tended to be sold farther from the farm of all products, with 47% sold more than 500 miles from the farm.

The greatest percentage of respondents indicated that they plan market channel increases in direct-to-consumer markets (51% of respondents) and direct-to-retail markets (47% of respondents), followed by sales to local markets within 100 miles of the farm (45% of respondents).

Respondents were most interested in expanding their volume of organic products marketed, followed by an interest in expanding the number of organic acres that they have in production.

26% of respondents indicated that their prices went up in 2001.
15% indicated that their prices went down.

The largest number of respondents, 52%, indicated that their prices held steady for the year.
41% of respondents said they are able to obtain organic price premiums on 100% of their organically grown products.
86% of respondents indicated that they received a premium price for some portion of their organically grown products.
8% of respondents were unable to obtain an organic price premium on any of their organically grown products.

When asked about production, market or regulatory conditions that serve as problems specific to delivering organic product to market, or to farm profitability, the eight top-ranked responses, out of 32 categories, were:
- Weather-related production losses
- Organic certification costs
- Obtaining organic price premiums
- High input costs
- Lack of organic marketing networks
- High labor costs
- Weed-related production losses
- Production losses due to pests or disease
New NOFA Manuals Cover Composting, Pest Control, and Whole Farm Planning

by Jonathan Von Ranson

Three New York farmers and a Vermonter are the authors of the three latest volumes in the NOFA Organic Principles and Practices Handbook Series. The New Yorkers are Brian Caldwell of Hemlock Grove Farm in Spencer, who “wrote the book” on organic pest management; and Elizabeth Henderson (Peacework Organic Farm, Newark, N.Y.) and Karl North (Northland Sheep Dairy, Marathon, N.Y.), who collaborated on an up-to-date manual of farm planning.

Grace Gershuny, whose book is on composting, is from Barnet, Vt. All three volumes and the rest of the series are supported by NOFA, NOFA/Mass and SARE.

• Vegetable Crop Health: Helping Nature Control Diseases and Pests Organically, by Brian Caldwell, is an information-packed resource for commercial farmers and skilled gardeners for creating a low-pest growing situation. Vegetable Crop Health includes farmer-friendly chapters on the basic concepts of organic pest management with heavy emphasis on proven non-spray cultural techniques that reduce pest numbers and damage. The 96-page illustrated book includes a full chapter on farm design and crop rotation toward this end. Finally, there is a crop-by-crop discussion of specific pest management practices, including spray-based “rescue” treatments. Scientific research and farmer experience back up the discussions.

The manual covers host plant resistance, soil health, trap cropping, cover crops, field layout, row covers, manipulating the overall farm environment, and much more. Brian has been a commercial organic vegetable grower for over 20 years, a Cornell Cooperative Extension Educator, and is now Farm Educator/Coordinator for NOFA-NY.

• Whole Farm Planning: Ecological Imperatives, Personal Values and Economics, by Elizabeth Henderson and Karl North, takes the desire to make a living by farming and offers the materials, right down to the brass tacks, to bring it to reality using a framework that is personal, communal and planetary.

The tools in Whole Farm Planning, borrowed in part from Holistic Management™ and its founder Allan Savory, are powerful because they’re centered around respect for all that adds up to life. Liz Henderson is a partner at Peacework Organic Farm in western New York, often NOFA’s emissary to the world outside the Northeast, and author of several books on organic agriculture. Karl North operates the farm he built in 1980, Northland Sheep Dairy. He has studied and has written on Holistic Management for NOFA periodicals.

• Compost, Vermicompost, Compost Tea: Feeding the Soil on the Organic Farm, by Grace Gershuny, guides on-farm practitioners as well as entrepreneurs in the art of creating this elixir of soil. The manual gives the principles and biology of the process, details the various methods and their pros and cons, lists costs and equipment needs, and offers the experience and suggestions of three seasoned compost-business operators.

The book contains current information about compost tea and effective microorganisms, as well as a discussion of the NOP compost regulations and how to comply with them. Grace Gershuny has a long and significant history in the organic movement and as an author (e.g., The Soul of Soil and Start with the Soil). She currently teaches about gardening and agriculture issues at the Institute for Social Ecology in Plainfield, Vt., and at Sterling College in Craftsbury Common, Vt. She worked for NOFA in the ’70s and ’80s in many capacities, including developing its first organic certification program in 1977, and was a founding member of the Organic Trade Association.

Other volumes in the Organic Principles & Practices Handbook series:

Crop Rotation and Cover Cropping, by Seth Kroek, available Sept. 2004
Marketing and Community Relations, by Rebecca Bosch, available November 2004
Humane and Healthy Production of Eggs and Poultry, by Karma Glos, available December 2004
Organic Seed Production and Saving, by Bryan Connolly, available January 2005
Making Milk and Dairy Products Organically, by Sarah Flack, available February 2005

Books are illustrated, ~ 60-100 pages, size 6” x 9” shiny softcover.

To order Vegetable Crop Health, Whole Farm Planning or Compost, Vermicompost and Compost Tea (or Organic Weed Management or Organic Soil Fertility Management, both published earlier), go to the NOFA website, www.nofa.org. You may also contact Elaine Peterson at info@nofamass.org or call 978 355-2853.
I am an organizer at heart. Don’t mistake this for being organized, however. I can organize a party, a political rally or a bake sale, but my kitchen is often a wreck. I live on a land trust with my family and four other families. It has been a great pleasure to organize a community buying club with them.

For at least ten years I have used Associated Buyers (AB) in Barrington, NH, as my source of natural foods. Twenty years ago I belonged to a buyers coop but eventually became dissatisfied with the supplier we were using. So many items would be out of stock and when you are counting on certain foods for the month and half don’t come in, well what’s the point? I was burned out on being “cooperative”. I dropped out of that group soon after I discovered AB and decided to make the minimum order myself each month. This was not always that convenient.

First, in those days we couldn’t always come up with the minimum dollar amount. Secondly, I may not have wanted or been able to use 25 pounds of quinoa. After a couple of years, I had a friend or neighbor join the order when they needed something or we didn’t have the minimum. Now I find it very rewarding to buy food cooperatively with the same small group of neighbors on a regular basis.

We are not terribly formal about our mode of operation, but it seems to work. Unlike the cooperative I used to belong to, we do not have a bookkeeper and we don’t have to go to two meetings every month. We are a much smaller group and take turns coordinating the order each time. Whoever coordinates pays the bill that month out of their personal checking account.

We pass the catalog around and each person orders the things they need that month. Some things come in large quantities but you can also buy just one of something, like toothpaste for example. Sometimes we make arrangements between a couple of us to share a bulk order. This not only saves money but cuts down on packaging. Whoever is coordinator that month will call in our order by the order date, and then like magic a few days later the food appears in our driveway. We have made special arrangements to pay in 7 days so we can take our time and go over the prices on the invoice at our leisure. It also means that it is not necessary for everyone to meet the truck at the same time in order to pay the driver.

Everyone I have had any contact with at Associated Buyers has been extremely helpful and friendly, from the owners, Karta and Susan, to the truck drivers who make the deliveries. It’s an easy process and sure beats going to the grocery store. In fact, as farmers, my husband and I grow about 75% of our food. The other 25% comes from Associated Buyers. I hardly ever set foot into a big grocery store. The few times that I do, I feel I must settle for the giant national brands, and the fact that no one cares if I shop there or not. In contrast, I trust AB to have the same basic values as I do, and my business seems important to the folks there.

If you are wondering about how to get started with a buying club, it’s really quite simple. Get a few like-minded friends together, get a catalog, and decide on a drop-off spot. You can all share the same monthly catalog or have one mailed individually to each member’s home. You may want to have a monthly meeting (I personally can’t bear to attend one more meeting if I don’t have to), or you can do it the way I suggested.

When you call AB you will be assured to speak to a human. No recorded messages or elevator music. If you have a question about a product feel free to ask the opinion of the person you are talking to. They all seemed to have tried most of the products and have never steered me wrong. Leah, Shadrack, Ester, and all the operators have become like friends over the years. This may sound corny but it is very comforting to work with the same dedicated people week after week, and to actually recognize their voices.

I also order from AB for our general store in town. They were very helpful when it came to getting started and we have gotten the same great service. A few people at the store have encouraged me to order from a larger competitor because we might save a few cents here or there. I think the prices at AB are competitive, and I am too loyal a customer to change to another company.

I love going into a food coop store, but I live at least a half an hour from one. This buying club I’m in fits my lifestyle perfectly. It saves me time, gas, and money. It gives me yet another opportunity to work with and see my neighbors and, most importantly, it gives me a chance to organize! I encourage everyone to form a buying club.
New York City's
Just Food

by Jack Kittredge

The teeming millions of Gotham employ a small army of farmers, packers, processors, brokers, truckers, and distributors to keep a steady stream of food flowing into the city. It is one of the largest markets for produce in the country. Ironically, however, most of this produce leapfrogs into the city from hundreds of miles away. Throughout New York state itself, agriculture is in trouble. Farms are vanishing and once fertile fields are disappearing to development.

One small organization trying to do something about this problem is Just Food. The group was formed in 1994, at a time when the state was losing about 1000 farms a year, in an effort to help local farmers access the enormous consumer base of New York City. Kathy Lawrence was the principle founder, and NOFA’s Kay Magilavy and Joan Gussow are on the board. Just Food’s original idea, the CSA in NYC program, continues to be a major focus. “There are two parts to this work,” says Kristy. “One is finding the city group to organize it; the other is finding the farmer to supply it. To find the group we do some outreach to community based organizations in the area. We’ll send out letters to certain types of organizations, like settlement houses. But mostly it is word of mouth — people involved in organizations tell someone else that they are doing a CSA and then we get a call.”

Just Food works with groups very closely during the first CSA application process. If a group is sponsored by a non-profit group — a church, a settlement house, a community center — and function at that site. But it could be a volunteer group of individuals, too. She has them fill out an application which asks for a description of the community and why the group wants to start a CSA. Then she’ll visit the site and survey whether it is appropriate for a CSA: Can a farmer drive a truck up and unload there? Is it accessible? (Kristy says they have discovered that people will walk about 10 blocks, tops, to get to a distribution site. But they’ll travel really far by bus or train — some people travel all the way to the West Side of Manhattan from Queens because it’s on their way between work and home. So a lot of the sites end up being convenient to bus and train stops.)

If there is an organization sponsoring the CSA Apostolides makes sure there is buy-in from the executive level. If it’s a volunteer group she talks it over with them for a long time to make sure they’re really dedicated to the idea. Once they go through this process over a couple of months, Just Food will make a decision to go forward or not. If they decide yes, they’ll hook the CSA up with a farmer. If the group seems to need additional regular help, a Vista volunteer may be assigned to the site.

“One of the reasons why we started the application process with farmers,” she continues, “is because one defaulted during the year and left the members stranded. In that case the organization sponsoring the CSA took the blow and compensated the members for their losses. But that really sparked our idea to be more carefully picking farmers. We want to make sure both the city group and the farmer are able to live up to their commitment to the CSA. We have a memorandum of understanding with them that our responsibility is to provide technical assistance and they are dealing with each other directly as to the business arrangement.”

Usually by the fall the farmer advisory committee is finished and has made its recommendations. At that time the staff talk out what groups and neighborhoods they are working with, and try to make matches with farmers.
In 2004 Just Food added 6 new CSAs and 2 new growers to the program, making a total of 31 CSAs serviced by 18 growers. So far, Apostolides reports, they have had an equal amount of interest from buyers and sellers, and don’t really have much of a waiting list of either. Her objective is to saturate the city, at the rate or 6 to 10 new CSAs a year.

Fifty members is a good minimum, she figures. Less would not be enough to make it worth the farmer’s time. All the members at a site pick up on the same day, usually Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, or Saturday. The farmers usually hydro-cool the produce and deliver it in a refrigerated or insulated truck. Most of the distributions are indoors, so the produce isn’t out in the sun. The site core group usually has a person there to welcome members and help out, but some just have someone help set up and then leave instructions for the members. Once it’s organized, that job is often rotated and fulfills the work requirement for the CSA. Some sites bag the members, but most leave the items separate and people pick and bag their own order. Just Food works with City Harvest, a food reclamation group, so that every CSA has a relationship with a nearby emergency food provider to take any left over food.

“The most common demographic for our members,” Kristy observes, “is that they are moms. Whether they be rich or poor, black or white or Hispanic, they are moms. Some older, but mostly younger, with toddler age kids. Twenty-somethings, also — unmarried, more progressive — are into CSA for environmental reasons. But it runs the gamut of ethnic and class diversity, just like the city.”

Just Food tries to start sites in areas that are underserved. They have a CSA in Mott Haven, for instance, in the South Bronx. “That’s kind of a rough and tough neighborhood,” Apostolides reports. “There’s 40% unemployment, very high rates of obesity and nutrition related illnesses, high levels of poverty. That site is at a church, St. Benedict the Moor, and run through a group that tries to find stable housing for the homeless and runs clothing giveaway programs. The 2 or 3 staff members there are very involved in the CSA and have helped guide our Vista volunteer about what to do.”

“In that CSA people mostly don’t pay up front,” she continues. “The people who signed up in February have been paying since then, so they’re mostly paid up now. We tried to get them to accept food stamps, but that site has particular issues that prevent them from being eligible right now. Right now everyone who would be paying in food stamps is paying in cash. What we try to do to make working with sites like that feasible for the farmer is we try to set the farmer up with sites that are economically different. This neighborhood in South Bronx is a very low-income neighborhood. The majority of the people can’t pay up front. The farmer knew what he was getting into, but we also set him up with a site in North Bronx that is a pretty wealthy neighborhood. There, individuals have no problem paying up front. There are more members there, too.”

Ansche Chesed Synagogue is the site for the Just Food CSA sponsored by Hazon, on the upper West Side of Manhattan.
Just Food has come up with creative ways to help people afford shares. They set up a sliding scale for share prices and the United Way has purchased shares at the higher price. Those shares then get donated to an emergency food provider. The extra money, however, goes to lowering the price for members who can afford less. The organization also has a relationship with the New York Community Trust, which gives money to directly subsidize CSA shares in such areas.

Many CSAs are in mixed income areas. Chelsea, the neighborhood the Just Food office is in, has a wide range of incomes. Directly west of the office is a cluster of public housing projects. Two blocks over is Penn South, housing for wealthy people. So the Chelsea CSA charges a sliding scale. The CSA sets up the income categories, and people volunteer into which one they fit. Just Food encourages each CSA to look at their community and talk to other groups to see what the right categories are for them.

“Some of the sites have discovered that after a few years people don’t want to keep paying more,” Kristy reports, “even if it is helping out their neighbor. So they have created the option for people to donate to help subsidize a share. That works pretty well for some neighborhoods.”

Just Food worked, with other groups, on the national level to get USDA policy changed so that food stamps can be used at CSAs. When Apostolides came on, however, that change had never been actuated at the local level anywhere. So she had to work with people at the state level to show them that it could be done. Once she got through to them, she says, the state has been great about it, assigning all CSA stuff to one individual so that person knows what is going on all around the state and can answer questions about it.

“No,” she reports, “the food stamp office actually publishes a flyer saying that recipients can use their cards to buy fresh, local produce. They explain a little about CSA, and on the back is the list of CSAs in the city with a number to call to find out how to use food stamps to pay for a share. This goes to people when they recertify every 6 months.”

For a CSA one can pay with the electronic card two weeks in advance of getting that share. So the farmer is never delivering food which is not paid for already. But Kristy is trying to get the program to extend the time limit to a month. A lot of the CSA members say they get their food stamps at the beginning of the month and want to pay for their month’s CSA share right away and not have to worry about having enough left on the card in two weeks to cover the next shares.

In some cases the farmer is the one certified to accept food stamps, but in most cases it will be the group which is sponsoring the CSA. They will have their own bank account and at the end of a certain period of time will send a check to the farmer.

At the end of the year CSA in NYC conducts an evaluation with each core groups that was formed that year. In November they get together and Heifer International comes in and trains the members in how to evaluate the functionality of their group for...
sustainability and other goals. That’s an opportunity for people to look at what they have done over the last year, pat themselves on the back, and then gear up for the next season. Each core group also gives a survey out to their entire membership. It asks questions about what they thought was good, what bad, and includes an optional section to say what vegetables they want more and less of.

Just Food puts a lot of energy into education about CSA. They have monthly workshops for the new core groups on organizing and running a CSA. Usually 10 to 15 members come. Key members from older sites are asked to pay back into the system by participating in these workshops — sometimes running them — and by being on the city advisory team.

“The workshops cover all the things that should be done during the next month,” Apostolides says. “Some of them are facilitated by us, some by veteran CSA members. It’s a participatory training. It’s cool because I don’t know everything that is going on at all these different sites. They come and share their experiences and I learn what’s going on. That helps shape the future workshops as well.

“In addition to these workshops,” she adds, “I will go out and do technical assistance one on one. I’ll go to core group meetings and talk over typical issues they deal with. In the pre-distribution season they struggle with educating people about this idea, getting enough members, getting people to pay in full up front. After all, this is New York. People are: ‘Yeah, I’m supposed to give you $300 or $400 for food that you’re going to give me in six months?’ What we have discovered is that having the farmer present at outreach meetings really makes it real! They’re not hesitant anymore about the whole idea. When they meet the farmer it validates the reality of what is going to happen. Right now, in July, since distribution has started and seems to be working, they’re talking about how do we form a better core group, get people to go that extra mile? Once we get people to a meeting, how do we get them excited about what CSA is all about?”

In addition to the workshops, Just Food has a mini-conference on CSA in February every year. The farmers come to that, as well as CSA members, new and old coordinators, and other farmers who sell non-vegetable products through the CSAs.

Kristy has studied the occasional failures of a CSA to thrive, as well as the many successful ones. “Where it hasn’t worked,” she observes, “the most common reason is that it was too much the responsibility of one individual. That person will be very excited about it but may not have enough time to keep it up. Creating a group takes a lot of time initially, but it seems vital for long term survival. Eventually the one person will burn out or move on to something else. The membership will drop, and finally it won’t be big enough to sustain a farmer delivering to them. Either the members get worried and reinvigorate the group – which is exciting — or it dies. So we make sure all the sites we have started over the last couple of years involve other people — that there is a real core group that runs it. That
One concrete result of all Just Food’s efforts setting up and studying CSAs is a “CSA Toolkit”. It is a 300-page loose leaf notebook containing monthly meeting agendas, instructions on how to talk through each item with the core group, organizational tips, and samples of forms, logs, budgets, surveys, worksheets, applications, press releases, templates, evaluations, outreach materials, brochures, newsletters, and price studies. All CSA sites in the city get a free copy. Other organizations can buy one for $35. An advantage of the binder format is that any page can be easily taken out and photocopied. Apostolides says they intend to update it as needed, as well as publish it in a CD format and put a month’s worth of it up on their web site.

In addition to a vegetable share, CSA members at some sites can get other items. “We’re working with 16 vegetable growers and twenty-some meat, dairy, fruit, flower and egg producers,” she says. “We discourage sites from doing anything but vegetables the first year. That’s enough to tackle. But many sites want to get some other products after their first year. And they work it out directly with the producers. The details of those arrangements vary widely. Flowers and fruits are usually sold as an additional, optional share. That is organized either by the vegetable grower, who will colloge the money for those shares and pay it to the other producers, picking the flowers and/or fruit up on the way to distribution, or sometimes farmers contact us and say they want to sell to our CSA. We may share their contact information with the CSAs, saying we don’t know anything about them and if you’re interested you should contact them yourselves. If the farmer is already coming into the city to sell at the Greenmarkets, they can do an additional drop or two without much trouble.

“The vegetable share is required by the CSA,” Kristy continues, “but you can get veggies and fruit, or veggies and flowers. For the meat, eggs and dairy, that is done mostly on a monthly order basis. There is one instance where it is done as a $200 share. One site just started doing a weekly and bimonthly egg share. But more commonly, there will be an order form that has all these different meat products on it. One farmer does poultry and pork. He sells to one CSA on a monthly basis. Another farmer has beef and lamb and separately sells to that same site. In another case three farmers have gotten together who have poultry, beef, pork and lamb between them. They joined together and developed a joint order form.”

One of the more recent creations of Just Food is an emergency food provider CSA. United Way pays for the shares in it. There is one site in Brooklyn that serves as a central distribution system. Emergency food providers will come to that central site and pick up 10 shares of food. They then take that back to their food kitchen or food pantry. The items are in categories that the emergency food providers identified as desirable, such as salad greens, onions, root crops, and cooking greens. But within those categories the farmer can make substitutions. Within root crops it could be carrots or potatoes or beets. Within onions it could be onions or garlic or leeks.

“It’s hard for providers to get fresh food into the emergency food stream,” Apostolides says. “They
usually patronize large vendors who deal only with surplus food, or corporate extras. The providers have a strong interest in getting better, fresher food into that stream. There are items we’re never going to be competitive on in price, like potatoes. They’re not going to get them from local farmers cheaper than 7¢ a pound! But some things they can’t get but want, like fresh tomatoes, like greens, they can get this way. They’re excited about being able to offer this to their clients."

An added advantage of this “institutional CSA” as Kristy calls it, is that it also provides a mechanism for her to get information to the food providers about how CSAs work, how to eat and cook seasonally, how to use raw produce, and why it’s good to support local farms. They do cooking demonstrations at the central site so that the food providers can learn about using the produce and also teach the families that who it.

Just Food’s City Farm program is an in-city extension service for people who are growing food in New York City. It is to help people grow, sell and donate more food. Kathleen works with about 30 different gardens.

“In September, 2002,” she relates, “there was a settlement with the city over a lot of garden sites. Some were permanently made part of the Parks Department, and about 120 were purchased through the Trust for Public Land. About 40 or so gardens were purchased by New York Restoration Project, a group Bette Midler organized. There are still gardens that are subject for development, but they were given a land use review so that no one wakes up to a bulldozer destroying their garden. I work with gardens under all these umbrellas. Every day gardens transition from being at risk to being bought and preserved.”

McTigue works with the gardens where there is the most committed community. If someone calls her and says they’re really interested in setting up a relationship with a soup kitchen or food pantry, then she meets with them and determines how active they will be.

The City Farms workshops are available to anyone and are broadly publicized and well attended. Kathleen also helps gardens develop an urban farm stand that sells food raised in the garden, or nearby. She helps them qualify for food stamps. She also encourage gardens to grow food to donate directly to emergency providers. Such gardens will dedicate a section for this purpose. It is often managed by volunteers, and by the individuals that run the garden. Youth programs can be tapped to help with a lot of the physical work.

“Five or six gardens are actively donating right now,” she says, “and I work with four groups that are doing markets. After the markets they donate what didn’t sell. The farm stands are networking with rural farmers to buy in stuff they don’t have enough of, so if a grower is already coming down to deliver here or sell in the Greenmarkets, our farmstands could also buy produce. The markets are Saturdays, Sundays, and Tuesdays.”

CSA site coordinator Anna Stevenson, and Just Food’s CSA in NYC Program Coordinator Kristy Apostleides, pose with a few of their favorite vegetables.
In addition, City Farms runs a Training of Trainers program. Certain gardeners are identified and before the season starts they come to a training program that teaches people how to teach. Then they go to a series of horticultural workshops hosted by the cooperative extension. These cover garden planning, planting techniques, seeds, soils, compost, cover crops, garden structures, pests, marketing, season extension, food preservation, and garden community organizing. The trainers are then qualified to conduct workshops for gardeners at garden sites around the city.

“The whole idea is to pass on the gift,” explains McTigue. “They are given all this knowledge in the training programs and then they pass it on with the City Farms.”

“Young people are trained,” McTigue continues, “in the areas of plant identification, which includes different types of produce that you get in a CSA – how do you store it, how do you choose it, and on the back are three recipes. There is also a whole section on preservation: canning, freezing, drying, and a basic nutrition section, including how to get all your vitamins from local food regardless of the season. These tip sheets are also being published in a binder for $35.

After interviewing Kristy and Kathleen at Just Food’s office, I checked out a nearby CSA distribution. The closest was the one sponsored by Hazon, a Jewish non-profit that organizes a big cross country bike ride to raise environmental awareness. Hazon uses as the site the Ansche Chesed synagogue where it has its office, on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. It’s a mixed, but generally well-off neighborhood. The CSA has a small fund set up by Hazon to enable anyone to join, no matter what his or her income. The farmers are from Long Island. The coordinator is Hazon’s Anna Stevenson. A full share in mid-July was 1 garlic, 1 lettuce, 1 cabbage (green or red), 1 celery, 1 golden zucchini, 2 papaya pear squashes, 1 small squash, 2 cucumbers, 3 lemon cucumbers, 1 chard or 1 fennel, and 1 bunch of onions.

“This CSA is brand new,” Anna says. “This is our seventh week. We have about 85 members — 65 full shares and 20 half shares. We went to Just Food and said: ‘We want to start a CSA’. I do the newsletter. I usually put in two things. For one, I feature whatever new vegetable we have this week and what to do with it. I research vegetables and get recipes. This week it’s celery and I have a recipe for celery soup and celery sticks with peanut butter or cream cheese. The other thing I put in is information about organic farming, regional issues, Just Food stuff, Jewish stuff — holidays and program events.”

“The whole idea,” Stevenson continues, “of educating people about kosher food and connecting that to sustainable agriculture is really exciting. The word kosher really means ‘fit’ as in ‘appropriate’. You think of food and whether it is fit to eat in terms of the earth and the body. There are also strong connections between Judaism and stewardship of the earth. We talk about saving blessings before you eat, and the holiday cycle. We have a shabbat or sabbath lunch in the park as a regular event.”

The last Just Food program is community food education, which started in the CSA program. “We realized,” says Kristy, “that members are a lot happier when they are actually using the food! They are in a city where people eat out often, and are less knowledgeable about how to cook. So bringing an awareness of seasonality, about the different types of produce that you get in a CSA — how do you eat a kohlrabi? — will enhance their satisfaction.”

The community food education program has created a curriculum around food preparation and recruits chefs to run cooking demonstrations. They are producing veggie tip sheets on individual vegetables — there’s an illustration, some historical information, storage tips, some nutritional information, preparations tips like what parts to get rid of, how to cut it, and on the back are three recipes. There is also a whole section on preservation: canning, freezing, drying, and a basic nutrition section, including how to get all your vitamins from local food.

Thanksgiving Farm is an integral part of The Center for Discovery, an innovative nonprofit organization dedicated to the care and education of children and adults with significant disabilities. Our goal is to grow as much healthy, organic food as possible for 3,000 employees, 500 families, and nearly 200 supportive families and individuals in our local and New York City CSA programs. We are located on the southern edge of the Catskills approximately two hours northwest of New York City and only 30 minutes southwest of Middletown.

We’re looking for someone to help manage our diverse and expanding farming operations. In addition to our flagship enterprise growing over 10 acres of all types of vegetables, we also raise full-blood Chaimana cattle, large Black pigs, and Kudara sheep. This is a full-time, year-round position with excellent salary, benefits and housing. Applicants must have training and experience in vegetable production systems. Additional experience with animal husbandry will be valuable. TOE.

For more information please phone, write or email:
Lowell Rheinheimer
Thanksgiving Farm at the Center for Discovery
103 Minter Road
Houtville, NY 12747
845-794-1400, Ext. 2255
new@centerfordiscovery.org

Check out our website at www.centersfordiscovery.org to learn more.
The Price of Organic Consuming

by Karen Franczyk

When thinking about all the different ways that one can purchase organic food, few people within NOFA would probably consider a grocery store as their first choice. There are so many great ways to support local farmers and producers, and since so many of these people in the northeast choose to either have a CSA, go to a Farmer’s Market, or put up their own farm stand (from the tiny one-table unstaffed ones to the larger fancy ones that rival grocery stores with their offerings), many knowl-
dgeable people think first of ways that they can buy directly from the farmers or producers them-
selves. However, if you were to ask the average person walking down the street, chances are that they would say they buy organic products at a grocery store. Whether we’re talking about a conventional grocery store with a “natural foods aisle”, or a natural foods chain like Whole Foods, the average consumer thinks in terms of traditional means of buying food. As someone who has never belonged to a co-op and has shopped primarily in mainstream grocery stores all my life, I understand this way of thinking. It’s part of why I enjoy my job at Whole Foods so much – I enjoy talking to the suburban moms with kids who are concerned about feeding their kids more nutritiously and want to find the best choices for them.

I began working for Whole Foods after I coordi-
nated the 5% Day for NOFA in 2001, when I looked at the company from the inside (through attending store meetings to promote and explain the 5% Day and who NOFA was) rather than just from the outside. My husband and I had already been selling our heirloom tomatoes to Whole Foods and found that experience to be very good – and in fact are our heirloom tomatoes to Whole Foods and found and who NOFA was) rather than just from the store meetings to promote and explain the 5% Day at the company from the inside (through attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending attending 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feelings about this. After all, the ingredients that go into most of these frozen or processed foods come from huge organic farms in California or other states with year-round growing climates. It’s hard for me to think of these farms as being the same as mine – we grow on a few acres, rotate our crops, still do many things by hand, etc. Yet these farms are certified organic, just like mine, so they are meeting the same standards we are. Whatever reservations I may have about buying broccoli from a huge farm, I would still prefer to buy organic broccoli from a huge farm than conventional broccoli from an equally huge farm (if not even larger). I feel strongly that it’s still better to give people an organic alternative, because in the end that is not only helping to keep farmland being farmed, but it’s being farmed in a sustainable way so that we are all better off on this planet. So while I personally buy very little frozen processed food, I am glad that we are able to carry those products so that if people are looking to transition over to healthier food, they can have a better alternative that is similar enough to what they are used to that they can enjoy it while feeling better about what they are eating.

I think one of the main differences that I really see among people who primarily shop at a grocery store as opposed to growing their own is that there is sometimes a disconnect to the seasonal nature of food. While every grocery store carries certain items at certain times of the year (fresh corn on the cob in the summer, clementines in the winter), more and more items are now available year-round. While we all know you can get fresh strawberries year-round, for instance, people with their own gardens tend to shy away from strawberries in the winter because it just seems unnatural, and the flavor is nowhere close to what they expect or want a strawberry to taste like. They might get them occasionally for a special occasion, but they have a sense of what is supposed to be eaten at what time of year. I think the more you grow your own food (on any scale, the truer this is). That is one of the nice things about buying locally grown produce in season – you can really appreciate the great flavors.

Whole Foods has developed relationships with many local growers, like me and my husband, in an effort to carry as much local organic produce as possible.

One of the interesting statistics that I ran across in researching this article is that over the course of a year, the Whole Foods stores in the Boston area average almost 50% of their produce sales in organic produce. Considering the difficulty in getting organic produce at times, I consider this phenomenal, that almost half of the produce bought is organic. This varies from store to store and season to season, but if you average it out over the year and over the region, that’s what you get. Obviously, the goal is to improve this number every year – and to improve it in stores where there is less demand for and support of organic produce.

When I was coordinating the 5% Day I made a real push to have a closer relationship between Whole Foods and NOFA. I felt strongly that the people shopping in the stores could be made even more aware of the issues that organic farmers are so concerned with, like strong certification standards and GMOs. I felt that NOFA members could teach classes at the stores or find other ways to help educate Whole Foods customers. Now, as someone working for Whole Foods and no longer on the NOFA/Mass board, I still feel the same way. I would still like to find more ways to educate customers and help make more people aware of the issues facing organic farmers. I strongly believe that we are all in this together, and whatever we can do to work together to help more people support organic farmers and increase the availability of organic food, is definitely a good thing.
by Julie Rawson, lifelong food processor

When you are making plans to set up housekeeping with someone for the long haul, it is good to know what you have in common. In our case Jack and I, as it turned out, both thought it was important to center our lives around children, giving them meaningful work to do, and to live frugally. Along with our old beat up cars and no mortgage, we hold the preservation of food for later use as a high priority on our homestead.

Now, rather shamefacedly after our children are all out of the house, we can be seen sneaking into the local natural foods store in March and April to buy some lettuce so we can have a little fresh salad (luckily we can grow lettuce in our greenhouse until February). But, we have a certain sense of gloat and good Protestant holier than thou-ism when we can eat almost all of our food from our root cellar, freezers, canning jars, dried storage jars, and baskets of stored alliums. So how does one do all this? The trick is to do it as you go along, kind of like making the bed and washing the dishes.

Let’s assume for a minute that you have access to your own big garden, or a large CSA share, or a local orchard when fruit is in season, or a farmer’s market where you have made an arrangement with a local farmer to save you some less than first quality produce. Now the excuses have all been dealt with, the “oh, I don’t have any space” argument. Get a chest freezer and use it as a piece of furniture/table top. And you can store your canning jars under your bed if necessary. Really, where there is a will, there is a way.

As soon as I could sit up to the table I was Frenching green beans, peeling apples for applesauce, cutting corn off of cobs, popping skins off of tomatoes for canning, you name it. You could say that it is in my blood. Now, with Jack, we have branched out to more exotic food preservation than the usual canning and freezing to wine-making, lacto-fermenting, dehydrating, making cheese and yogurt, and have also perfected really low tech techniques such as root cellaring and storing squashes in bushels and alliums in braids.

It is important to demystify food preservation. It isn’t that hard to do. And if you fail, you can always try again. Just do what ever it is in small batches until you are sure of your technique. And also remember not to make large quantities of things that you will never eat (unless you want to unload your wares on unsuspecting relatives at Christmas). Remember always to taste whatever you are making, to make sure right away that it has an enjoyable flavor.

Let’s start with something easy and freeze a few items. We have a wood cookstove, so the first thing we do is to crack it up nice and hot and put on our 6 quart copper bottom Revereware stainless steel pot with about a half inch of water to boil (about a quart). When it is boiling royally, I add about 4 to 5 quarts of the vegetable of choice to the pot and put it back on to boil. When it comes back to a boil begin timing. Boil for the specified amount of time and remove immediately, pour it into a colander to drain the water, and then immerse the colander of vegetables in a sink full of cold water. Swish it around until the vegetables are cool, pack them in your favorite storage bags, and put them in the freezer, all as separate as possible, so that they can freeze as quickly as possible.

As soon as I could sit up to the table I was Frenching green beans, peeling apples for applesauce, cutting corn off of cobs,
grape and tomato. Can are peaches, pears, tomatoes, and juices like grape and tomato.

Canning: I have never used a pressure canner so won’t discuss how to use it. My favorite things to can are peaches, pears, tomatoes, and juices like grape and tomato.

Grants: I don’t like to make too much of this, because it seems to need so much sweetener to be palatable. Take grapes off of stems and simmer slowy (they will make their own juice without much sugar). Process for an amazingly short time until you see milk splashing around in there with some great looking yellow stuff. Pour the buttermilk and butter processor (not too much at a time as it will splash out). Process for an amazingly short time until you see milk splashing around in there with some great looking yellow stuff. Pour the buttermilk and butter into a colander that is sitting in a bowl, then remove the butter to a bowl of its own. Add some of that great salt and mix it in with your hands. More

Press’ Stocking Up

Lacto-fermentation: Here is a very old technology that has made an incredible revival due in large part to the work of one woman – Sally Fallon. Her wonderful book, “Nourishing Traditions”, is a must read. (You can get it on Amazon). She has a million recipes, but here is a simple one for sauerkraut that I got from Peter Young, an early lacto-fermenter. Eat a couple tablespoons of sauerkraut for the rest of your life and you will have a very long and very healthy life. For every lb. of finely shredded cabbage, add one t of Celtic Sea salt. Let them sit for an hour or so in a bowl. Pack the kraut in quart jars and share the Brine around. You will need to add a little more water to each jar and a little more salt. The amount will vary according to your taste. Screw on lids medium tight and leave the kraut on your kitchen counter for three days. Then take it to your root cellar or a cool basement to keep the lacto-fermentation process going. If your storage area is cool enough you can keep this sauerkraut around as long as a year and a half. You can break into your sauerkraut after 5 days. If you don’t have a cool storage area, you can keep it in the frig, but the lacto-fermentation process will essentially stop.

Air drying: I use this method mostly for herbs like parsley, marjoram, mint, and oregano. Pick and dry upside down in a warm, dry place. After about two weeks, on a non-humid day, you can take the herbs down, separate the leaves from the stems and put them into jars with a lid. Store them in the dark in a dry location.

Butter: If you are lucky enough to have a cow, or get raw milk from a neighbor, let it stand over night in the frig, then skim off the cream. Let it sit out on the counter for about an hour, then pour it into a food processor (not too much at a time as it will splash out). Process for an amazing amount of time until you see milk splashing around in there with some great looking yellow stuff. Pour the buttermilk and butter into a colander that is sitting in a bowl, then remove the butter to a bowl of its own. Add some of that great salt and mix it in with your hands. More

(continued on page 27)
Vandana Shiva’s Keynote to the 2004 NOFA Summer Conference

transcribed by Dan Kittredge
and Haii Shellhouse

I want to thank all of you for the work that you do. That’s the only reason that I’m here. You are the heroes of the future. And I felt that it was worth it putting a little more CO2 in the atmosphere, coming here to tell you that about the work that the organic movement is doing. When I say organic I mean organic in the original term, that which is related, that which is based on connections. I think it is, and that’s why I spend all my time practicing it, developing policies around it, fighting the false paradigms that kill its possibility. I think it is the most revolutionary activity of our times and you are the ultimate revolutionaries, you and organic farmers everywhere. So I hope that there will be a bigger fifteenth anniversary and then in one hundred years I hope we don’t have any toxic agriculture.

In the wonderful skit that was just performed by the staff, one of the issues that came through was the elections not talking about agriculture. Well the Indian elections didn’t talk agriculture either. The Indian elections were fought on a slogan that was created by an advertising company. The Indian elections are being affected by the US style, where the media and ad companies are supposed to relate candidates to the people. And the slogan that an American ad company thought would be very appropriate for India just now was ‘India Shining’. And if you picked up during the months of January, February, March or April, every newspaper and magazine had a cover story on ‘India Shining’.

But of course all of India wasn’t shining. We have our share of information technology millionaires and billionaires. We have our share of millionaires who have become billionaires by doing nothing. This is the most amazing period in human history — where the richest people are the ones who don’t lift a limb. And then of course they pay huge amounts to gyms to lift a limb. Ghandi had a wonderful saying about this. He said any earning that does not involve physical labor is a sin. For those who work earning their livelihood in India, which is 75 percent of India, wasn’t shining. It wasn’t shining because the package of India shining was the package of globalization, the package of even deeper industrialization of agriculture, the idea that all the worlds agriculture should modeled on US style agriculture — where farmers become so insignificant in the population that they don’t count in the census anymore. We had a state — well actually the state is still there, just the chief minister isn’t. We had a state — the state of Andhra Pradesh and its capital Hyderabad — where the chief minister wrote in his vision of 2020 that he thought the name should be Cyberabad. That’s where the Microsoft Bill Gates was at, they even have a Bill Gates university. And Mr. Nider, the chief minister of the state, thought that all the farmers of the state were surplus farmers and he shaped policies to treat them as surplus farmers and repeatedly said he wanted to see, by the year 2020, 2 percent people on the land.

Well, policies in a country where 75 percent of people are on the land basically mean farmers are going to be pushed deep into debt, deep into misery. In the last 5 years we have lost 25,000 farmers because of — the word they use is ‘suicide’. We decided recently we’re not going to talk about these as farmer suicides, we’ll talk about these as genocide by an industrial agriculture system. It’s those farmers, farmers like that, who were the quiet, silent pain in India, who voted. And they voted the India shining slogan out of India. The farmers are going to be pushed deep into debt, give them more loans. One trillion rupees (one dollar equals about 45 rupees) of new loans were pushed. It’s like pouring more water on a person who is drowning! And I have to write to our Prime Minister in exactly that language.

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There are only 2 interventions that you need to make reduce the cost of production: 1) by promoting sustainable agriculture and organic farming and 2) by regulating prices so that farmers can make a living. That’s the only job that governments have. Not creating subsidies that go via farmers back to agri-business. The issue is not...
more loans; the issue is not higher subsidies. I
know how many of you have been keeping track of
this pretend new round that was launched in Geneva
[she is referring to the WTO here] on the 31st of last month, but this was the attempt
to pick up the pieces of the completely dead Debate
because of the collapse of the negotiations in
Cancun. And the most significant event of Cancun
was the Korean farmer who said WTO killed
farmers and a way to illustrate that. The recent so-called framework
negotiations have not moved anything by an inch.
They keep talking about a new round because I
illustrate that. The recent so-called framework
farmers and in a way his death was meant to
cause of weapons of mass destruction being used in
agriculture. I don’t mean it metaphorically and I
don’t mean it as a direct cause of those words all the time. These were meant to be
weapons of war and when the wars were over the
companies that made them wanted to find an
alternative and agriculture became that alternative. It
was their version of swords into plowshares
except they were doing it with toxics, which don’t
change their nature.
Again and again and again we’ve been told that
the reason that the toxics were the first Green
Revolution, and now the genetically engineered
seeds are the second Green Revolution, as it is
repeatedly referred to, unnecessarily, because without
them we can’t feed the world. That’s the
biggest lie of industrial farming because industrial
farming is the most inefficient producer of food in the
world. It’s most inefficient because it uses more
resources than it produces, in terms of food. I notice
you’ve been seeing the film on factory farming of
salmon. I did studies on industrial shrimp farm-
ing. You feed the subsidy to the shrimp farmers to
produce more fish than the shrimp produces in terms of
protein. In industrial agriculture you use 300 units
of input to produce a hundred units of output.
There is another way to put it. The shrimp can’t
produce the same hundred units. It’s an inefficiency
that wastes resources 37 times more.
And no matter which way you look and which
system you look at, monocultures with external inputs are always more powerful than
the small farm agriculture. Without them we can’t feed the world. That’s the
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they slept everywhere. They slept above the water-harvesting tank. They slept in the dining hall. But, everywhere, organic farmers are on their own. No institution is spreading the system. From Madagascar it has spread across India. And the NGOs have jumped from two tons per acre to thirteen tons per acre without the use of chemicals, shifting to compost, and reducing water and irrigation by 60 percent.

One of our colleagues from South India grows sugar cane and he was giving his results and showing how just by being an extremely sensitive observer of how the plants are growing he has tripled the yields on the same land without adding a gram of chemical. The more irrigation you give, the more crops you grow. But that crop is going to produce a lot of weeds, a lot of disease, and the nutrition is figured into the cost of the weed control. The monoculture of the mind goes on as fast as the monoculture of the system. It produces mass, not food, and therefore it produces malnutrition because of obesity. Both ends of that malnutrition crisis need to be addressed by the agriculture you do.

We need an agriculture that recognizes that agriculture produces food, not minerals. Agriculture doesn’t produce commodities. And in a way, therefore, a farm has to be recognized as a conserver of resources, as a health provider, as a community holder, as a custodian of the common and all of those functions. Looking at farmers in that way would not allow what is going on worldwide—in this country or the countries of the south, the countries like my country where artificially priced foods are being redressed to reach the poor’s table. The more you farm from the rid of all inputs and getting rid of irrigation.

And the issue really is that plants are a bit like children. You don’t get better children by pumping them with more money. I remember when the Columbine disaster happened—you know, the shooting at the Columbine school. I was making a trip to this country. It was quite a few years ago and one of the senators that has something to do with the India caucus was sitting next to me on the flight and we started to talk. I said: “Don’t you worry about the quality of those children in our schools?” and he said: “Yes, I’m extremely worried about it because we as a culture have obviously learned how to make a lot of money and to spend a lot of money, but I think we are forgetting how to bring up children, how to prepare the next generation for life.”

And that’s why I’m so thrilled in NOFA all of the lovely sounds of babies in this hall. It just says that these babies, and these children and these teenagers, are going to be the real— I guess probably the whole—whole only being around. You can run workshops on how to be a human being. All of you, this amazing future generation that’s absorbing all of this. Plants in the same way don’t respond to chemicals. What plants respond to is the right amount of sunlight, the right amount of nutrients in a balanced way and just the right amount of moisture.

That irrigation of the green revolution has led to all of the dams, all the water logging, all the salinity, all of the canals, the depletion of ground water. It was all to feed the chemicals. Water as a carrier of chemicals, not a provider of water. Plants don’t need that much. My calculations have shown that the Green Revolution uses ten times more water per pound of food that good healthy ecological agriculture uses. It was a water wasting revolution and the entire crisis across the world is because of those aspects of industrial farming. And the Green Revolution—nothing has happened. Industrial agriculture was only sent to the third world with all of the World Bank aid, all the US aid, all the Rockefeller aid. It was just given the name the Green Revolution so that it could avoid the Red Revolution that was spreading—

But it became red in a very ugly way itself. I would say it became a very dirty brown because what was left was a legacy of desertification. It didn’t lead to more food production. We’ve run short of pulses, we’re importing pulses—our main source of protein is pulses. We’ve imported rice and all the seeds. The monoculture of the mind goes hand in hand with another trick that industrial agriculture played on society and on our mind, and that is a trick of measuring only exports, only mass. Measuring mass, measuring size. Never the quality, never the nutrition, never the wholesome- ness of food. I call it the obesity model of agricult. It produces mass, not food, and therefore it creates mass on us, and not health. The obesity crisis is linked to the idea that food is about industrial processing. And the consequences for the earth, the whole world, the whole country, is a result of a careless food system. And I think that we need to vote for the sake of the poor who are not getting enough to eat, for the sake of those in this country, the one-third who after getting enough to eat are also unhealthy and

countries can subsidize their farmers for exiting from agricultural production. It is not enough to get off the land. They call it the exit clause. They call it producer retirement. Resource retirement basically put an end to farming.

And that’s exactly the change we want to see in our lifetimes. That farming will be what farmers do. Food will be what people making the land with love produce. Food will not be this anonym- ous bundle of things that reach our table. I’m sure you all read this lovely book Fast Food Nation. Did you read the part on the strawberry flavor? It is a half page of chemicals, the flavor of strawberry into ice cream that doesn’t have the strawberries. What an effort! Can you imagine? Except the effort gets made because someone makes the flavor of the strawberry industry. And that is what we’re really up against with the entire trading system. It is based on people making money both ways. I mean Cargill and they are being dined on by because we couldn’t save the wheat we harvested. I think this was around the year 2000, maybe a little earlier. They said when we harvest our wheat and store it we are wasting government money and to keep our schools out of a budget deficit, we should sell it off. Of course if you sell off the wheat after harvest you have to bring it back. So Cargill bought the wheat at $60/ton and sold it internationally, but two months later we were short of wheat and we were re-importing it and Cargill was selling it back to us at $240/ton. Just work it out. They made $180/ ton over 2 million tons one way and $240/ton over 2 million tons the other way. India lost, the producer lost, the poor lost because the wheat became more expensive. Only Cargill gains.

Industrial agriculture with the WTO rules is no more about producing food. It is about producing profit. And everywhere in the world the actual production of food in the world today is for the wealthy consumer. The amount, the percentage I get up in the middle of the night and I think: “Oh my God, at this trend, if all of us working to stop this trend are not able to, not only where will good food come from but where will we even get food from?” Because it’s a system in which the trade is driving the system. But they’re not producing. They’re locking farmers into debt; they’re getting farmers off the land. But they don’t really have a system of production. They have a system of commerce, they have a system of commodification, but they don’t really have a system of production.

And they have a system in trade in which become is what my friend, the European parliamentarian Caroline Lucas, has called the great food swap. Every country is exporting the same product. Every country is importing the same product. Every country is importing the same thing. My friend Gene just gave me an apple when I arrived and I had a label from New Zealand. I know in India we are dined on by Washington apples that are subsidized hugely. While our apple growers up in Himachal can’t sell their apples. The Washington growers are probably also threatened by the WTO’s rules. It’s not that the Washington grower will stay safe.

It’s a system of mutually assured destruction. Let me give you an example. Figures about food swap. In 1996 Britain exported a hundred and eleven million liters of milk and imported a hundred seventy-three million, and yet they talk about the milk oceans in Britain. It imported 49 million kilograms of butter and exported 47, and yet we talk about butter mountains. The moun- tains of butter are based on importing, not on production.

Now this juggling with imports and exports is leaving no one with any idea of how much food we have in fact in our hands. The FAO has put a great culture Organization until about 4 years ago used to give production data. It now only gives trade data. So you could actually be having less food and trading more and imaging that there is more food in the world then there is. So you have a lie coming from the trade side.
But this lie is based on a very false assumption, which is at the heart of the World Trade Organization: the idea of a “like product.” The idea that a genetically modified soy is equal to a non-modified soy. The idea that non-pasteurized fresh milk from cows is like the BGH milk with pasteurization. This issue of like product basically means discounting the love, effort and care you put into your food.

I do not think that industrial products are equal to organic products, and in the global market they should not be treated as such. We have in fact started to make artisanal food, just like you have artisanal craft; you have lovely woolen weaving. You pay more for it. You happily pay more for it. You have hand crafted shoes. You have embroidery done by hand and not by machines.

Everytime something is hand crafted everyone knows that it is put into it of love, not more of resources but of care, more attention, more beauty, more of quality.

And that shift from the obesity paradigm of mass and weight and extension to the quality paradigm is really the revolution we are making. We are shifting agriculture from the obsession with quantity: quantity traded, quantity produced: of single commodities, to quality of the people who grow the food. The quality of life of those who eat it and the quality of the products themselves.

In any case, if the full cost of production were honestly taken into account, it’s a very costly system that neither the planet nor the richest society can afford. Can you imagine if the entire cost of production was reflected in the prices? No society can afford. Can you imagine if the entire cost of production were reflected in the prices? No society can afford. Can you imagine if the entire cost of production were reflected in the prices? No society can afford. Can you imagine if the entire cost of production were reflected in the prices? No society can afford. Can you imagine if the entire cost of production were reflected in the prices? No society can afford.

There is a real freedom movement that we are building. It is those truly global values of love for the earth, love for all beings, love for each other, love for ourselves. It is those universal values that we carry.

It is those truly global values of love for the earth, love for all beings, love for each other, love for ourselves. It is those universal values that we carry. These freedom zones are really building and spreading around the world. It basically says on our Navdanya website or my website that this is what people should do, but to basically strongly condemn the way that this is being done. This is a way to fight dishonest power, which has unleashed a war against the planet and the farmers and producers of the world, and to do that through organic farming by creative, constructive action you have to stop. It’s such fun anyway. Every day is meaningful. You get up in the morning not terrified about how you’re going to face that office today because the farm invites you.

But even more importantly I do believe the organic movement is holding the germplasm of freedom in its hands. For a few years now, both with movements as well as with governments, I keep saying the way to take our next step is to build more and more freedom zones. Zones in which we do not admit toxic poisons into our food systems. Zones in which we do not allow genetically modified seed to come in. Zones in which we do not allow the patenting of life, in which we see it as a human abuse and an abuse against species. Zones in which we do not allow privatization of our water resources.

These freedom zones are really building and spreading. I have a report. For those of you who want or need it, please contact Julie. It’s basically a report on GMO-free zones and how fast they are spreading around the world. It basically says on genetic engineering that citizens are voting for GMO freedom.

But when we had our gathering of organic farmers in India, we called it Vasundhara. Vasundhara is the name of a goddess that makes that make it possible. That’s what the word means, a supporter of life. One of the pledges we took and the declaration of this real freedom should be up on our website, the Navdanya website or my website. Vasivha.net — we called it the declaration of real freedom through the real Green Revolution.

The real Green Revolution is the organic revolution. Not the fake one. I believe the beauty of this freedom movement that we are building is that it is simultaneously so deeply local and so global. It has to be local because you work with which you work. You can not farm through remote control or at least you can not do good farming through the remote control. It is also very very global in the sense that the spirit that was performed late tonight was performed by our farmers on the planet earth.

It is those truly global values of love for the earth, love for all beings, love for each other, love for work, that is shaping the future. We got together, many of us together, against all the monopolies and of itself, its doubly unethical when the crops we have evolved are now being patented. These freedom zones are really building and spreading around the world. It basically says on our Navdanya website or my website that this is what people should do, but to basically strongly condemn the way that this is being done. This is a way to fight dishonest power, which has unleashed a war against the planet and the farmers and producers of the world, and to do that through organic farming by creative, constructive action you have to stop. It’s such fun anyway. Every day is meaningful. You get up in the morning not terrified about how you’re going to face that office today because the farm invites you.

Together we wrote… I’m not going to read out the principle in this manifesto but we actually drew up a manifesto on the future of farming. Not to say that this is what the farmers should do, but to basically declare this is what we are doing. We are changing agriculture, we are changing its practice, we’re changing its paradigm and we’re not going to rest until we change the whole of it. Our dream is to make organic the only way farming is done because it is the only true way farming should be done.

Thank you.
buttermilk will separate. Put the butter out on a piece of wax paper, form into any shape you like, wrap it up and freeze it for later use, or use it right away.

Celtic Sea Salt: Peter Young turned me onto this when I first learned how to lacto-ferment from him. You can order it from the Grain and Salt Society at 1-800-topsalt. I get 5 pounds of light grey at a time and it costs $28 or so for that much. It is chunky and is great like that or you can buy a salt grinder from them if you like it finer. It has a nice array of trace minerals and has a sweet taste. It is immensely healthful. I use no other salt.

We also make a great soap from our pigs’ lard

Root cellaring of carrots, apples, beets, potatoes: Go out and get Nancy Bubel’s book “Root Cellaring” and build your own or retrofit one. We store potatoes and apples in bushels on shelves, and carrots and beets in wet sand on the floor in bushels. We use them all winter until late April.

Braids of onions, shallots, garlic: the best way to store these alliums is in braids because they get good air circulation that way. French braid this family with a twine string to keep the braid sturdy as the stalks die back. Store in 50-55 degrees out of the sun – not in a damp place. If you can’t braid you can store these folks in baskets, checking them regularly for rot.

Jack is the king of wine and beer making, dehydration, yogurt and such, so maybe he will write an article some day on those topics.

Have a good time with your food preservation exploits. And bring stuff out and brag regularly to anyone who will listen, and feel so comfy and satisfied and well-fed from what you have wrought!
Green Planet Buying Club

by Doug and Brenda Peterson

Green Planet is a natural food buying club located in Seymour, CT, that supplies local organic farm produce and other natural, healthy products at discounted prices to its buying club members, as well as offering healthy food advice to the community.

Coordinators, Doug and Brenda Peterson have been interested in health, nutrition, and the environment for a number of years.

"During my second pregnancy we became interested in healthier eating, natural and organic foods. It was getting to be very expensive, so in 1997 we joined a natural food co-op to help with the cost," says Brenda.

"Buying in bulk enabled us to purchase the same products at discounted prices. Today we feel better and want to share our health success with other people," claims Doug.

Before long, Brenda had volunteered her house to be the drop-off spot for the monthly deliveries and soon after she became the new coordinator and renamed the co-op Green Planet.

"The name Green Planet, came from our hopes for a clean and safe environment. Our logo is the planet earth with a maple on one side and a conifer on the other with the words ‘Improving the quality of your life’ “ declares Doug.

"I was a stay-at-home mom and thought this was a good way of staying connected with people who had the same interests as Doug and me. We became like a family and it was fun getting together with the same people every month,” states Brenda.

The members would come to the house on delivery day, help unload the truck and package their own orders. This system was discontinued as the membership increased in numbers and a more organized approach to packaging was made. Now they have volunteers who prepare the orders for pickup.

"People who had belonged to other co-ops expressed that ours was different and they were comfortable here. The other co-ops had many rules and regulations and I was more flexible. There were no minimum orders, volunteering time was not mandatory, a very minimal fee was charged and you didn’t have to order every time,” states Brenda. “I just looked at it as getting good food to people who needed it and wanted it,” she continues.

After a while a member, Sherri DiMario of New Haven, offered to take over the ordering of the produce while Brenda handled just the grocery end by taking calls and entering orders into a computer program provided by their main supplier.

“It was very labor-intensive, with all the produce orders being placed by phone and taken by hand. Sherri was a great help to me,” says Brenda.

It was Doug who brought in some local farm produce vendors to the co-op. These farmers grew organically, but not all were certified as such. The fruits were ecologically grown.

“We got to know them on a personal level and thought it was a good idea to support local farmers and gardeners,” says Doug.

The Entire 8 hour Pre-Conference by Eliot Coleman:

Successful Systems I: 0410 & 0411 (4 hr)

☑ Please send me this 2-video set. I enclose $30 in the form of a check to “NOFA Video Project.

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Also: Dr. Vandana Shiva’s Keynote Address is available in either audio or video format.

☑ Please send me an audio tape of this address. I enclose $5.

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NOFA Video Project, 411 Sheldon Rd., Barre, MA 01005
Doug and Brenda Peterson’s 130-member Green Planet Co-op has slowly taken over their house!

“We joined NOFA (Northeast Organic Farming Association) and started going to their workshops and conferences. We learned more about organic farming and the people behind the scenes. What actually takes place on the farms and how it’s not only better for us health-wise, but better for our environment. By eating organic we’re supporting farming that doesn’t pollute and that’s why we want to support our local farms and protect the environment for our children’s future,” he continues.

According to Brenda “It’s important to support organic foods and organic farming for if you don’t pay now you’ll pay later whether it be medical bills or cleaning up the environment.”

When DiMario could not continue with her duties, Doug took over the produce ordering and computerized the process.

“It was so awkward doing everything manually, and because I worked on the computer all day at my regular job, I said ‘Why can’t I put all this on the computer and make it easier’ and that’s how the online ordering process was developed,” says Doug.

The members could go on the web site with an ID and password, check what is available, and place orders from the United Natural catalogue, local farms, organic bakery, local eggs and homemade soaps.

“I decided to take it one step further. If our buying club members were ordering healthier types of snacks for their families, why not offer it to our schools and that’s how the ‘Healthy School Snack Program’ began” states Doug.

Right now they have one private school that is ordering consistently.

Brenda has gone into the local schools and given talks on healthy eating and how to prepare tasty snacks. Doug accompanied her on a juicing demonstration at the junior high school.

“We did an organic carrot/apple juice and most of the kids enjoyed it. Most of them had never tasted fresh juice like that before,” exclaims Brenda.

Pursuing her interest in food and health, Brenda graduated in 2002 from The Institute for Integrative Nutrition in Manhattan and is a certified holistic nutrition counselor. She is presently enrolled in the chef program at The Natural Gourmet Institute for Food and Healing.

“I really enjoyed the first school and they gave me a good understanding of how to help people who might have health issues, but I didn’t get enough training on the food end. I had heard of this vegetarian based school, which was health supportive and decided to enroll,” states Brenda.

Her goal is to work with people doing private chefing along with health counseling, and when they expand to a store location, become head chef at the deli.

Presently, the Peterson’s are looking for a storefront in New Haven County for their growing business.

“We are moving away from a co-op and listing ourselves as a buying club.

As of March 2004 our membership has increased to 130 members. Our growth is due to members telling their friends and co-workers about a way to purchase organic and quality foods at a reasonable price,” ends Doug.

For more information go to their web site www.greenplanet-ct.com

New from the 2004 NOFA Summer Conference:

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<tr>
<th>NOFA Videos</th>
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<tr>
<td>0401 Biodynamic Basics</td>
<td>Jennifer Clifford</td>
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<td>0402 Greenhouse Tomatoes</td>
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<td>Vandana Shiva</td>
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<td>Karma Glos</td>
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<td>0409 Raw Milk</td>
<td>Gina Robinson</td>
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<td>0410 Grilling Fruit Trees</td>
<td>Bill Mackentley</td>
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Please send me the circled videos. I enclose $15 for each in the form of a check to “NOFA Video Project”

NOFA Video Project, 4H Sheldon Rd., Barre, MA 01005
I took over a farm in 1984 - kind of early - due to the death of my parents. I like to call it a family farm, but really, my parents bought it only 14 years earlier and they bought it for a place for the family to be outdoors. Agriculture was really a backdoor for family.

I farmed it in an unconventional but not organic way for 10 years. In 1990, I began a family of my own. In 1995, I converted the farm to organic principles - which resulted in a positive chain reaction of creativity that we had not foreseen.

In 1995, the farm supported three families, giving full-time work for four people. Eight years later, there are 160 of us. And it’s all due to one key idea — the idea of reconnecting urban households and farms. It’s as simple as that.

And you all know that I didn’t come up with that idea. On the other hand, I didn’t steal it from anyone else. I ran into it in the public domain, so to speak. The organic domain, of course.

Gate-crashing a World Organic Scientific Conference in Copenhagen in the summer of 1996 - I call it gate-crashing because I was still in conversion then - and you have to use the kind of unknowingly fragile, unsexy in that phase - like a crayfish changing its shell. It wasn’t sure whether I was supposed to be there, but I kind of sneaked around.

But there was Michael Ablenman showing slides from Fairview Gardens in California and talking about their CSA. And the same day there was a Canadian girl called Gendiene, who had gone to Denmark to study. I didn’t sleep for three days, or at least that is how it felt. It was a profound encounter.

I didn’t steal the idea. Rather, I put myself at the disposal of this great idea, and have continued to do so this day. The jobs – all the staff – are kind of a side effect of my own personal voyage that started that day. So, being back here is also sort of to pay back the debt to the pioneers of this country that got us on this track.

Someone once said that what really moves the world is enlightened self-interest. I have to subscribe to that, I guess. I put us at the disposal of this great idea because it offered something extraordinary. I could go on being a farmer. I could be a foodie. I could be a philosopher. And, I could be a revolutionary. All in one – Wow!

So we set up a CSA the following winter of 1996. We even got a government grant: $10,000 to set it up, with the by-laws and so on. And 100 families in our area signed up for the trial year, the season of 1997.

The dream then was to have 250 families share the garden on our farm. That was the dream, full stop. Seriously. We are now in our 8th year and more than 44,000 households are now customers of this system. How? We simply let it get out of hand.

The CSA structure survived for only two years, unfortunately. It was registered as a charity/non-profit organization and it simply couldn’t deal with risk-taking and the fast decision making that took place in those early years. So we mortgaged the farm and founded a limited company called The Seasons. Today, it is that one day I hope we will see a website designed by a Swedish chef while he was cooking for people in Vail, Colorado. So, again, you guys helped us out. It became a dot.com and not a dot dk because an architect’s partnership had taken the Danish domain called The Seasons. Today it is the most visited architectural website in the world.

But we liked the name and it has served us well, although it is the most unpronounceable name for any company on the planet. It’s worse than Haagen-Dazs – seriously. No one has a pronunciation of who could pronounce it. Dutch is spoken with a potato in your mouth and Danish is spoken with a hot potato in your mouth. So that’s what we are called.

So, what is Aarstiderne? A box scheme/CSA? A farm-based fresh produce business? An organic food company? A food culture educator? A complex adaptive system/energy field? An orchestrator of food-driven ecosystems? A self-organizing hot house experiment? What I like to think is that it is a way of managing an insect, but the answer would depend on whom you ask. Experimenting on how to do things is a key part of our work. I’m going to describe it for you and break it down for you. The answer depends on whom you ask.

If you look at it from above, it looks like a patchwork of small fields. It’s a farm on the coast of the inland waters, the archipelago of Denmark. As you can see, my conventional neighbors grow winter rape (canola) and I don’t. We are in a high priority nature conservation area because of the farm’s coastal boundary of 4.5 miles. A key part of our work is to try to produce the landscape and the species there, including the dormouse that I showed you at the beginning of the slides. Unfortunately, the dormouse hasn’t been seen on our farm, but the priority is that one day I hope to give a presentation where we can have a picture of one that is living with us.

When you look at it from the side, the land has a beautiful landscape quality and our work goal is not only preserving it as it is nor, but also returning some of this landscape to its former glory.

We can also look at it from the bottom up (slide of a large tree, taken from the base, looking straight up into a pattern of limbs and leaves). I’m not going to talk about trees, but my university background is in forestry and I have a deep affection for trees. We do use them as our key educators because if you look at forests and forests’ ability to self-organize, it’s quite extraordinary to see how forests become a complex social organism. I like to use forests because we are humbled by forests. If you walk into a cabbage patch or a wheat field, you feel like the teeniest fraction of that. If you walk into a forest, you are humbled. Trees are bigger than you, they have been there longer and they have incredible capabilities of organization. You feel humbled. So it is an incredible and healthy exercise to walk in a forest.
On a good day, it looks like this (slide of garden)

This is a garden dedicated to a farm shop on the farm. It’s also a venue for customers to see what they will get in their boxes. If you look in the back by the oaks, you can see the field scale cabbage patch because we grow at the field scale, too.

We recreate the close links between the work of the organic farmers and the work in all the kitchens, transforming the bounties of the land into the feasts of honest, nutritious, seasonal and inspired food. You will notice it has lots of food and kitchen and spiritual angles. Sort of a credo, sort of a battle cry, what we are there for.

At Aarstiderne, when we were growing, we articulated these as our basic principles. It took us through the breathtaking growth from 2000 to now. It helped us maintain a basic civility. There are many stories behind these and I can’t tell you all the stories, but I’ll speak to some of them. They are: empathy, quality, creativity, conversation, growth, transparency and ecology are all household words.

Our growth has been very quick. In 1999, we were serving 2000 households. In 2003, we had 44,000 customers.

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<th>Year</th>
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Customers are paying more than these prices for their food because food is taxed at 25%. These numbers are for the company, so add 25% to what they spend or $31 million in spending with them.

We believe in hospitality. This garden shows people what is going into the boxes throughout the seasons. We believe in taking children onto the farm. We also believe in serving 2000 households. In 2003, we had 44,000 customers.

Our growth in numbers of households and in dollars.

If you ask me what is going on, the project is about being a change agent reintegrating us with the natural world. It feels like a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

We believe in hospitality. This garden shows people what is going into the boxes throughout the seasons. We believe in taking children onto the farm for 3 days to a week as part of a project to give them an idea of what we are doing.

We are still absolutely crazy about self-organization and permaculture and natural, undisturbed ecosystems. This is where you get the smart ideas and the solutions to things that seem to be insurmountable problems. Look into the way the natural world on the farm organizes itself and carries the stress and the discrepancies; it’s quite extraordinary. So we are into undisturbed systems, although there is disturbance all around us.

We made a decision to go on the Internet because the phone was killing us in those early years. So we made a defensive move onto the Internet because we couldn’t handle all the calls. We set up a website. Going onto the Internet meant we could work in the day and answer email at night. In those days, it wasn’t a forward thinking move, it was to handle the calls. If they make a decision to join a CSA, it’s a life decision and people want to talk about it. It’s like an organic help line.

What was then a liability is now an asset. Two or three years later, conversations with our customers are what give us huge amounts of valuable information. You can’t do this with surveys. Through the personal attraction of a conversation you learn something and go somewhere. We have a Conversations Department to talk with whoever needs to talk to them, rather than a customer service department. Their job is to engage in as many conversations as they can. We have made the art of conversation a top priority for our work.

It empowers the people there. It’s not just complaints or sales. They become deeply involved in the development and creativity of the company and they have very valuable information. They are the interface of the company and their work is key to personalizing something that with exclusive use of the Internet could become very impersonal and it can take you somewhere. Combining a website with a great, active conversation department has worked well.

Transparency is one of the seven household words. It keeps us on track. There are no secrets to this business. We openly tell everybody about what we do. Customers have our financial data in the public domain.

We are working on a long-term project to set a new standard for transparency in food. You cannot have close links between people if you are not transparent. You cannot have close links that are not transparent.

The conventional system is so blatantly nontransparent in how it works. So there is an edge there. It is plain common sense to work with trust. It’s good for everything. We think of it as good for organic principles and criteria, organizational ethos, customer loyalty, supplier loyalty, co-worker loyalty and recruitment.

We see no real reason not to develop this idea to its full potential. It’s a vantage point, somewhere you can work from. It’s unique, vacant, unexplored, fertile and conquerable territory. It’s a vantage point you can claim, you can defend it and it’s very difficult for the conventional world to reach it.

So we thought we could just do it. But, transparency, like charity, starts at home. There are things we need to look at and agree upon within the internal culture of our company. When we launched this idea 18 months ago as a high priority, I thought we would be there in a short time, but it has taken a lot longer to prepare ourselves for what I call the Organic Full
Our customers get not just vegetables, but also they get a lot of fruit, cheese, meat, fish, bread. Many are on a fortnight delivery for everything except milk. We haven’t been able to come up with a model that would break even on milk. In Denmark the market share of organic milk is 32%. In the cities, the share is 50%. So basically organic milk is a large commodity in the conventional supermarkets and they use it to bring in customers. It’s like six packages; it’s always on offer to bring people into the stores. Organic milk is not expensive in Denmark and you can get it everywhere. So people are not willing to pay the premium to bring it to their doorstep. What they value are people, but they are part of an economic system that is not what we want to do. We are working on this.

So how do you get it right? What was it that happened, what drove us and are there lessons to be learned? I’ll take a go at this next.

From day one, we needed to find people who would bring creative energy to the table. We worked with a wonderful chef. If he hadn’t been there to tell us, the farmers, that it is possible to grow what you wanted to grow in the box and put in the box about stuff that people would like to eat at the other end, I wouldn’t have been giving this lecture to you. He brought the chef’s perspective and the culinary perspective to our work. If someone says that you need to go to market in the urban area, I would say the urban people are not going to suffer some of the stuff you want to grow. I know it’s probably not politically correct to say this, but in the real world, you need to have this in mind.

You need to have someone to back you up. Our bank suffered us for a few years and then said, no, this is too scary. We had the good fortune to find a Dutch Ethical Bank, Triodos. It has been instrumental partners with us. They were very instrumental in bringing us through difficult patches over the last 3 or 4 years. I know there are beginning to be structures like this in the U.S. There are people who can help you out.

You need to strike a balance between the dream side and the today side of things. I call it the law of oxygen equilibrium. Money is like oxygen. Oxygen is the destroyer of the universe and the creator of the universe. We only need 2% more oxygen in the atmosphere and we have a self-inciting 23% oxygen and we are gone. If you take it down to 19%, photosynthesis will go down by 30 or 40%. It’s a very delicate balance.

The role of money in work like this is the same thing. Money is the destroyer of things and the creator of things. You need to strike a balance, not to be a total fundamentalist and not to rid yourself of principles in the process. Don’t be a Taliban, don’t be a Jesus. Find some sort of a delicate balance in-between.

You need to get the ball rolling. We all agree that farm days and visits are wonderful and they do wonderful things. But they are also a limitation. You are inviting people into your world and it’s your responsibility to move people and make change in people’s lives, you have to go where they are. You have to take it to the streets and meet people where they live as well. You make food for them. We cook for them in the streets and tell them that the food came from this and such farm. If you want to learn more about this, Aarstiderne is a way to hook up to this kind of food quality. We set up 4 or 5-day street restaurants and have done so systematically every year. You can generate huge energy from it if you are there for that long and then are gone. You get to meet your customers on a personal level. You get to engage in conversations.

The eighth principle in our house is that the c word does not exist. We have ethnologically cleansed ourselves of the word, “consumer”. It is a fundamentally derogatory phrase about people. We are not consumers. Our customers are fellow citizens. This is a word created by economists to put us into segments. Abolish the word consumer. We are creating this intelligent way about issues of within each of us. It’s a totally different relationship than betting on only the consumer side of people.

We call these events Food for Thought and usually partner with an NGO, and that allows us to get into attractive parts of towns and it’s an extraordinary way of connecting with our customers.

This is what this project is about. We spend serious amounts of serious time with our customers where they live, in their environment, not on the farm.

This approach is in a contemporary tone, not earthy or old-fashioned. You have to watch out for that. People lead their lives in a very fast way and you don’t want them to think their food was grown in the last century. Contemporary and non-conforming.

You need to connect with another energy than that you are so right and they are so wrong. Eat good food with them; create an experience that transcends the notion of raw materials. It works! Beauty is very often the daughter of simplicity. Oscar Wilde said in a very quizzical way: “Only money can buy people, and that is why I am so rich.” If you want to create a relationship with your customers, get the food preparation part of it right, so that it looks good and has that energy that shows that you care for it.

We use a contemporary feel for moving organic food. You need to make it contemporary and non-conformist. You have to have food secretary on-scending. You need to create a different energy than just the label or word.

What’s the message? What’s my story to you about this project that got out of hand? The root of the matter?

Truly good food can only come from sustainable agriculture. It has a spiritual aspect that you can visit also. This is a conscience thing. If you speak to people in a contemporary tone, they don’t need to engage in conversations. If you use the label or word. They are not consumers. Our customers are fellow citizens. This is a word created by economists to put us into segments. Abolish the word consumer. We are creating this intelligent way about issues of within each of us. It’s a totally different relationship than betting on only the consumer side of people.

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The Purple Dragon Co-op

Glen Ridge, New Jersey is one of the more upscale municipalities among the dozens in the vast, sprawling metropolitan area of the Garden State which lies on the west side of the lower Hudson River. In this part of the world one goes from stately mansions with tall, shabby tenements, from shady tree-lined suburban streets to inner city missions within only a few blocks. Heavily residential, corner grocery stores still thrive in the more densely populated areas and only occasionally do you see the sort of large scale retailing represented by a Whole Foods or Fresh Fields.

In this diverse mix of neighborhoods an unusual food distribution business has taken root. The Purple Dragon Co-op — billed by its founder, Janit Lon-don, as “The Original Organic Produce Co-op” — now serves some 700 families, bringing fresh and largely local organic produce to their tables once every two weeks.

The operation is organized around neighborhood “pods”, each of which has a “host” to whose home, early in the morning, the pod’s collective food is delivered once every two weeks. A couple of pod members show up later that morning and break down the delivery into “shares” which are then picked up by members later that day.

Purple Dragon is currently composed of 48 pods. Janit tries to keep the size of a full pod to 15 shares, but sometimes it’s more because two families might split a share. The business started in 1989, but Janit has consciously taken a very slow growth path.

“I’ve always felt it was better to have things solidly in place,” she explains. “And try to keep the quality there. I like a certain way of treating people. If someone calls, they want them to feel like they’ve actually connected with someone. I’m driven insane by multi-voice menus on the phone!”

Originally, pod deliveries were on Saturday. Janit set up an every two-weeks schedule because she felt members didn’t want to be tied down to being home every Saturday. As the business grew, however, Janit added two more delivery days. Now there is a delivery to some pods on Saturday, then to others on the following Thursday, then to the rest on the next Wednesday, before starting again with the original pods on Saturday.

Hosts sign a contract with Purple Dragon and have to have space to accept the delivery, break it down and store it. Sometimes that will be a garage, sometimes a porch or basement. The hosts take responsibility for collecting the money from members and deal with those who forget to pick up. In return they get a $40 discount on the price of their share every two weeks.

Purple Dragon is not a traditional pre-order co-op or buying club. Instead, Janit finds out what produce is available (especially what the farmers have a lot of) and what is especially attractive because of variety or quality or price. Then she puts together an order that she thinks will appeal to the members.

The week I visited, in late June, the share included New York ecologically grown cherries and Cameo apples, organic New York baul, calalou and haiti taisi greens, red leaf and caddie lettuces, sugar snap peas, zucchini, California white corn, onions and potatoes, Mexican Roma tomatoes, Costa Rican superfine pineapples and Ecuadorian bananas.

“I put my order together a couple of days before delivery,” she relates. “I try to make one whole cycle — for the entire two weeks — the same. But sometimes you can’t. You can’t get the same color lettuce as last week, or sometimes you come across a deal and decide to jump on it even if it won’t be there next week. We do the best we can. If the farmer or the supplier has something which they have to sell, we try to work with them.”

Besides the regular produce share which members commit to buying, they may also order one or more fruit shares for a particular delivery day. These provide extra fruit and some members buy several before a party or other special occasion. During my visit the fruit share was a watermelon, Valencia oranges, and Bing cherries from Washington. In her newsletter Janit also offers specials which folks can order – deals on produce, personal care items, natural pest solutions, kitchen products for chemically sensitive persons, etc.

The order is delivered to a small warehouse, where it is unloaded and put in a walk-in cooler by a couple of part-time workers. The warehouse has a loading dock, but of course that has a fixed height and she has all sorts of vans and pickups who deliver to pods. Her former boyfriend had the brilliant idea of installing a car lift at the bottom of the dock to lift pallets up or down to the vehicle’s height.

There was no running water or heat when she bought the building, and she had to have a new floor installed. Although the business only uses the current walk-in to hold greens over-night, it has still gotten too big. So London is getting a second cooler which is 10 by 10 by 23 feet. She also bought a 6 by 6 foot water-cooled walk-in from a local shop, but found it wasn’t right for her purposes. She is looking for a farmer who has a stream that could be used to operate it. Any interested readers should call her at 973-429-0391.

“We don’t keep much here,” she says. “We put all the greens in here overnight for the next day’s delivery. But sometimes I get a deal. A couple of weeks ago I got a good deal on a new crop of organic potatoes. Other ones were a dollar a pound, and we got these for $15 a case! So I bought enough for all three deliveries and stored them in the walk-in.”

On delivery mornings, part-time drivers show up with their own vehicles at about 4:30 and are met by Janit or another person who supervises their loading for the different pods. Sometimes the workers are

Janine Marley and Carolyn Smiley, members of the Purple Dragon co-op, open produce boxes in preparation for distributing their contents to the pod members' boxes.

co-op members, but often they are people who want to earn a little money before they go to their regular jobs.

Breakdown at the Saturday pods is a job that is rotated among the members. As London explains: “The reason I designed it like that was because once every three months you get to work with another person you don’t know who at least has this interest in common with you. You open up boxes of beautiful produce to share with others. Our lives are so alienated already, it’s nice to have an un-mental thing to do with another person that involves the beauty of nature. Some of the pods have potlucks and people can make friendships or business relationships.”

On Wednesdays and Thursdays, of course, it is much harder to get members who can take a couple of hours in the morning to break down. So members of those pods each chip in $2 extra per order to pay a couple of members who have flexible schedules to do the breakdown job regularly.

Janit has had custom software designed to make handling orders easier. “That’s quite a process,” she recalls, “having software designed! There was nothing out there that really did what we do. If I have 20 groups this week and I order 20 cases of apples, the software divides it so that one case goes to each pod. Then there are also dividing instructions for the shares. When they open up the case at breakdown it will tell them 2 1/2 pounds per share. It will also sort it by where in the bag that produce should go. Squishabilitly index, we call it! We also can put in the computer the extras – the fruit shares, or two pounds of cherries for Sharon and a pound of garlic for Diane at a certain pod – and it adds that to the lists.

Members are supposed to bring recycled paper bags to the pick-up point, where they are reused. Wooden crates and reusable waxed boxes are collected and taken back to the warehouse where they are returned to the farmers.

Janit keeps the share price the same through all the seasons, and gives the same amount of food. The current price is $42 for the Saturday pods, with the weekday ones paying $2 more for the breakdown workers. Fruit shares are $20 each, or $17 for three
or more. At each pickup you are supposed to leave a check for the next delivery. If you forget, the host/coordinator has to follow up on it.

“That’s the design of the co-op,” says London. “To make it participatory, but not overly much so. Statistically, people in New Jersey sleep less than anyone else in the nation. They just don’t have a lot of extra time. The co-op is easier for some people than a CSA because they’re not putting out several month’s worth of payments at once. There’s a downside in that we don’t require that commitment. Sometimes we lose people when we don’t want to.

We don’t have a membership fee. I’ve never liked groups where there was a punishment if you left. You don’t forfeit anything if you leave. But we’re wondering if we should institute something like a discount if you stay for a while. In some areas turnover isn’t a problem, and in others it is. It may be as much the host family as anything else.

“If you are not going to be around for a delivery and you’re in the co-op,” she continues, “it’s your responsibility to find someone to take your food. Or you can donate it to a shelter or to your pod or give it to a friend. But it’s your responsibility. Which is a really great thing. I just had a call this morning from someone who substituted for a member a couple of months ago and now wants to join! That’s exactly what it is supposed to do.”

If someone wants to join, Janit sends the person an information packet and the phone numbers of coordinators of the pods in that area to call and see if there is an open spot. In odd circumstances a group will have room for new people. But she likes to keep it to 15 shares in a group.

Maddy Malfa is coordinator of the New City pod. “The hardest part about being a coordinator,” she feels, “is maintaining the 15 family membership. We have always managed by using subs until the spot is filled.” Maddy thinks that she wouldn’t be likely to eat the variety of things she does if not involved with Purple Dragon, nor would she be able to afford to eat so well.

London puts out a newsletter to members for each distribution. “I try to do education in it,” she sighs, “but it’s two pages of solid type and mostly business — what you’re getting this week, what the schedule of pick-ups is, what’s coming in next. We urge people to stay in the coop during the summer and not drop out because this is the season that really helps the farmers. But some people ask why should they care that this apple is from New York state? We publish recipes to help people use the produce. It’s really strange! (laughs) Not only are hundreds of households eating the same thing, they’re actually making the exact same recipe!

Purple Dragon is strongly committed to buying from local farmers. One way this shows up is in the design — rather than consumers ordering what they want, they get what farmers have available.

“It’s really like a multi-farm-based CSA,” Janit points out. “What happens with us is we’ll talk first to our farmers, then to our wholesalers. Depending on the time of year — in winter it might be just apples or onions or potatoes that we can get from
local growers. Then we’ll bulk that out with other stuff. Right now I’m working with several farmers, including Amy Hepworth in New York state, who has both orchard and row crops. The orchard ones are eco and the row crops are certified organic.

“I find myself pushing suppliers to buy from local farmers,” she relates. “We would each put in a dollar.”

“That’s where the concept for Purple Dragon came before it was a health food brand. But before that a while at Westbrae, which was a grocery store in Berkeley. She turned vegetarian at 16 and ended up leaving college and going to the West Coast. She worked for the store ethos from my background. But then a whole growing interest in organic food. Having been in a lot of co-ops before,” she recalls, “I was also frustrated with the health food store I went on the bus with my fat baby in arms. Their organic food looked like whitewashed for regularity, not flavor or nutrition. A food coop connects people more with nature!”

London was born in New York City in 1952 and grew up in Yonkers. When she was a kid her dad gardened and she read all his organic gardening magazines. One day she and her brother found a bird which they thought had a broken wing. They were going to put it in the garage and nurse it back to health when they found half a dozen more of them. They all died in convulsions, and the experience was her awakening into environmental awareness.

She turned vegetarian at 16 and ended up leaving college and going to the West Coast. She worked for a while at Westbrae, which was a grocery store before it was a health food brand. But before that she got involved with the Food Conspiracy in Berkeley.

“That’s where the concept for Purple Dragon came from,” she relates. “We would each put in a dollar and go to the farmers market and buy stuff with the money. We would then split it up and each end up with a box of vegetables. We did that every week. When I was at the market I was looking at things and suggested we each chip in two dollars and get a box of fruit as well. That was the genesis of this idea.”

After working at Westbrae, Janit went to Texas and worked for a store called the Hobbit Hole in Austin. The store had organic produce flown in, so she learned about distributors, ordering and shipping fresh food there. Then she decided to study Tai Chi and came back to the East Coast in 1979.

“I started looking for a job and worked for various co-ops,” she recalls. “When I married and came out to Jersey there was nothing that I could find. I had no money and didn’t even have a car. When I went to the health food store I went on the bus with my fat baby in my arms. Their organic food looked like compost. I knew it didn’t have to look like that.

“I was also frustrated with the health food store employees,” she continues. “They treated me poorly. It didn’t seem like the whole health food store ethos from my background. But then a whole lot of the industry has followed suit. There starts to be big money involved and suddenly there’s organic white sugar and white flour. I remember hearing Fred Kirschenmann say: ‘If we do in organics is replicate exactly what’s in the supermarket but make it all organic, we won’t really have done much.’”

So London convinced some of her girlfriends that they should start a little buying club to get brown rice and stuff. Then she convinced them that they should bring in produce from the West Coast. She didn’t know about Northeast Coops at that point, so she used to have to go out to the airport with cash every time the delivery came in. Finally she convinced United Airlines to give her credit! Then she found more local sources like Northeast, and Alberts Organics opened an East Coast branch.

At first Janit just ordered with a small group of friends. Their supplier, Hudson Valley, said to them: ‘What’s the name of your co-op?’ She had been studying a meditation discipline in which you are supposed to visualize different things - a red lion, a green horse, a violet dragon. She didn’t want to lift something directly from that, but founding member Bobbi Dunderdale said ‘How about a Purple Dragon? That’s pretty charismatic!’ The name stuck.

At about that time her husband decided to leave her and London was trying to figure out what to do to support herself. She knew the courts wouldn’t let her take the baby to California where she could get a job. So she figured to try to grow the buying club idea into a business. That was in 1989, just when Meryl Streep had started speaking out about Alar and there was a growing interest in organic food.

“Having been in a lot of co-ops before,” she recalls, “I gave a lot of thought to how I was going to make ours bigger. I realized there was a limit to how many people could come to my house. So I built it on neighborhood pods. I also realized that our model was strong enough that it could be replicated nationally, but that it is better if kept small with local connections.
“First we were working out of my finished basement,” London continues. “That was in some ways the best because I just blasted two air conditioners in there and it was nice and chilly. Being a single mom I was home with the kid. But then one of my neighbors busted me. I guess the deliveries bothered them. Picky, picky — Semi's at three in the morning! So then we rented a little storefront. It was 30 by 15, very small. We worked out of there maybe 5 years, until this warehouse was ready three years ago. It was harder there as a single parent. I had to be there at 4:30 in the morning and if I didn't have a babysitter I'd wrap Alex up in a sleeping bag and throw him into the car and keep my eye on the car while we were loading.

It seems like it didn’t do the boy any harm, however. Alex is now a sophomore at Ithaca College who is into physics and acting and computers. “I’m a type A parent with a type B kid,” Janit says, rolling her eyes. “I tell him to mow the lawn. He takes the mower out, hits a rock and breaks it, and comes back in for a nap!”

Over the years several competitors to Purple Dragon have started up, often directly copying wording or phrases from its literature and many of its methods, such as being organized on a two-week cycle and using 15-family breakdown groups. “When you think about it,” Janit laughs, “12 makes a lot more sense from a breakdown point of view!

“We’ve been copied so much,” she continues. “In a way it’s a compliment. But a lot of the companies which copy us don’t do a lot of buying from local farmers. It’s a lot of work and they don’t want to do it!”

London was happy with a smaller membership a few years ago, but when the competition started copying her and encroaching on Purple Dragon neighborhoods she had to put out more energy to maintain her groups and stay stable. Now, with the warehouse and distribution system in place, she admits it makes sense to continue to grow.

“But I’m pretty burned out,” she sighs. “At first I started it just to survive. A single mother has to make a living! Now it’s kind of beyond my plans. I need to get some good help, but I haven’t found the right person to take over a lot of my responsibilities yet.”

Janit is also interested in helping people replicate the Purple Dragon model in other areas (she won Dividends Magazine’s Home-Based Small Business of the Year Award with it in 1998). She feels it’s a reasonable way for an organized person to make a good living from home. After 15 years at it she makes $85,000 annually, although she puts in 80 to 100 hours a week so that comes down to a modest $20 an hour.

She has developed a training program for anyone interested in setting up a similar business. The full program costs $10,000 and includes the works: a manual explaining the operations in detail, copies of the distribution software and periodic personal consultations all the way down to the stickers to highlight distribution days. Janit will not train anyone right in her local area, but one woman who took the training went on to start up a very successful program in Hong Kong. One can also just buy the manual and consult with her over the phone for $100.

I stopped in at a Purple Dragon distribution while in the area, and was fortunate to meet two members, Janine Marley and Carolyn Smiley. They are the ones paid by the $2 extra fee to show up every other Wednesday morning and break down the order into
shares. The order had been delivered early that morning to the host’s garage, where Janine and Carolyn meet at 11:00 a.m.

Both women are fairly new to the co-op, having joined last fall, but are quite satisfied with the quality and variety. They also like the fact that as much produce as possible comes from local farms. But the key to their involvement is that they think they are getting good value.

“I want to get organic food cheap,” says Janine. “Going to Whole Foods is pretty expensive. I’ve wanted to take our order and go to Whole Foods and compare to see exactly how much money we are actually saving. Although I haven’t done that, I think in terms of quality and quantity you’re getting a little more for your money.”

Carolyn notes that, since she doesn’t pick what is in the order, sometimes her family struggles to use it all. “Every once in a while we end up with something we don’t like or don’t know how to use, so we end up letting some stuff go bad. If I just shopped at Whole Foods I’d get just what I planned to use. The flip side, though, is that you can be adventurous and try new things and you get exposed to things you never knew about. We eat more salad now, and more fruit!”

Janine agrees: “We eat more vegetables now. We do more stir fries and it makes me happy to see the kids eating more vegetables. I have to be honest, though, and admit they won’t eat the greens. I eat them.”

She is also happy with the buying decisions Janit makes. “It’s a big variety,” she says. “When I first joined I wasn’t sure if she would buy the things I’d buy. I was worried about that. But every two weeks you can count on getting bananas, apples, and maybe one other fruit that’s in season, plus some greens and a vegetable, then onions and potatoes every so often. We get enough fruit for my family for one week, and vegetables for two. If it was once a week we could get less but it would be fresher.”

Carolyn, however, supports the two-week period, saying: “I’m not sure I’d want to come here and distribute every week!”

They both enjoy the friendship that has developed between them as a result of their joint work every two weeks. Meeting other people was part of the reason Carolyn joined, in fact.

When a quality issue comes up with the produce, she feels it is properly dealt with. “Every once in a while we get something that is not as it should be,” Carolyn states. “But they take care of it. If the bananas are brown or something didn’t look good enough to pass out, they make up for it in the next shipment.”

Asked if they would recommend the Purple Dragon co-op to others, they both nod. “I’d recommend this to anyone,” says Janine. “It’s good healthy food, the quality is really excellent, it’s supporting farmers, and it’s good for the environment.”

Carolyn adds: “It’s fun!”

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Check out our website at www.thecenterfordiscovery.org to learn more.
Ah, food choices. How many there are! Organic meat wasn’t even a choice for most consumers until 2000, when the USDA first allowed organic labels on USDA inspected meat products. The number and variety of labels in the meat case can be bewildering—grass-fed, natural, organic, free-range. Each implies a kind of choice and the promise of delivering something special along with the fancy label.

I love to remind people that we all eat (not that most people need reminding) and that our food choices matter. We buy more than food every time we grocery shop, we buy stewardship, and open space and vibrant local economies. Or we don’t. It depends on where the dollar is spent, and on what.

But what happens when we don’t even have a choice? It is happening more and more often.

For the first time ever, this year’s NOFA-NJ Winter Conference at the Cook Campus Center at Rutgers University, was catered by University Dining Services. We worked hard with them—and they with us—to produce a meal that was as organic and affordable as possible. And the result was great: organic egg salad, vegetables, chicken, chips, and bread. It was a huge success, until conference-goers got to the beverages at the end of the table. It was piled high with cans of Coke.

The Choices We Make—and the Ones We Can’t

It wasn’t that we asked for it. It was our only choice, if you can call it that. Why? Because Rutgers University has a ten year contract (expiring this July) with the Coca-Cola Company to serve Coke products exclusively on-campus. Coke got the hearts, minds and palates of the students (and Rutgers sports fans, and other captives like us) and Rutgers got $10 million over ten years. We didn’t have a choice. By some accounts, Rutgers was the first university to sell “pouring rights,” a trend that is now nearly universal.

This spring, newspapers carried the latest installment on mad cow disease: Creekstone Farms, a Midwestern Black Angus beef producer, wanted to test its product—at its own expense. The USDA, which controls all meat testing in the US, denied that request, saying they believe that BSE testing of younger animals, such as those processed by Creekstone Farms is not scientifically justified or necessary. Creekstone Farms not only lost the decision, they lost lucrative export markets and 50 related jobs. Buyers lost the right to make informed choices about the beef they buy.

This probably sounds familiar to Oakhurst Dairy in Portland, Maine. Oakhurst milk labels used to say “Our Farmers’ Pledge: No Artificial Growth Hormone Used”. Monsanto, the largest manufacturer of artificial hormones used in conventional dairy production, objected and filed suit. In a compromise, Oakhurst labels now carry this statement as well: “FDA states: No significant difference in milk from cows treated with artificial growth hormone.”

Much closer to home—my local dairy case—I recently realized, with great dismay, that I can no longer buy organic milk that hasn’t been ultrapasteurized. Two brands, but no real choice.

Even as the invisible hand of the market pulls options from the shelves, so too does the hand of the health inspector. In New Jersey—and indeed in much of the US, consumers are unable to legally purchase raw milk. We can buy food with additives, and preservatives; we can buy saccharine and hydrogenated fats. These foods are freely available. But unpasteurized milk isn’t available.

All of this drives home the point that there are a lot of folks, all along the food chain, who limit our choices as consumers. From what is on the label to what is on the shelf, the myth of freedom of choice is just that. In the food business, consolidation, concentration, commodification, processing and retailing all work to limit our food choices.

But for farmers and consumers who make the extra effort to meet in a local market, whether a CSA, a farm stand or a farmer’s market, there is still the chance to tell the whole story. A chance to make the special request. A chance and a choice—and that is almost enough for me.
Enjoyment of a less-intellectual kind was had by many at the various entertainment venues during the weekend, including the ever-popular contradance and the Saturday night concert by Dirty Rice. Steve Leicach drummed up rave reviews once again, and in his return to the NOFA conference John Porcino delighted young and old alike. In her second year as fair coordinator, Tricia Cooper outdid herself, being as details-oriented as Eliot Coleman and putting on a great event.

For those of you who were there, we’d love to have your thoughts on the 2004 conference, as your comments help the Summer Conference Committee immensely. So now it’s back to the drawing board for us. Some might ask how we can top this year’s event, but that seems misguided because our aim, like an organic grower’s, is to do it at a sustainable level. With the committee we have, there shouldn’t be any problem.

On a personal note, I will no longer be doing either the publicity for the conference or co-coordinating the children’s conference. In both roles I had a lot of fun. Your children are delightful and I thoroughly enjoyed the time I spent with them. And this communication has been a hoot, too. Look forward to very insightful, clear and concise articles from new publicity staffer Kathy Lichtfield. And like I said in my role as reporter in the Friday night skit, “Good night everyone out there!”

Ralph Nader, speaking on Wise Governance, during his debate with libertarian Congressman Ron Paul.

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...The right word, at times, becomes... words, ink, & identity
From the Andes: First Potato, Then Quinoa, Now Tarwi?

by Brian Cady

The potato came to our Northeast from Europe, and to Europe from the region Spain first called ‘Andenes’, ‘The Steps’. The Andes were named after the ubiquitous terraces that stepped down from South American pastures below snow-covered peaks; past potato, quinoa, and tarwi fields, past fields of peanut, corn and bean, then towards Pacific Coast guano, salt and fish, or Amazonian timber. ‘Andenes’ were walled with stone, filled with gravel, first topped with the original forest soil and kept fertile by steady streams of anchovies and guano packed-in from the coast. Robbed of their peasants by European diseases and conquests, these terraces were often then knocked down, overgrazed, eroded of fertility and abandoned. Pre-contact Andean agriculture fed a large population that some claim has never since approached the numbers then achieved. Early Andean agriculture could accomplish this feat partly due to use of a gathering of potato companion and rotation crops that fit Andean circumstance quite well, including quinoa, a basketful of other tubers, and a soy-like legume called tarwi.

**Terraces planted to potato and quinoa. Lake Titicaca is in the background.**

Quinoa, now recently adapted to North American day length regimes, and the long-adapted potato, exemplify the potential of adapting Andean crops to the Northeast. Quinoa and tarwi induce potato cyst nematodes to hatch but starve — they are triggered to hatch by quinoa or tarwi root exudates, yet cannot feed on them. This ‘trapping’ can thus reduce soil nematode levels by 80% a year. Quinoa seed is naturally surrounded by protective soap-like saposins which are milled off for North American markets; a process perhaps foreshadowing future tarwi preparation.

Tarwi yields a high-protein, high-oil-content seed that undergirded Andean cuisine from before Christ to modern times. Its bitter leaf alkaloids retard browsers, so Andeans traditionally hedged their gardens with growing tarwi. Tarwi’s indehiscent pods do not suddenly split, scattering seed, as wild legume pods do, and tarwi seed also swells and sprouts quickly when moistened. These two features mark tarwi as quite domesticated and subdue tarwi’s weed potential.

**A field of tarwi in the Andes.**

Tarwi is also called tarwi, tarhui, chuchus, chochos, Andean or Pearl Lupin, Lupinus mutabilis and altaramuz. ‘Altaramuz’ is the generic name for lupin in Iberia, where the white, yellow and blue lupin species of the Mediterranean, adapted to winter culture, probably trumped the summer adapted tarwi in Spanish and Portuguese winter trials. Drought and custom probably prevented tarwi from growing in Iberian summers, perhaps leading to no Iberian tarwi use. This, and the lack of a native grain lupin grown in Northwestern Europe analogous to tarwi, may explain why earlier Northwestern European colonists of Northeastern North American adapted, through the Spanish and Portuguese empires, the culture of potato, turkey, and peanut, yet not of tarwi.

Tarwi grows in Andean highlands from the equator to the Tropic of Capricorn, in highland Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, and Northern Chile and Argentina. Most tarwi develops indeterminately, blooming and setting seed until drought or frost end its season. Before dying each year, the tarwi plant grows 0.5 - 3 meters tall, develops palatable compound leaves about hollow central stalks and side stalks, and produces hairy 5-10 cm, pods holding two to six 1.25 mm speckled, mottled or plain seeds of nearly any color. Tarwi grows short, much-branched taproots and in the presence of any suitable rhizobia, symbiotically forms root nodules and fixes nitrogen.

Damp Amazonian winds against the complex mountain landscape caused the multitude of Andean temperature, humidity and rainfall patterns which stimulated development of tarwi cultivars adapted to the great number of quite distinct and localized microclimates - any adaptation to Northeastern conditions had best choose carefully from among very diverse tarwi strains.

**It's lunchtime...**

**People in a field of tarwi on the Bolivian side of Lake Titicaca in April, 1996.**

Alkaloids also embitter tarwi seed - In fact, the plant concentrates alkaloids produced in leaves into the ripening seed, discouraging seed predation. Ingesting a few tarwi seeds occasionally de-worms Andean people and livestock by gradually releasing these bitter alkaloids. Andean streams running through baskets of tarwi have traditionally leached out alkaloids before tarwi use. ‘Improvements’ on traditional de-bittering methods yield 85% of tarwi’s original protein, with 2% of its alkaloids - this removal process has real protein costs.

Quinolizidine alkaloids predominate in tarwi, including sparteine, which is uniquely high in tarwi, compared to Mediterranean seed lupins. Among lupin alkaloids sparteine is more toxic, but has been consumed by Andeans and Europeans for thousands of years, has recognized physiological activities under investigation, and distills intriguingly, perhaps from ground tarwi.

Sparteine’s ability to chelate divalent alkaline earth metal cations may well be shared with most of the diazine quinolizidine alkaloids common among lupins, and this may underlie the lupin family’s acid soil tolerance. Low-alkaloid tarwi cultivars have been developed, but the loss of insect, browser and disease resistance, and magnesium and calcium cation chelation abilities may explain their poor competitiveness. Alkaloid presence in tarwi seed, while hindering direct food use, may benefit tarwi growth and human use overall.

Ammodendrine made up one percent of tarwi seed alkaloids in a study, and may have given cows birth defects; while suspected, this remains unproven. Other studies either fail to address, or deny, any tarwi seed ammodendrine. Ammodendrine is a pipеридине alkaloid, not a lupin-typical quinolizidine one. An admittedly cursory glance finds Andean folklore relating no association between human or animal birth defects and three thousand years of tarwi food use.

**Possible Northeastern North American tarwi uses, from most promising to most likely:**

Seed of tarwi have yielded tempeh, after fermentation. Blue lupin tempeh’s taste bested soy tempeh’s, suggesting tarwi’s promise here. Strains of soy microbes have digested lupin alkaloids well, and studies of soya-sauce-like tarwi processing have earned funding. Any microbial fermentation component in traditional Andean tarwi alkaloid reduction might help reduce future non-Andean tarwi preparation’s water use, and nutrient loss, and may indeed increase nutritional value. This warrants investigation, as does scaling of whole tarwi plants to yield proteinaceous feed, both using microbes selected to digest tarwi alkaloids.

Large numbers of traditional Andean recipes tempt the tongue, including ‘cebiche serrano, sauces (cream of Andean lupin); stews (pipian, a kind of fricassees); desserts (mazamorra custard with orange) and soft drinks (papuya juice with Andean lupin...
flour”). Tarwi flour can be used to make various dishes, such as tarwi ground and cooked with milk, potatoes, garlic, chili peppers, onions, mints, and cheese. Tarwi lack of teratogenicity calls for confirmation before expansion of tarwi food use beyond Andean populations, as genetic differences in liver enzymes affect metabolism of sparteine and other alkaloids.

Protein from tarwi seed is high in valuable lysine; and soil gypsum supplementation increases tarwi seed’s percentage content of sulfur-containing methionine, which exceeds that of many other legumes. Whole tarwi seed contains around 35-50 percent protein, while hulls of tarwi seed contain more seed alkaloids, and less protein, than kernels. Mills can split hulls off tarwi kernels, which average half protein.

Yellow and other lupin’s ‘proteoid’ root structures have been associated with greater access to bedrock phosphorus, unreachable by most plants, so perhaps tarwi could join buckwheat and alfalfa as phosphorus-accessing soil-building crops.

Tarwi makes an excellent cover crop. In Bhutanese trials, potatoes yielded a third more after tarwi crops, and in Nepalese trials, near 35 degrees north latitude, tarwi reportedly fixed about 500 pounds of nitrogen per acre per year, in symbiotic association with rhizobia. Others suggest fixation of 400 lbs of nitrogen per acre per year in Andean seasons of 5-11 months. In Germany, tarwi fixed as much nitrogen as peas did - about 150 pounds per acre per season - which seems eminently reasonable to expect here in the Northeast. Native tarwi rhizobial symbiotes reportedly tolerate soil acidity less than the adaptable tarwi, but rhizobia of North American native lupin, birdsfoot trefoil or cowpea may work - reports on specificity of tarwi rhizobial requirements are mixed. Tarwi yielded about 20 tons of green matter per acre in a Russian trial, showing promise as a fallow, cover or manure crop.

As mentioned before, tarwi retards mammalian browsing and can ‘trap’ some potato nematodes. A few tarwi cultivars are determinate, and late-blooming ones might be chosen to winterkill before they would set seed, when planted after or between summer-harvested crops like squash and early potatoes. Cache-cropping these tarwi could leave mulched, weeded, nitrogen-enriched soil for spring use, as crimson clover cache-cropping does, with no ripened tarwi seed to volunteer and compete with crops.

Tarwi seed use as feed, once leached of alkaloids, suggests few problems - fowl and livestock have tolerated other lupins in feed well. Perhaps Maine-grown tarwi could restore the Maine livelihood of raising roaming chickens, which thrived before Midwestern soy price hikes drove the broiler industry south and west. While white lupin was tried as a Maine-grown soy replacement in feeding broilers, its adaptation to Mediterranean winter daylength regimes may explain the failure of Maine farmers to embrace it, following trials that sometimes needed hormone sprays to synchronize ripening. The summer-adapted, daylength-neutral tarwi’s determinate cultivars could avoid this problem, and might also compete with soy as an oilseed crop.

Oil of tarwi seed is edible and healthful, like peanut oil. Seed oil content ranges from ten through twenty percent, allowing commercial pressing of some oil-rich varieties. Exceptionally low in illness-associated erucic acid, over 50% oleic acid and high in nutritionally essential linoleic acid, tarwi oil has been traded and consumed by South Americans. Annonmodendrine content of tarwi oil warrants a check - Capsaicin, the flavor in hot pepper oil, is an oil-soluble alkaloid, suggesting possible alkaloid presence in tarwi oil. Tarwi olsseed use here seems the most easily attainable major tarwi use, needing only agronomic work.

Tarwi’s honey-fragranced, strikingly pretty spires of flowers grace landscapes with a changing sequence of many colors. This color change inspires tarwi’s latin species name, ‘mutabilis’. Tarwi grows ornamentally in Argentinian gardens, and might here as well. Tarwi’s potential here in northeastern potato fields and gardens defies prediction, yet intrigues, and might be vast and good.
**The Fate of Family Farming**

by Ronald Jaeger

published by University Press of New England, Order Department, 37 Lafayette Street, Lebanon, NH 03766, USA

$14.00, free shipping at genetraders.org

268 Pages, $26.00, cloth

review by Richard Murphy

When I saw the cover of “The Fate of Family Farming” the first thought was not optimistic. Fate in a title always sounds ominous. Substitute “Future” for “Fate” and you immediately change the tone. Fate, however, is more of a graber and so I picked it up and read it and am sad to say, it did not meet my paranoid expectations. This does not mean TFOFF was a joyous work of someone who cannot suppress a sunny disposition. No, Ronald Jaeger has written a volume that is well ordered and well reasoned. Sober, but not somber.

After all, Mr. Jaeger remembers with fondness his own upbringing on a successful, yet doomed farm in Michigan.

The book is in three sections. Section one deals with farming traditions and is itself divided into three chapters. Chapter One lays out how we got our American idealization of the family farm. He examines four historical points, going from the bungling early attempts of the English to translate non-farming populations to the New World (Sixteenth Century) to discussing the work of a French soldier turned American yeoman named Crevecoeur (Seventeenth Century) to Thoreau and Emerson (Nineteenth Century) to finally reflecting himself on the situation at the middle of the last century.

The second chapter is an agricultural history of New Hampshire, the state where the author resides. The third discusses the “Agrarians” or at least three of them, Louis Bromfield of the elegant failure of Malabar Farm, Wendell Berry, known in most NOFA members and Victor Louis Hanson, academic, farmer and famously a recent chickenhawk.

The second section surveys actual family farms. Though one feels that Ronald Jaeger’s heart is in all of the book, a reader cannot help but know that he is thoroughly enjoying his time with his subjects here. In spite or because of this, these chapters could be case studies at Farming Graduate School of Business Administration, if there were ever such a place. Herein is the $64,000 question. Are they more regular businesses or farms? Let I appear even more obtuse than usual, I know that family and homestead enterprises have to have an eye on costs even more than do General Motors or Microsoft. Still, there is a difference between a family farm and a company.

Bascom Farm, a large maple syrup enterprise, is the case that, to me, has clearly passed the boundary and is more a conventional business, than farm. Yes, the family does still tap its own trees, and yes, it is still a family enterprise. But it in five words: specialization, consolidation, contracting, integration, and family, but farm is not what they are, though they have a farm. I mean this as no pejorative, they are certainly not NOFA size. I say that with confidence, even though I could not define the term NOFA size.

In what seems another life, I was associated with a regional wholesaler that was a venerable family concern for the area. The generation that was running it at the time had discerned that (correctly, as far as I could tell) the national concerns were the future and worked to position themselves to sell out as profitably as possible. In reading about the Bascoms, I had the feeling I was watching the same thing all over. Certainly, they are more regional corporation than family farm.

The three other farms are more farms than businesses, but the same dynamic that pushes the Bascoms pushes the Eccardt (dairy), Coll (eggs, corn and farm stand), and Leadbetter (apples) families -- get bigger.

The last section is the most important. The Ironies of Success, title of the first chapter of the final part, presents the system as it is in detail. Actually, he does it in five words: specialization, consolidation, contracting, integration and globalization. Specialization, gone is the mixed farm. Consolidation, the big fish eat the little fish. Contracting, the farmer agrees at a set price to raise GE corn as aid. The last chapter is by Devinder Shamma, who takes apart the argument that western technology, specifically GMOs, can ever feed the world.

On the negative side, a good deal of repetition appears in this work, as is often the case in edited anthologies. No one would claim that any of the authors are “objective” in the sense of trying to give both sides, and much of the writing is didactic, concerned with convincing the reader of a position. On the positive side, however, the serious reader can emerge from this work with a much more detailed understanding of the last half century -- the creation and support by western corporate interests of international institutions which are attempting to knit the world into a unified market (at whatever human or environmental cost) and the role of agriculture and biotechnology in that effort.
The next chapter, "Biotechnology and the Future" looks at GMOs with a skeptic’s eye. Still, he is not absolutely against the technology, more for its backers to prove its value and safety. This is where he would find most of his disagreements from supporters of organic agriculture, even though he is not very happy with the way the technology has been so quickly adopted.

His last chapter, "The Soul of Agriculture" is his song of hope and it would, for the most part, warm the cockles of NOFA members’ hearts. He praises organic, CSAs, Farmers Markets, Beginning Farmer Networks, Women in Agriculture Networks, Niche Farming, Sustainability, and SARE.

The last chapter is hopeful. My problem with it is that the family farms whose success he extols are fighting bravely to be family farms and be more and more subject to the forces they so nimbly resist, for now. I love his praises for CSAs and Farmers Markets and all that, but the demographics are yet small, and generally we service a tiny, though aware and knowledgeable clientele.

On pages 28 and 197 the author alludes to the success of the Amish who farm in the same country where non-Amish farms of the same size have disappeared like snow on a desert. I think a book that discusses “fate” would have been well served to have an investigation of the only group of farmers who are successful as a group. Is it as a class, a religion or an ethnic group that they thrive while others fail? Is it that in resisting the technology trap, they avoid financial ruin?

The book is not a bad history. It is a good snapshot of where we are now. As to the actual ‘Fate,’ NOFA is proof that no matter what, there are just some people you can’t keep from farming even if it appears that the fates themselves conspire against them.

Uncommon Fruits for Every Garden
by Lee Reich
published by Timber Press, 133 S. W. Second Ave, Suite 450, Portland, OR 97204-3527, 800-327-5680, or orders@timberpress.com
$24.95, hardback, 288 pages, with illustrations and color photos

Lee Reich is, of course, familiar to many NOFA members. He has presented on trees, bushes and fruits for years at the Summer Conference and never fails to draw an enthusiastic crowd. He gets excellent evaluations by attendees, and his presentations are the subject of several NOFA Videos.

This book is really an expansion of his 1991 book on the same theme. In this one he covers Juneberry, Beach Plum, Alpine and Musk Strawberries, Pawpaw, Raisin Tree, Lingonberry, Actinidia (kiwi), Mulberry, Persimmon, Elaeagnus, Gooseberry, Maypop, Che, Black Currant, Nanking Cherry, Cornelian Cherry, Red and White Currants, Asian Pear, Jostaberry, Lowbush Blueberry, Jojube,
Treating Dairy Cows Naturally: Thoughts and Strategies
by Hubert J. Karreman, V.M.D.
published by Paradise Publications, Paradise, PA.
(To have your name added to the bulk order for Treating Dairy Cows Naturally, send a check for $29.95 to Just Dairy, 35 Brook St., Manchester, MA 01944. Once the bulk order arrives, it will be sent to your home. You will have saved $10 off the single copy plus s+h price.)
review by Gina Robinson

As indicated by the book’s title, Dr. Karreman’s “thoughts” figure almost as prominently on the treatment of health problems in dairy cattle, from an organic perspective. The author is a practicing vet in Lancaster County, PA, where 60 of his 90 clients are certified organic. The book contains a wealth of information drawing from homeopathic, herbal and conventional methods, among others. There’s also plenty of straightforward advice on nutrition and good general management practices.

As indicated by the book’s title, Dr. Karreman’s “thoughts” figure almost as prominently as his “strategies”, and this is by no means a weakness! He opens the book with discussions on the different approaches to dairy farming, contrasting the “all-in-one” approaches favored by organic growers with the high-input, grain-based approach common on conventional dairies. From the start, he shows his holistic stripes by discussing not just the fact that well-managed grazing cattle are healthier than their confined sisters, but that grass-based farms confer social benefits in terms of more sustainable use of resources (less reliance on the oil industry for growing grain) and a family friendly as opposed to cheap labor-relent infrastructure. There is a section on grazing basics, sprinkled with the author’s insights on certain grazing practices as they relate to cow health and environmental quality.

Next comes a discussion on certified organic dairying, and I, for one, am delighted with the author’s balanced treatment of this subject. He takes a look at some of the advantages of going organic before stepping firmly on his well-earned soapbox to expound upon the “health care dilemmas” of certified organic dairies, particularly under the new rules of the National Organic Program. Simply put, when a certified organic cow gets sick (believe it or not, this happens!), the organic producer has no access to conventional antibiotics that can often be effective. BUT, in some cases, a cow can be so completely overwhelmed by an acute illness that it is unable to receive the conventional drugs which would likely lead to permanent injury or death. Dr. Karreman explains that although the NOP directs certified farmers and their vets to take such emergency measures when needed, there is virtually zero incentive to do so, because once the cow has received that antibiotic, she may never produce organic milk on that farm ever again. She must be sold. (Before the NOP took effect, there were no organic standards, which could be used to identify “Pure Milk” as a nutritionally superior product. “Pure Milk” would have to pass multiple tests of its bacteriological quality to be similar to these days.) The NOP requires farmers to leave you without a clue, it could be a challenge to slog through this one. On the other hand, for those of us with ten or twenty vivid memories about every kind of illness mentioned, this book (with its detailed descriptions of all manner of odors and discharges) does emphatically not make good mealtime reading!!

Dr. Karreman ends the book with a short discussion on the production and certification of raw milk. As a grower I’d want to have beside me in the barn. The author is a practicing vet in Lancaster County, PA, where 60 of his 90 clients are certified organic. The book contains a wealth of information drawing from homeopathic, herbal and conventional methods, among others. There’s also plenty of straightforward advice on nutrition and good general management practices.

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Calendar

Friday, September 17: FOAM Organic Network Summit, Skagit Bay, WA, for more info: Shell Weir, (602) 299-3579 shell@sheldevinberg.com

Friday, September 17 and Saturday, September 18: Sally Fallon seminars on Healthy Traditional Diets, Huntington, NY, for more info: 202-333-4325 or www.The WestonAIPrize.org

Saturday, September 18: Cover Crops and Soil Fertility, Easthampton, MA, for more info: 413-243-6315, email mfaber5@yahoo.com, or www.nofa-mass.org

Saturday, September 18: The One World Fair, Cummington, MA, for more info: www.oneworldfair.com

Saturdays, September 18, 2004 – June 26, 2005: A one year part-time (eight Saturday workshops and a final one-week intensive) introduction to Biodynamics, Chestnut Ridge, for more info: 945-352-5020 ext. 20, info@pfeiffercenter.org, www.pfeiffercenter.org


Friday, Sept 24 & Thursday, October 7 & Friday, October 22 & Saturday, October 23: Livestock Nutrition and Healthcare Workshops, Burlington, VT for more info: Sarah Flack 802-933-6965 or sarahf@globalnetisp.net.

Friday, October 1: Raising Standard Turkeys for the Holiday Market, Crawford County, PA for more info: www.passafarming.org or call PASA at 814-349-9850.

Saturday, October 2: Criteria for Choosing Breeder Turkeys from Your Flock, Crawford County, PA for more info: www.passafarming.org or call PASA at 814-349-9850

Thursday, October 7: Goat Cheese for Beginners, Natick, MA for more info: http://nafitfork.org or norganic@aoicl.org or 508-655-2204

Sunday, October 10: Third Annual Maine Food Festival, Focus on Maine Grown Grains, Unity, Maine, for more info: 207-568-4142, mofga@nofga.org, www.mofga.org

Saturday, October 16: Planning For A Wildlife Habitat, Natick, MA for more info: http://nafitfork.org or norganic@aoicl.org or 508-655-2204

Saturday, October 16: Grease Car Conversion Workshop, Plainfield, MA for more info: Gopi Krishna at gopigopilyingturtle.com or 413-634-5663

Wednesday, October 20 – Thursday, October 21: Conference and farm tours, Setting the Table: Tools and Techniques for a Sustainable Food System, Burlington, VT for more info: www.wvm.edu/~nesare

Thursday, October 21: Easy Composting - Turn Garbage Into Gold, Natick, MA for more info: http://nafitfork.org or norganic@aoicl.org or 508-655-2204

Thursday, October 28: The Joint History Of Carver Hill Farm (NOCF) And Bacon Place, Designing Your Shrub And Tree Garden, Natick, MA for more info: http://nafitfork.org or norganic@aoicl.org or 508-655-2204

Saturday, November 13: Soap Making Workshop, Natick, MA for more info: http://nafitfork.org or norganic@aoicl.org or 508-655-2204

Saturday, November 20: From Cubbage to Kraut, Natick, MA for more info: http://nafitfork.org or norganic@aoicl.org or 508-655-2204

NOFA Membership

You may join NOFA by joining one of the seven state chapters. Contact the person listed below for your state. Dues, which help pay for the important work of the organization, vary from chapter to chapter. Unless noted, membership includes a subscription to The Natural Farmer.

Give a NOFA Membership! Send dues for a friend or relative to his or her state chapter and give a membership in one of the most active grassroots organizations in the state.

New Jersey: Individual $35, Family/Organizational $50, Business/Organization $100, Low Income: $15*
Contact: P O Box 886, Pennington, NJ 08534-0886, (609) 737-6848 or join at www.nofanj.org

New York*: Student/Senior/Limited Income $15, Individual $30, Family/Farm/Nonprofit Organization $40, Business/Patron $100. Add $10 to above membership rates to include subscription to The Natural Farmer.
Contact: Mayra Richter, NOFA-NY, P O Box 880, Cobleskill, NY 12043, Voice (518)-734-5495, Fax: (518)-734-4641, office@nofany.org, www.nofany.org

Rhode Island: Student/Senior: $20, Individual: $25, Family $35, Business $50
Contact: Membership, NOFA RI, 51 Edwards Lane, Charlestown, RI 02813 (401) 364-0050, fvoil@direcway.com

Vermont: Individual $30, Farm/Family $40, Business $50, Sponsor $100, Sustainer $250, Basic $15-25*
Contact: NOFA-VT, PO Box 697, Richmond, VT 05477, (802) 434-4122, info@nofavt.org

*does not include a subscription to The Natural Farmer

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Erich V. Bremer, PO Box 866, Pennington, NJ 08534-0866, (609) 737-6848, certify@nofanj.org

Many Hands Organic Farm
Jack Kittredge and Julie Rawson, The Natural Farmer
June 2004
Carolyn Smiley and Janine Marley, members of New Jersey’s Purple Dragon co-op, pack local organic produce into members’ boxes according to instructions provided with the orders.

News, features and articles about organic growing in the Northeast, plus a Special Supplement on

The Organic Consumer