44th Annual Summer Conference Keynotes: Rowen White & Eric Holt-Gimenez

During the weekend of August 10-12, 2018 we will gather again at Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts for the 44th Annual NOFA SC. At this year’s conference we will pay homage to the agricultural wisdom that has been handed down to us through the ages. We will celebrate the wisdom of our rich indigenous agricultural past that instruct the organic and ecologically based practices we strive for.

We this theme, we are particularly happy to announce our two keynote speakers: the founder of Sierra Seeds in North San Juan California, Rowen White and the Executive Director of San Francisco based Food First, Eric Holt-Gimenez to keynote the 44th Annual NOFA Summer Conference. Learning about Rowen’s passion for the connection of all living things and the stewardship and stories that seeds hold within them as well as Eric’s passion and understanding of the overall state of our food system and the inner workings of the parties that comprise its fabric are what’s in store for next summer.

In her words, Rowen White shares, “I have been asked to be a vessel for their stories. I am a Mohawk woman, who comes from a long line of people who have tended soil and seeds with reverence and devotion. It is through these relationships with plants and seeds that I am finding my way home to a deeper understanding of the magic of being human.”

Eric Holt-Gimenez has been working with farmers in Central America for the last 25 years. According to Eric, “Small farmers and underserved urban communities need changes in national food policies and international trade rules to have a fighting chance of feeding themselves and building healthy, prosperous livelihoods.”

We look forward to hosting Rowen and Eric for the 2018 conference.
The Letters to the Editor

Editor’s Note: Last issue the one on “Organic Hydroponics” stirred up a real firestorm. Rather than try to characterize the controversy I’ll let the letters speak for themselves. I put them in the order they came in and tried to answer each one as well as I could.

The one thing about controversy that editors like, of course, is that no matter what is said, people are reading your rag!

On Sep 5, 2017, at 12:04 PM, Eliot Coleman wrote:

Hi Eliot,

Sorry to have pissed you off. I do that sometimes in this job.

I don’t think you have read the entire issue yet, given your quote from the first page. There is no quarter given in it to hydroponic growing using synthetic inputs. There is a community in the organic world, however, which believes that organic inputs, in the form of manures, processed through biology such as worms and microorganisms, can be used as a nutrient source. Respected certification agencies take the position that the NOP allows that and they will certify such production operations until the NOP decides otherwise. That is why the Jacksonville meeting is so important, if they agree to require soil explicitly.

Rather than vilify such groups out of hand, I thought it would be reasonable to explain why they think these methods are certifiable. That is why I cite the documentary history in some depth to let people read for themselves the NOFA decisions, the relevant sections of the OPFA, and the opinions of many of the actors, pro and con. I mean The Natural Farmer as a journal of information, not a poster for a cause. Were it such, my job would be a lot easier! Hope this is helpful. -- Jack

On Sep 6, 2017, at 7:00 PM, <ejm@woodprairie.com> wrote:

Hi Jack,

In my circles, the “Respected certification agencies” you refer to are not respected at all. They have become sell-outs which make big money from certifying the fake corporate hydro outfits. Failing to work in concert with OTA to do the bidding of corporate clients and serve as a relentless force that erodes organic integrity.

There was no lack of clarity in the NOP’s 2010 vote of 12-1 that judged soil-less operations not organic. NOP concorded the absurd lack of clarity on the part of the NOFA members in the debate on whether soil-less organic was even possible. The 12-1 vote clearly states that if somebody proposed an input, that meant they needed it, and therefore they deserved the right to use it.

They needed it, and therefore they deserved the right to use it.

We plan a year in advance so those who want to read on a topic can have a lot of lead time. The next 3 issues we are planning on:

Spring 2018: Urban Farming

Summer 2018: Organic Allies

Fall 2018: Fungal-Friendly Compost

If you can help us on any of these topics, or have ideas for new ones, please get in touch. We need your help! The deadline for the issues are:

Spring - January 31, Summer - April 30, Fall - July 31, Winter - October 31.

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Moving? The Natural Farmer will not be forwarded by the post office, so those who subscribe directly should send address changes to us. Most readers, however, get this as a NOFA member benefit and should send address updates to their local NOFA chapter.

Archived issues from Summer 1999 through Fall 2005 are available at http://www.library.umass.edu/ispecoll/digital/uf. More recent issues are downloadable (starting 3 months after paper publication) at www.nofa.org as pdf files. We also have many issues archived in convenient downloadable form at www.thenaturalfarmer.org.

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Northeast Organic Farming Association, Inc.
The reason rotting garbage stinks is that biological activity is taking place.

Most of the commercial scale hydroponic operations depend on a conventional coconut waste product to hold its roots (or some other inert material). They depend on the vast preponderance of plant nutrition from liquid fertilizer solutions. It doesn’t really matter what’s in those solutions, the mantra, at least when I started organically farming in the 80s, was “feed the soil not the plants.” How do you feed the soil without soil?

We all know what the benefits are to the environment, nutritional content and flavor of our food because we are grown in water without soil? It’s magical. The soil scientist doesn’t even completely understand how that happens.

The common nitrogen source for hydroponics comes from a conventional soybean derivative. And speaking of garbage, there is an operation in the Pacific Northwest that is supplying some hydroponics/container growers with liquid fertilizer that is a byproduct of composting conventional waste from grocery stores.

In my humble opinion, none of that is “organic.” And since we couldn’t grow many of our crops in fresh cow poop, under the organic regulations, I’m not sure growing in fresh fish poop is anymore “organic.”

That is not to say that some of these operations, especially the modest scaled local ones, shouldn’t be considered as something positive in the marketplace. The universal argument here is they are just not “organic” and should not be allowed to use the term on the label and compete with legitimately organically managed farms (with a higher cost of production).

The majority of the hydroponic production that is flooding the marketplace right now, from facilities in the desert Southwest, Mexico, Canada and Europe, is on a gargantuan industrial scale. Jack, they’re going to crush all the people we work for. That’s a fact. And it’s not a level playing field. That’s what we are all fighting about. And in an Orwellian twist, the products being imported can’t be sold as organic in their home countries.

Jack, all my comments here are in the context of corporate NOSB appointments. We may have to abandon the program at some point, I understand, although that would be exceedingly difficult. And I’m not sure how we could replace it with something immune to a similar fate. I would love to be involved in discussions of these matters and help strategize solutions. Whatever we do, we should do it as a solid group and in unison, if possible.

That said, I guess my style on issues is to try to tease out the truth and defend it vigorously. I’m happy to defend soil-based growing for organics, as I have, but I think we should admit that our arguments aren’t ironclad, there are fuzzy areas, we don’t know everything and we are hanging on to some of your statements concerning “micronutrients” in terms of journalistic coverage is not always appropriate.

I have nothing much to add other than to comment on some of your statements concerning “microbial life” and “biological activity.”

That’s not the definition of soil. Just like real estate developers want to create new “wetlands” to remediate the ones they desecrate I don’t think that man-made substitutes for soil have the ability to replicate the complex ecosystem that exists in truly healthy organically managed soil – even if biologically activity takes place.

The Natural Farmer
Francis Thicke’s Farewell Address to the NOSB

Francis is a pioneering organic farmer operating a 730-acre Iowa farm for 30 years with his wife, Susan. He has served as a National Program Leader for soil science for the USDA-Extension Service, as well as serving on many national and state boards. He is a former board member of the Organic Farming Research Foundation and a former advisory board member of the Cornucopia Institute. With a Ph.D. in agronomy, he also has taught at the college level, and has a book published on Food and Agriculture. In 2010 Francis ran as the Democratic candidate for Iowa Secretary of Agriculture. He has received many awards, including the 2009 Spencer Award for Sustainable Agriculture from the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, the Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award from Practicum Farmers of Iowa, Steward of Land Award from the Iowa Sierra Club, and the Friend of Extension Award from the ISU Extension Service. Although he holds an environmentalist seat on the NOSB, he easily qualifies for a farmer or scientist position as well. He is real organic. And as former OFRF director Bob Scowcroft has said of Francis, he is one of the smartest people in the room.

At the end of the Jacksonville National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) meeting in October, when hydroponics was welcomed into organic certification, Francis Thicke gave his farewell address. After 5 years as a member of the NOSB, his despair was evident at the Board’s decision.

The closing comments of Francis Thicke at the end of his NOSB term, November 2, 2017:

“There are two important things that I have learned during my five years on the NOSB. First, I learned that the NOSB review process for materials petitioned for inclusion on the National List is quite rigorous, with Technical Reviews of petitioned materials and careful scrutiny by both NOSB subcommittees and the full board.

The second thing I learned, over time, is that industry has an outsized and growing influence on USDA — and on the NOSB (including through NOSB appointments) — compared to the influence of organic farmers, who started this organic farming movement. Perhaps that is not surprising, given the growing value of organic sales. As organic is becoming a $50 billion business, the industry not only wants a bigger piece of the pie, they seem to want the whole pie.

We now have “organic” chicken CAFOs with 200,000 birds crammed into a building with no real access to the outdoors, and a chicken industry working behind the scenes to make sure that the animal welfare standards — weak as they were — never see the light of day, just like their chickens. The image consumers have of organic chickens ranging outside has been relegated to pictures on egg cartons.

We have “organic” dairy CAFOs with 15,000 cows in a feedlot in a desert, with compelling evidence by an investigative reporter that the CAFO is not following the grazing rule — by a long shot. But when USDA does its obligatory “investigation,” instead of a surprise visit to the facility, USDA gives them a heads up by making an appointment, so the CAFO can move cows from feedlots to pasture on the day of inspection. This gives a green light to that dairy CAFO owner to move forward with its plans to establish a 30,000-cow facility in the Midwest.

We have large grain shipments coming into the US that are being sold as organic but that lack organic documentation. Some shipments have been proven to be fraudulent. The USDA has been slow to take action to stop this, and organic crop farmers in the US are suffering financially as a result. I spoke with the reporter who broke the story on fraudulent “organic” grain imports. I asked him how he was able to document the fraud of grain shipments when USDA said it was very difficult to do so. He replied “it was easy.”

We have a rapidly growing percentage of the organic fruits and vegetables on grocery store shelves being produced hydroponically, without soil, and mostly in huge industrial-scale facilities. And we have a hydroponics industry that has deceptively renamed “hydroponics” production systems with 100% liquid feeding —as “container” production. With their clever deception they have been able to bamboozle even the majority of NOSB members into complicity with their goal of taking over the organic fruit and vegetable market with their hydroponic products.

A year ago I wouldn’t have supported the idea of an add-on organic label because I, like many others, had seen the USDA organic label as the gold standard, and had hoped that through our vision of the process of continuous improvement we could really make it into that gold standard. Now I can see that the influence of big business is not going to let that happen. The USDA is increasingly exerting control over the NOSB, and big business is tightening its grip on the USDA and Congress. Recently industry representatives have publicly called on the US Senate to weaken the NOSB and give industry a stronger role in the National Organic Program. And sympathetic Senators promised to do just that.

I now support the establishment of an add-on organic label that will enable real organic farmers and discerning organic consumers to support one another through a label that represents real organic food. I support the creation of a label, such as the proposed Regenerative Organic Certification, that will ensure organic integrity; for example, that animals have strong access to the outdoors, and a chicken industry working behind the scenes to make sure that the animal welfare standards — weak as they were — never see the light of day, just like their chickens. The image consumers have of organic chickens ranging outside has been relegated to pictures on egg cartons. The industry wants the whole pie.

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a single farm organic system plan and inspection can serve to verify both NOP and the higher level organic certification, by certifiers that are accredited by both certification systems.

I also am pleased that organic farmers have recently organized themselves into the Organic Farmers Association (OFA), to better represent themselves in the arena of public policy. Too often in the past the interests of big business have overruled the interests of organic farmers—and consumers—when organic policies are being established in Washington. I hope this will allow organic farmers to gain equal footing with industry on issues that affect the organic community.

In summary, organic is at a crossroads. Either we can continue to allow industry interests to bend and dilute the organic rules to their benefit, or organic farmers—working with organic consumers—can step up and take action to ensure organic integrity into the future.

**NOSB Divided on the Allowance of the Certification of Hydroponic Production in Organic Agriculture**

The National Organic Standards Board’s (NOSB) inability to make a definitive statement on hydroponic practices at its October 29 Jacksonville meeting will allow the USDA to continue permitting hydroponic vegetable and fruit production to be certified organic. The USDA has quietly allowed hydroponics to bear the organic seal without NOSB standards for some time. Since some certifiers allow hydroponic production to be certified, and others do not, the crops subcommittee put forward a compromise proposal that would require some amount of soil or compost in containers used to grow crops. This vote failed 8:7. Several NOSB members used the language of “inclusion” to justify voting down the prohibition of hydroponics in organic production. Many organic farmers testified in person to the NOSB, and at a rally outside the meeting, that organic integrity is compromised by “including” systems that do not comply with the soil nutrient cycling requirements of the Organic Food Production Act (OPPA). Ironically, aeroponics was unanimously voted to be prohibited as organic at this meeting. NOSB farmer-member Emily Oakley questioned the logic behind some members voting to allow one soil-less production method (hydroponics) while shunning another (aeroponics), given both systems rely on liquid fertility. Since soil is a prerequisite for organic certification under OPPA, Cornucopia will take steps toward the filing of a lawsuit on the allowance of hydroponic systems by the National Organic Program.

source: Cornucopia’s The Cultivator, Nov. 4, 2017

Here’s how the NOSB members voted on requiring soil in organic production

**Organic Producer**
- Ashley Swaffar - NO
- Jesse Buie - YES
- Emily Oakley - YES
- Steve Ela - YES

**Environmentalists / Resource Conservationists**
- Francis Thicke - YES
- Harriet Behar - YES
- Asa Bradman - NO

**Consumer / Public Interest Advocates**
- Dan Seitz - YES
- A-dae Romero Briones - NO
- Sue Baird - NO

**Handlers / Processors**
- Tom Chapman - NO
- Joelle Munoz - NO

**Retailer**
- Lisa de Lima - NO

**Scientist (Toxicology, Ecology, or Biochemistry)**
- Dave Mortensen - YES

**USDA Accredited Certifying Agent**
- Scott Rice - NO

source: Email from Maddie Monty Kempner, 11/3/17

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Winter, 2017-18

The Natural Farmer Winter, 2017-18

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Warwick, MA residents learn about impacts of herbicides

With a proposed Roundup ban set to come before voters at the special town meeting, two Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) representatives answered questions about health risks and alternatives during an informational session this week. Coming from NOFA’s Massachusetts branch, Executive Director Julie Rawson and Soil Carbon Program Coordinator Jack Kittredge told residents about how glyphosate, the active ingredient in the commercial weedkiller Roundup, has been linked to health problems such as exacerbated auto-immune diseases and infertility. Furthermore, Rawson said, developing research around glyphosate led California officials in July to add the ingredient to the state’s list of chemis-
ticals known to cause cancer, though Monsanto, the maker of Roundup, vowed to fight the designation. The effects of glyphosate have proven to be contro-
versial. “From my standpoint, there’s just no good reason, ever, to use a poison,” Rawson said of the town’s proposed ban on Roundup when reached by phone Wednesday. Selectboard Chairman Lawrence “Doc” Pruyne proposed a townwide ban, the subject of Article 7 on the special town meeting warrant, and organized the informational session in hopes that residents can make an informed decision. Spe-
cial town meeting will be held Monday at 7 p.m. in Town Hall.

source, Greenfield Recorder, Oct. 29, 2017

Breakthrough study shows organic cuts agri-
culture’s contribution to climate change

A new groundbreaking study proves soils on organic farms store away appreciably larger amounts of carbon—and for longer periods—than typical agricultural soils. The important study, directed by The National Soil Project at Northeastern University in collaboration with the Organic Center, provides a new significant proof that organic agricultural practices build healthy soils and can be part of the solution in the light on global warming.

The new data are published in the Oct. 1 is-
Sue of the scientific journal Advances in Agronomy. One of the largest field studies of its kind ever con-
ducted, the study pulls together over a thousand soil samples from across the nation. It uses cutting-edge methods to look at how organic farming affects the soil’s ability to lock away carbon and keep it out of our atmosphere.

One of its most compelling findings is that on average, organic farms have 44% higher levels of humic acid—the component of soil that sequesters carbon over the long term—but soils not managed organically,

Agriculture is one of the main causes of the depletion of carbon in the soil and the increased presence of carbon in our atmosphere, as evidenced by a recent study published by the National Acad-
emy of Sciences that estimated agriculture’s role in global soil carbon loss. Organic farming can play a key role in restoring soil carbon and in reducing the causes of climate change, and this study proves that.

Working with Dr. Elham Ghabbour and Dr. Geoffrey Davies, leaders of the National Soil Project at Northeastern University, The Organic Center contacted organic farmers who acted as “citizen scientists” to collect organic soil samples from throughout the country to compare with the conven-
tional soil samples already in the National Soil Proj-
ect’s data set. Altogether, the study measured 659 organic soil samples from 39 states and 728 conven-
tional soil samples from all 48 contiguous states. It found that all components of humic substances were higher in organic than in conventional soils.

“We studied to a true extent the soil organic carbon, but also the components of soil that have stable pools of carbon—humic substances, which gives us a much more accurate and precise view of the stable, long-term storage of carbon in the soils.”

“To our knowledge, this research is also the first to take a broad-view of organic and conven-
tional systems, taking into account variation within management styles, across crops, and throughout the United States. It gives a large-scale view of the impact of organic as a whole, throughout the na-
tion,” said Dr. Shade.

“We were focused on developing and adopting reliable methods of soil analyses for this nation-wide project, as much as we were on involving hundreds of sample donors. The results of this project will be of value to farmers, policy mak-
ers and the public at large,” said Dr. Davies.

Healthy soils are essential for robust and resilient crop production, and the amount of soil organic matter is one of the most critical components of a healthy soil. Organic matter is all the living and dead plant and animal material that make up the soil. It helps to make it more than dirt—earthworms and insects and mi-
croorganisms, plant and animal residues, fermented vegetation, decomposed organic matter and the nutrients needed in organic matter support healthy crops, are less susceptible to drought, and foster a diversity of organisms vital to soil health. Soils rich in organic matter can also last far longer in the face of climate change, and help reduce the causes of climate change.

“A number of studies have shown that prac-
tices commonly used in organic farming increase

The gold standard of organic matter are the humic substances. Humic substances—made up of carbon and other elements—are the life-blood for fertile soils. These substances resist degradation and can remain in the soil for hundreds and sometimes thousands of years. They don’t just mean healthy soil; they are also one of the most effective ways to mitigate climate change. The more humic substanc-
es in a soil, the longer that healthy soil is trapping and keeping carbon out of the atmosphere.

This stable pool of carbon is therefore more repre-

The study shows that the components of hu-
ic substances—fulvic acid and humic acid—were consistently higher in organic than in conventional soils.

The research found that, on average, soils from organic farms had:

- 13 percent higher soil organic matter
- 150 percent more fulvic acid
- 44 percent more humic acid
- 26 percent greater potential for long-term car-

Storage.

This is the first time scientific research has given an accurate picture of the long-term soil carbon storage on organic versus conventional farms throughout the U.S., since most studies focus on individual farms or total soil organic carbon.

The Organic Center’s study takes farms from around the nation into account and looks at the most accurate measure of carbon sequestration.

Since 2008, the National Soil Project at North-eastern has been measuring the organic soil content of soil throughout the nation. Its collected samples were primarily of conventional soil. Drs. Davies and Ghabbour, the directors of the National Soil Project, were seeing very low levels of humic substances in these conventional soil samples.

This project was made possible with the generous support from our funders. Thank you to the UNFI Foundation, Farmers Advocating for Or-
ganic, and the VK Rasmussen Foundation.

Source: The Organic Center press release of Sep.
11, 2017

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Source: National Organic Coalition newsletter, Nov. 15, 2017

NOC to Stay the Course with NOP

At a time when many in the organic community are questioning whether to stay in the National Organic Program after the Jacksonville NOSB failure to support soil in organic, the National Organic Coalition has decided to stay. In their latest newsletter they say:

“So where do we go from here? In Jackson- ville, NOSB members discussed the possibility of a label for “hydroponic organic” products – this is something we might see on the NOSB’s work agenda for the upcoming Tucson meeting.

So Bradley, a past president of the Weed Science Society of America, started collecting data on crop damage from across the country, mapping the epidemic. By the end of the summer, Bradley estimated that at least 3.1 million acres of crops had shown some injury from drifting dicamba.

Bradley’s Scott and his colleagues in other states say that much of the damage they saw this year didn’t appear to come from “physical drift” of windblown droplets of dicamba, coming directly from a sprayer. Physical drift, they say, typically produces a plume of damage that diminishes with distance from the source of the spray. Instead, they saw entire hundred-acre fields of soybeans with cupped leaves, and the damage was uniform from one end to the other. They also saw damage in orchards and fields that were far removed from any fields sprayed with dicamba.

This pattern, they say, looks more like what they had feared all along: volatilization.

Source: NPR’s The Salt, October 26, 2017

German study finds dramatic insect decline

The number of flying insects in Germany has been dropping at an “alarming” rate that could signal serious trouble for ecosystems and food chains in the future, scientists say. According to a study published October 18 in the journal PLOS ONE, researchers using funnel-shaped traps at 63 sites across western Germany recorded a 76 percent decline in bug volume from 1989 to 2016. The midsummer loss during the 27-year-period was as high as 82 percent.

“The widespread insect biomass decline is alarming, even more so as all traps were placed in protected areas that are meant to preserve ecosystem functions and biodiversity,” the authors said.

The drop in airborne insects over Germany was higher than the global estimated insect decline of 58 percent between 1970 and 2012. The researchers, led by Caspar Hallmann of Radboud University in Nijmegen, Netherlands, said it was unclear why the numbers in Germany have declined so sharply, but concluded that neither landscape nor climate change are likely to be the cause.

Instead the authors speculated that intensive agriculture and pesticide use may be to blame.

Source: Associated Press, October 19, 2017
The Natural Farmer  
Winter, 2017-18

Iowa farm groups sue California after it lists Roundup ingredient as cancer-causing chemical

Monsanto Co. and nearly a dozen state and national farm groups are suing California over its decision to list glyphosate as a cancer-causing chemical. Glyphosate is a key ingredient in Monsanto’s top-selling weedkiller Roundup.

The California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment made the decision in July. The agency said Wednesday it followed proper procedures in listing the herbicide and “stands by its decision.”

California’s Proposition 65, a ballot initiative passed in 1986, requires the state to protect drinking water sources “from being contaminated with chemicals known to cause cancer, birth defects or other reproductive harm.” It also requires businesses to warn California users about their chemicals’ dangers.
The decision would not only hurt Monsanto, the St. Louis company said, but also “crops grown by U.S. farmers who use the herbicide, and food products derived from those crops.”

The Monsanto company is appealing the ruling.

United States Durum Growers Association, Bureau, North Dakota Grain Growers Association, company is appealing the ruling.

Monsanto sued the California agency in 2016 to block glyphosate’s potential listing. The case is about the internal process for reviewing glyphosate — along with other ‘possible’ or ‘probable carcinogens’ like internal process for reviewing glyphosate — along with other ‘possible’ or ‘probable carcinogens’ like ag-gag laws passed in several states that legally prohibit outsiders from photographing farms, and “right-to-know” laws that make it easier to sue out-of-state, corporate interests that want to quash local autonomy.

Glyphosate is one of the safest herbicides ever developed and has been rigorously tested by the U.S. government for decades, continually passing as non-carcinogenic,” said Kirk Leeds, CEO of the Iowa Soybean Association. “The California office’s decision to list glyphosate as a carcinogen is inaccurate and its listing could be ‘a devastating blow to Iowa soybean farmers and an industry valued at more than $5 billion’.

“Glyphosate is one of the safest herbicides ever developed and has been rigorously tested by the U.S. government for decades, continually passing as non-carcinogenic,” said Kirk Leeds, CEO of the Iowa Soybean Association. “The California office’s decision to list glyphosate as a carcinogen is inaccurate and its listing could be ‘a devastating blow to Iowa soybean farmers and an industry valued at more than $5 billion’.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has allowed glyphosate use since the 1970s, and it has come under regular review.

California’s efforts to list glyphosate as a carcinogen could result in farmers abandoning the chemical, which could require growers to use more tillage to eliminate weeds, Leeds said. Or turn to harsher chemicals. “It’s a much safer herbicide than many others,” he said.

Growers also could be required to segregate crops grown with glyphosate, adding costs for consumers.

The lawsuit said 250 crops are grown using glyphosate.

Leeds said in a statement the listing “violates the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution because it compels the plaintiffs in the case to make false, misleading and highly controversial statements about their products.”

The International Agency for Research on Cancer, a World Health Organization group, determined in 2015 that glyphosate probably causes cancer in people. Leeds said the French organization’s determination that “glyphosate is ‘probably carcinogenic’” could compromise the conclusion of every global regulator that has examined the issue over the past 40 years.

“Not only does the scientific community disagree with IARC’s findings, the organization’s internal process for reviewing glyphosate — along with other ‘possible’ or ‘probable carcinogens’ like French fries and coffee — has also been roundly criticized,” he said.

Monsanto sued the California agency in 2016 to block glyphosate’s potential listing. The case was dismissed in March, but the seed and chemical company is appealing the ruling. Also joining in the lawsuit against California: Associated Industries of Missouri, Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Farm Bureau, North Dakota Grain Growers Association, South Dakota Ag-Business Association and the United States Durum Growers Association.

source: Des Moines Register, Nov. 15, 2017

Twenty-eight states make it illegal for counties and cities to ban chemicals such as ag-gag laws passed in several states that legally prohibit outsiders from photographing farms, and “right-to-know” laws that make it easier to sue out-of-state, corporate interests that want to quash local autonomy.

Seed-preemption laws are part of a state-level initiative by industrial agriculture, including ag-gag laws passed in several states that legally prohibit outsiders from photographing farms, and “right-to-know” laws that make it easier to sue out-of-state, corporate interests that want to quash local autonomy.

Nearly every seed-preemption law in the country borrows language from a 2013 model bill drafted by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). The council is “a pay-to-play operation where corporations buy a seat and a vote on ‘task forces’ to advance their legislative wishes,” essentially “voting as equals” with state legislators on bills, according to The Center for Media and Democracy. ALEC’s corporate members include the Koch brothers as well as some of the largest seed-chemical companies — Monsanto, Bayer, and DuPont — which want to make sure GMO bans, like those enacted in Jackson County, Oregon, and Boulder County, Colorado, don’t become a trend.

Seed-preemption laws have been adopted in 28 states, including Oregon — one of the world’s top five seed-producing regions — California, Iowa, and Colorado. In Oregon, the bill was greenlighted in 2014 after Monsanto and Syngenta spent nearly $500,000 fighting a GMO ban in Jackson County. Monsanto, Dow, and Syngenta also spent more than $6.9 million opposing anti-GMO rules in three Hawaiian counties, and thousands more in campaign ads. At these companies are also involved in mergers that, if approved, would create three seed-agrochemical giants.

Montana and Texas were the latest states to join the seed-preemption club. Farming is the largest industry in Montana, and Texas is the third-largest agricultural state in terms of production, behind California and Iowa.

Language in the Texas version of the bill preempts not only local laws that affect seeds but also “laws that deal with that ‘cultivating plants grown from seed.’” In theory, that could extend to almost anything: what kinds of manure or fertilizer can be used, or whether a county can limit irrigation during a drought, says Judith McGeeary, executive director of the Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance. Along with other activists, her organization was able to force an amendment to the Texas bill guaranteeing the right to impose local water restrictions.

Still, the law’s wording remains uncomfortably open to interpretation, she says.

In both Montana and Texas, the laws passed with support from the state chapter of the Farm Bureau Federation, the nation’s largest farm-lobbying group — and other major ag groups, including the Montana Stockgrowers Association and the Texas Seed Trade Alliance. In Texas, DuPont and Dow Chemical also joined the fight, publicly registering their support for the bill.

Echoing President Trump’s anti-regulatory rhetoric, preemption proponents argue that, fundamentally, seed-preemption laws are about cutting the red tape from around farmers’ throats. Supporters also contend that counties and cities don’t have the expertise or the resources to make sound scientific decisions about the safety or quality of seeds.

“We don’t believe the locals have the science that the state of Texas has,” said Jim Reavis, legislative director of the Texas Farm Bureau. “So we think it’s better held in the state’s hands. It will basically tell cities that if you have a certain seed, the state can ban it, but you can’t.”

Other preemption proponents claim that local seed rules would simply get too complicated, forcing growers to navigate conflicting laws in different counties. “Many of our farm fields are more than one county,” said Don Steinbeisser Jr., a Sidney, Montana, farmer who testified in support of his state’s bill at a legislative hearing this spring. “Having different rules in each county would make management a nightmare and add costs to the crops that we simply do not need and cannot afford.”

But critics of preemption laws, including farmers (organic and conventional) and some independent seed companies, are afraid of losing their legislative advantage to a larger, more powerful company — more serious than a single farmer’s crop is at stake.

“There is no looming threat that warrants forfeit ing the independence of local agricultural communities in the form of speaking language that eliminates all local authority governing one of our most valuable resources,” says Hubbard of the Organic Seed Alliance.

Organic farmers can lose their crop if it becomes contaminated with genetically modified material. Even conventional farmers who rely on exports to Asia, where GMOs are banned by some countries, face risks from contamination. There are currently no plans to ‘ban’ GMOs anywhere in Texas or Montana, and neither state requires companies to disclose the use of GMOs. (In Montana, at least, Gov. Steve Bullock, a Democrat, added an amendment to the preemption bill when he signed it, preserving the right of local governments to require that farmers notify their neighbors if they’re planting GMO seeds.) Yet critics of the preemption laws fear that they tie the hands of local governments, which will make it harder for communities to respond to problems in the future.

Still, the fight isn’t just about GMOs, says Judith McGeeary, noting that seeds coated with neonicoti noids — a class of pesticides linked to colony col lapse disorder in bees — are also at issue. Under the Texas bill, a local government can’t ban neonic seeds in order to protect pollinator insects, and in the current political climate, it’s hard to imagine that such a ban would happen on the state level.

“We have an extremely large state with an incred ible diversity of agricultural practices and eco logical conditions, and you’ve now hobbed any ability to address a problem that’s found in one area,” says McGeeary. “And it’s the same issue for a state of 23 million to pay attention to through the state legislature, nothing is going to happen,” she says.

source: The Fern, August 17, 2017
Preliminary Report on the Organic World Congress and the IFOAM-Organics International General Assembly 2017 in India

by Elizabeth Henderson

Since I held the proxies for all of you, I would like to give you a quick first report on the Organic World Congress (OWC) and the IFOAM General Assembly. I will write more later in the month as time permits.

As the home of organic agriculture – as practiced in the US where we follow the teachings of Sir Albert Howard – India was both a fabulous and a disastrous choice for the OWC. Hundreds of organic farmers from around India were able to attend. The organizers were able to fully fund farmer participants from Latin America, Africa, and other parts of Asia. US North Americans were on our own – and in few number. The enormous Expo Mart in Greater Noida had ample room for the 5000 or so people who attended. The air quality, however, was an utter disaster. My lungs feel sandpapered from a week of acrid smoky air and my heart is saddened for the 250 million regular inhabitants of Delhi. The food at the conference was extraordinary – supplied by Indian organic farmers. They introduced us to grains and combinations of vegetables and herbs I had never tasted before. Transportation on the other hand was hair-raising. Delhi drivers dart from lane to ill-marked lane while people on motor scooters weave in between. The occasional bicycle skirts the edge of the road, driven into the faster lanes to avoid stopped cars and groups of pedestrians who seem oblivious to the chaos. Along roadsides, people live in makeshift shelters, hanging their laundry to dry on public fencing. At a red light, a child the age of my grandson (7), wove between the stopped cars selling balloons and begging while his mother sat under a tree on a small grassed division in the middle of the 10 lanes of traffic.

I attended the plenary sessions, helped conduct a pre-conference on CSA in Asia, gave a short talk on succession planting for CSAs in the Farmers’ Track, participated in a panel of CSA networks, and contributed to a discussion on Fairness for All. I will write more about the OWC content later.

I also attended a meeting of Urgenci, the International CSA network of which I am honorary president. The acting President, Judith Hitchman of Ireland, a relentlessly energetic advocate of solidarity economics, announced the good news that Urgenci has signed an MOU with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN that will fund the extension to CSA and my “loving manner” and I too got a loving standing ovation to retiring president Andre Weber, special flower wreaths to all the outgoing board members. Much to my surprise, the WB selects officers. The new World Board candidates for the 10 positions lobbied energetically as did the 12 countries contending to be the site for the next OWC.

The GA opened with reports from the staff and the outgoing board. I am happy to report that IFOAM is in solid fiscal health with a larger budget for the next three years and has several new projects underway, especially focused on increasing organic farming in the Global South. The “internal auditor” found that the World Board worked well with one another and with staff, and staff has increased efficiency.

A large portion of the GA is taken up with discussing the motions that will guide the organization for the next 3 years. While complicated, Roberts Rules of Order govern the process. There were excellent exchanges that strengthened some motions and eliminated a few. The many motions included confirmation of Organic 3.0 as guiding policy, renewed determination to distinguish among new technologies to identify genetic engineering so that organic systems will exclude it, a project to delineate non-certified organic farms and acreage around the world, a study of the extent of glyphosate contamination of lands, crops, humans and the environment, standard setting for the production of invertebrates (insects), greater transparency in IFOAM financial reporting to members, and clarification of the role of regional bodies such as the new IFOAM NA. There is strong support for decentralizing the organization as much as possible. The membership voted decisively against any form of aquaculture except the most natural (fish in outdoor farm ponds and lakes with systems that use renewable energy). There was extended discussion of how many resources should go into attacking mega-corporations like Monsanto as compared to putting the highest priority on building the organic alternative.

The election of the new World Board is the other central event. The members elect the WB and then the WB selects officers. The new World Board members are David Amudavi of Kenya, Choitresh Kumar Ganguly of India, Hans Herren of Switzerland, Julia Lernoud of Argentina, Edith Van Walsum of Netherlands, Karen Mapouza of Fiji, and Jennifer Chang of South Korea. Returning for a second term are Peggy Miars, US, Director of OMI, Gerold Rahmann of Germany, and Frank Eyhorn of Switzerland. They elected Peggy Miars President, with Jennifer Chang and Frank Eyhorn on the Executive Board as Vice Presidents. With the exception of Shimpeta Murakami of Japan, the slate I recommended to you was selected! The next Organic World Congress will be hosted by France in Rennes in 2020. Morocco was a close second, and Czechoslovakia gave the most creative presentation during the bidding.

The final part of the agenda is devoted to thank yous and awards. The entire assemblage gave a long and loving standing ovation to retiring president Andre Leu, and special flower wreaths to all the outgoing board members. Much to my surprise, the WB awarded me special recognition for my contribution to CSA and my “loving manner” and I too got a standing ovation from the members!

Please feel free to share this report. I will also post it on my blog in case you want to link to it.

For Peace in Our Lifetimes,
Liz
Book Reviews

Land Justice: Re-imagining Land, Food and the Commons in the United States
edited by Justine M. Williams and Eric Holt-Giménez
paperback, 263 pages, $10.95 from Food First, www.foodfirst.org
published by Food First, 2017
review by Liz Henderson

If you are looking for a deeper understanding of the ills in our food system and how to address them than “vote with your fork,” this is a book you should read as soon as possible. Land Justice stands in contrast with so many food movement books that never question the basic premise that with a few adjust-

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ments, we can correct the excesses of the capitalist marketplace. Eric Holt-Gimenez lays out the book’s basic premise: “Racial injustice and the stark inequities in property and wealth in the US countryside aren’t just a quirk of history, but a structural feature of capitalist agriculture. This means that in order to succeed in building an alternative agrarian future, today’s social movements will have to dismantle those structures. It is the relationships in the food system, and how we govern them, that really matter.” (P. 2)

A collection of essays, Food Justice brings together stories of old injustices and on-going ones, stories that we all need to hear and take to heart. We learn about the Gullah Geechee farmers, George Washington Carver and Booker T. Washington, the Republic of New Africa, the Land Loss Prevention Fund, women farmers, white and black, the Acequias Communities, the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, Rosalinda Guillen and farm worker organizing in Washington State, the People’s Community Market in Oakland, the Black Community Food Security Network in Detroit, and students taking action in Occupy the Farm in Berkeley.

Prefaces from three voices open Land Justice - a Native American, an African American and a family-scale farmer — voices that must be heard if we are to sort out the strands in the history of the “land problem” in this country and imagine a way forward towards a more just food system.

Winona LaDuke contrasts mainstream industrial, monocrop agriculture with the indigenous approach “based on biodiversity and the use of multiple locally adapted crops.” (P. xii) Plants, LaDuke tells us, are magical and “provide complex nutrients, medicinal values, cultural and spiritual connections, and they feed the soil.” She recounts the struggle of Native Americans for control of their land culminating in the successful class action suit, Keepsease Native Americans for control of their land culminating in the successful class action suit, Keepsea vs. Vilsack (1999) which won $680 million in payments; a quota system that was fair to Africans on stolen land “is what built the wealth of the so-called New World.” The Homestead Act, which allowed many landless European immigrants to access land, was not for former slaves. Redmond urges the solidarity of her people with Native Americans, the water and land protectors, and calls for unity against “corporate oligarchy and federal imperialism.” (P. xviii)

Belittling the ‘vote with your fork’ vote analogy, Iowa farmer George Naylor declares: “We need to recognize how market forces affect farmers, the land, and consumer behavior, and demand policy solutions to achieve a sustainable future.” (P. xix) Naylor insists that “We need to de-commercialize food and land.” To accomplish this, Naylor proposes that we replace the cheap food policy that has enabled corporate dominance, with a system based on “Parity,” the New Deal farm programs involving “conservation-supply management to avoid wasteful, polluting over production; a price support that actually set a floor under the market prices rather than sending out government payments; grain reserves to avoid food shortages and food price spikes; and a quota system that was fair to all farmers and changed the incentives of production.” (P. xxi)

The authors of these essays have every reason to be bitter and pessimistic given what they have experienced and the long history of atrocities that mar our country’s past. Yet, despite the recitals of inhuman cruelty and brutal greed, Land Justice leaves the reader energized and inspired by the writers’ courage and determination. Together they show us a path forward through alliances and collaboration with the marginalized communities represented to “change the politics of property.” This book makes a major contribution to helping us develop a radical and coherent program for transformative change. As Holt-Gimenez concludes his incisive introduction, the authors are “in a struggle to remake society.” It is up to us to harken to their passionate words and to take “land justice” as “both a vision and a clarion call.” (P. 13)

Taking as her chant “This Land is Contested,” LaDonna Redmond, laments the Indian removal that preceded the importation of slave labor: “The holocaust of the indigenous set the stage in the US for the rise of capitalism.” (P. xv) The free labor of 12 million enslaved Africans on stolen land “is what built the wealth of the so-called New World.” The Homestead Act, which allowed many landless European immigrants to access land, was not for former slaves. Redmond urges the solidarity of her people with Native Americans, the water and land protectors, and calls for unity against “corporate oligarchy and federal imperialism.” (P. xix)

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A Report on the Northeast Gathering on Domestic Fair Trade

Friday, August 11, 2017, Hampshire College, Amherst, MA

by Elizabeth Henderson and Louis Battalen

A spirit of cooperation brought farm workers, farmers, and their advocates together to compare experiences in creating fair labor programs for the third annual Northeast Gathering on Domestic Fair Trade, August 11, 2017 in Amherst, Mass, held in conjunction with the Northeast Organic Farming Association’s (NOFA) annual summer conference. Louis Battalen, homesteader and member of the NOFA Interstate Council Domestic Fair Trade Committee, welcomed the forty participants from around the region. The goals for this gathering, Battalen explained, were to learn about the similarities and differences among fair labor programs and to explore how we can support each other by advancing an agenda that brings economic and social benefits for farm workers, farmers and local communities. Representatives from four programs – the Agricultural Justice Project, Migrant Justice, Red Tomato’s Equitable Food Initiative pilot and the Workers’ Center of Central New York – were the main speakers for the morning, followed by short reports from a wide range of programs and a rousing discussion.

The four programs, according to Battalen, have many similarities, most critically when compared to others with their emphasis on worker participation in creating standards, certification and auditing, and farm worker ownership/involvement. There are also important differences among these programs: some target conventional farms while others focus on organic. A major difference is in the approach to some target conventional farms while others focus on organic. A major difference is in the approach to the standards and code of conduct.

The four programs, according to Battalen, have many similarities, most critically when compared to others with their emphasis on worker participation in creating standards, certification and auditing, and farm worker ownership/involvement. There are also important differences among these programs: some target conventional farms while others focus on organic. A major difference is in the approach to the standards and code of conduct.

1. Code of Conduct: developed from a survey of dairy farm workers. The top priorities are safety and health standards, fair wages and hours, fair housing
2. Education: Worker to worker education on the legal contract with corporations: Holds corporations accountable for conditions on the farms that supply their raw materials.
3. Independent third-party verification: Economic relief for farmers and farm workers with support from Ben and Jerry’s for the farmers in achieving the standards.
4. Legal contract with corporations: Holds corporations accountable for conditions on the farms that supply their raw materials.
5. Migrant Justice is currently campaigning to have Ben & Jerry’s follow up on its two year old pledge to sign an agreement with the farm workers. (As of early October, the two parties signed the pledge.)

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Migrant Justice, Balcazar said, expects B & J’s to exhibit the same level of care and concern for their workers as it espouses for the cows that produce the milk and cream for their ice cream. B&J already has a fair trade label on its products (for ingredients), and this may be confusing to the consumer who assumes the workers are also included in the standards. At this point, MJ is focusing on worker driven initiatives, and is first trying to get the program going. Once it is going, and they conduct audits, they can talk one on one with farmers for plans to improve their farms. MJ doesn’t want corporate social responsibility, they want worker driven responsibility.

Rafaela Rodriguez, staff for the independent Milk with Dignity Standards Council, a 501c3, explained that the council’s task is to communicate the program to farmers and then to monitor the farms, holding them accountable for living up to the standards of the Code of Conduct. The council will audit the farms and run a Hotline where workers can submit concerns/issues and work to implement collective solutions with the farmers. The goal is premium pricing for milk with the requirement that part of it should transfer down to the workers. Farmers will receive warnings for non-compliance to the standards and if they fail to address and correct them will forego participation in the program. In other words, they will not be able to sell to B and J’s.

Equitable Food Initiative and Red Tomato

Sue Futrell of Red Tomato, a nonprofit that markets for 40-50 farms in the Northeast, told the story of their pilot project with EFI. This is EFI’s first foray into the east and out of the West Coast and Mexico. Red Tomato was borne out of the fair-trade movement (one of the founding members of the DFTA), taking the principles of international fair trade and applying them to fruit and vegetable farmers in the Northeast. Their challenge is to help farmers who are struggling to make ends meet, whose farms are invisible within the food supply chain where margins are low, and there’s not a lot of room to do more even if they wish they could. The farms have already committed to Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and the standards of the Red Tomato Eco label. They are primarily family owned, multigenerational with deep community connections. Workers on the farms are either year-round family members; full time workers from the local community; or immigrants who stay year-round for full time work. Some of the farms hire seasonal workers or rely on H2A workers with whom they have long-term relationships. (A few of these farms have been targeted by ICE.)

When the Cornell University Farmworker Program held trainings for Red Tomato farmers and workers a few years ago, the process raised the question of how to ensure justice for workers given all of the tensions in the system that led to this pilot project with two participating farms and EFI. The project emphasizes workforce development, training and the establishment of worker leadership teams. The EFT program covers food safety, environmental criteria, and worker rights and it has the support of such large buyers as Costco and Whole Foods who
financially support the worker training. The retailers do not commit to premium prices, only to steady buying. There is a certification component, which is a challenge for Red Tomato farms because it may not result in any financial benefit to either the participating farms or, for that matter, to Red Tomato. The website, Righteousproduce.org, tells the stories of the farms and their workers behind-the-scenes in the supply chain.

Workers' Center of Central NY

Rebecca Fuentes, Director of the Workers' Center, and Lazaro Alvarez, a dairy farm worker, told about creating “Milked” (www.milkedny.org), a study based on 58 interviews with farm workers from 53 farms in NY, the fourth ranking state for milk production. Researchers from Cornell & Syracuse Universities helped with the interviews. Their goal was to formally document the current situation on conventional dairy farms by speaking directly with farm workers about working/living conditions, hours, salaries, plans for the future – 225 questions in all. The report reveals that many workers fear intimidation/deportation and that makes organizing difficult, especially since farm workers do not have the legal right to collective bargaining. Many earn minimum wage or even less and are working 60-70 hours a week. It can be a very dangerous job, working in an environment that is unsafe, unclean, and fast-paced. Housing conditions for workers are often very poor. With the current low milk prices, larger farms are absorbing smaller ones, creating competition among farm workers. US government tax subsidies allow farms to get larger while decreasing protections for animals and the environment (and the workers by proxy). As a result of this report and their work building contacts with workers, the Workers Center of Central NY will be meeting with Chobani in the near future in a concerted effort and don’t even know what a dignified life looks like here in the Unites States.”

The second section of the Gathering, called Open Sowing, featured a series of short reports from eight of the participants

Kathia Ramirez, the farmworker group CATA’s Food Justice Coordinator, spoke as representative of the U$ Food Sovereignty Alliance (FSA) (which was holding its first regional meeting in conjunction with the NOFA Summer Conference). NOFA recently became a member. Ramirez explained that FSA is divided into five regions, focusing on local struggles and connecting grassroots organizations in those regions. FSA also works with movements overseas including the agroecology movement.

Nathalie Marin-Gest, Fair Trade USA (FTUSA), reported that her organization recently brought fair trade certification to domestic production. Members of the DFTA, including NOFA, had been critical of FTUSA’s failure to involve farm workers in the development of their standards for hired labor. Marin-Gest said that FTUSA heard this feedback and as a result created a process to integrate the feedback from thousands of workers into their process. She concluded with an appeal to listen to diverse points of view and to support each other as allies.

Kristen Wilmer, from Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA), described her organization’s buy-local focus. With 300 farm members in Western MA, CISA supports farms with marketing assistance, local branding systems, and advice on accessing premiums in the market. They have increased the technical assistance they provide to farms on labor management and labor laws, emphasizing improving communication between farm managers and workers, and seek input on how CISA can engage more in these areas.

Steven McKinney, USDA Wage and Hour Division, Community Outreach and Resource Planning Specialist, explained that his unit conducts on-site investigations of farmworker living and working conditions, human trafficking and has the power to enforce H2A regulations. It serves as a certifying agency, providing resources on how businesses can navigate regulations and laws. They targeted Subway and negotiated an agreement to help with improving the supply chain’s labor practices.

Becca Berkey, Associate Director, Northeastern Environmental Justice Research Collaborative, told about her research as part of her doctoral dissertation that she conducted in association with NOFA’s Domestic Fair Trade Committee, at the intersection of environmental and social justice in farm labor and that involved a survey of farmers in the NOFA network on the values that motivate them.

Gabriella Della Croce, organizer with the Pioneer Valley Worker’s Center of western Massachusetts, announced that they are beginning a farm worker survey project. Della Croce described some successes they had with a survey of 241 restaurant workers which found that 66% had experienced wage theft. They then used the results to actually change practices, provide channels for information flow and help with union drives.

Jessica Culley, General Coordinator of the Farmworker Support Committee (CATA), a migrant and immigrant farmworker based organization focusing on workers’ rights, immigration and food justice, and CATA’s representative on the board of AJP, identified three elements that have been important to their thinking about certification work.

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1) worker participation: working as base building organizations to build power, including verification of what’s happening on the ground complete with meaningful worker protection;

2) the importance of being invested in local communities, involving local communities;

3) the question of pesticide exposure - diminishing use of pesticides over time has to be a major goal.

Charlotte Vallaeys, Policy Analyst for Consumer Reports, described the magazine’s work to empower consumers with information. “What should a good fair food label look like?” is the question she is asking in developing an evaluation of fair trade labels for the October issue. Consumers need to understand the claims on food labels and what they mean. Labels are the number one piece of information that consumers use. Consumer surveys show their major concerns prioritize animal welfare above environmental health and fair trade issues. Her biggest challenge is to boil down the standards without compromising the complexity of what fair trade standards mean. Components that she considers important include: Are farmers and workers interviewed? Is there a grievance process? What makes a program fall short? What characteristics are important to ensure that a label is fair for farmers and workers?

The final section, called Companion Planting, opened the floor for comments and questions:

Cora Roelofs who has been investigating worker safety argued that it’s not just about conducting trainings, it’s about ensuring these trainings result in changed conditions on the farm, citing workers’ exposure to hot conditions in the field as one example. One possible remedy is providing for periods of shaded rest, which –whether paid or otherwise- is in direct conflict with the owner’s need for continued production. Just bringing this point home to workers in a training, according to Roelofs, is insufficient unless it results in corrective action. Most states don’t have a standard for break times and, thus, employers are not legally obligated to provide them. This comment set off a discussion of training as a part of certification: Are workers involved in identifying the training that would be the most useful to them? Who does the training? Who sets up the leadership teams in EFI? Sue Futrell responded that for EFI trainings are not the end all, but used in the context of helping workers be in the front line for identifying issues on the farms. Leadership teams are established to represent the different functions on the farm; workers develop the training plan going forward, becoming part of the training team on the farm. Training is on communication, decision making, management, how to work as a team rather than on functional “how to do your job” type topics.

The morning ended with a series of big questions that could easily have provided the topics for many more hours of discussion:

• In programs for training beginning/new farmers, do we bring these programs to the forefront to teach people how fair labor practices can and should be done? Should we speak about farm justice to new farmers before they hire their first worker?
• What should be the percentage of fair trade ingredients to merit a label?
• Will there be any trickle down safety impacts for farm workers from the Food Safety Modernization Act?
• Is capitalism compatible with a fair, ecological food system?

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