2008 Summer Conference Success at U/Mass

by Jassy Bratko

When people who share common goals, beliefs, hopes and dreams gather at events such as the NOFA Summer Conference the result is an amazing, synergistic energy that can make you look at things in a new and refreshing way. The result is that the conference can last a whole lot longer than three days. The ideas that it spawns, the connections it forms and the knowledge that is gained helps to create meaningful and important change that can last a lifetime to the people who attend and to those whose lives they touch. For years “organic” seems to have hovered on the edge of mainstream but all indications are that the message NOFA has promoted for years is gaining widespread acceptance and importance. This could account for the record breaking attendance at the NOFA’s 24th Annual Summer Conference.

Over 1200 people were pre-registered to attend the jam packed event that was held for the first time this year at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst from August 8-10. The change of venue may well signify a productive and growing partnership between UMass and NOFA. Steve Goodwin, Dean of the College of Natural Resources, addressed the audience before Friday’s keynote speech and said that he was looking forward to receiving many ideas in the near future for research projects based on organic growing. He expressed surprise at the perception that the University worked only for companies such as Monsanto.

The research will be welcome and necessary. According to Friday night’s keynote speaker Dr. Arden Andersen, the United States has a “...population that is starving itself to death on full stomachs.” He said that plants grown by modern, conventional agriculture are suffering from a “deficiency of nutrition” and so are the animals and people who eat them. According to Andersen studies have shown that during the last century there has been an average 63% decline in nutrition in food. A tomato eaten today does not contain the same quantities of vitamins and minerals that one did in our grandparent’s time. He went on to say that “...health and disease are correlated to nutrition” so it is not surprising that despite the advances of modern medicine the overall health of the population is declining. “Real medicine, real health begins in the soil” he said, and this was the topic of his speech.

Mark McAffee, the keynote speaker on Saturday night, continued to build on Andersen’s message by saying that the nation is “committing mass suicide” with antibiotics, pesticied, herbsicides, antibiotics and processing treatments that greatly undermine the nutritional value of food and, consequently, people’s health. Agribusiness, which produces so much of the world’s food supply and uses these methods, treats food as a commodity and not something vital that is going to feed a neighbor. Government policies support the methods that will generate the most profit for investors at the expense of producing wholesome, organic food.

To change this Andersen said, “…the most important vote cast is with your dollars everyday…” by choosing locally grown, organic food. McAffee agreed and said the power to change current policies “…is all in our hands.” Looking out over his attentive audience he laughed that he might be preaching to the choir!

In addition to the two great keynote speeches, the main attraction of the conference was over 200 well attended and very informative workshops. At the heart of the campus the exhibit tent bustled with activity throughout the weekend. On Saturday afternoon a farmers’ market and a lively fair provided a welcome change of pace from workshops, and an opportunity to meet old friends or enjoy a rest under a large shade tree. Others may have chosen to watch one of the many educational movies offered throughout the weekend. Dancing with Swallowtail or Dirty Rice, drumming with Steve Leicach and comedy with Jackson Gillman kept the festive atmosphere going well into the evenings.

New this year was the Grazing School that featured several workshops and a pasture walk organized by Mass Grass, a statewide grazing group of Massachusetts livestock farmers and educators from agricultural organizations, including NOFA/Mass, UMass Extension, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation.

Inside This Issue

Features

Meetings Shape Organic Future 7
Vermont Compost in Legal Battle 8
Welcome to Page Crepiga 8
Attending the Organic Summit 41
Are Northeast Farms in a Financing Fix? 42
Report from IFOAM World Congress 43

Supplement on

Organic Winter Production and Sales

Winter Time Farmers Market in Providence 9
Year-Round Food and Learning at MSU 14
Pre-Thanksgiving Farmers Market 20
Running a Winter CSA - Blue Heron Farm 23
Growing in the Winter Greenhouse 30
Radiant Heated Benches for Winter Greens 33
Farming Winter Greens 34

Departments

Editorial 2
Letters 2
NOFA Exchange 4
News Notes 5
Book Reviews 39
NOFA Contact People 46
Calendar 47
Dear Editor,

I read the recent issue about Online sales and marketing with some interest since I have been selling my vegetable seedlings by pre-order online successfully for 2 years. And though I am sure the technical article about how to set things up was well done, I wouldn’t know since setting up websites baffle me) I was dismayed not to read about criteria to use when hiring someone else to do it for you. When I began my farming adventure I was told to do as much as I could by myself to save money, but also to hire an expert for things that are high profile and critical to my business if one hasn’t been previously trained in that field. My web designer has turned me onto tools to manage mailing lists, orders, gift certificates and messages from clients that I never would have imagined possible. Since she does this every day and I do not, I can only imagine what my attempt would look like. Plus, the computer savvy are a population that could be open to barter for farm fresh goods. This is putting your name out there for the world to see and quite important to do right the first time. Building a web presence is not like mending a fence or trying a new heat-retaining system (under greenhouses, hoop-houses, cloches, row-cover), varieties which are suitable for photosynthesizing in low-light-low-heat situations, and management systems that deal with the vagaries of winter climates, finding time for harvest and renewal, are all being explored. For many of us, this interest is a two-edged sword. The few months of lessened winter activity provide an opportunity for some well-deserved R ’n R. On the other hand, the opportunity for winter income from the farm is an attractive, if somewhat novel, prospect. As you might expect, some NOFA farmers have jumped in, ramping up their winter operations, and others have gotten their feet wet, lengthening their season to Christmas before taking a month or two off. This issue deals with both those responses, and a number of others, as it explores this new market window, the technologies and systems it is inspiring, and the ways interest in local, organic food is continuing to transform organic farming in the Northeast.

Ayn Whettemare
www.foundwellfarm.com
Pembroke, NH 03275

Thanks, Ann.

I certainly support the idea of having a competent person do your website!

We are fortunate enough to have a son in the business who manages our farm website, and since he is in the profession he keeps us up on the latest developments. But many NOFA people are incredibly capable — like Mel Bristol in the article on Bloomingfields Farm who manages his own internet operation or Abby Holm who set up the small software package -- so I wanted to give people a taste of what it is like to work in the profession he keeps us up on the latest developments. But many NOFA people are incredibly capable — like Mel Bristol in the article on Bloomingfields Farm who manages his own internet operation or Abby Holm who set up the small software package -- so I wanted to give people a taste of what it is like to design your own site. Even if you have someone else do the design, it helps to have thought out some of these issues so you can discuss the options intelligently with the designer.

Glad you site is working for you. I think more farmers should consider this option. - Jack
Please help us thank these Friends of Organic Farming for their generous support!

Kim Q. Matland
In the long run men hit only what they aim at. Henry David Thoreau

All Natural Distributors
11 Perry Dr.
Foxboro, MA 02035
508 543-1160

Fedco-Seeds
PO Box 520, Waterville, ME 04903
207-873-7333

Socially Responsible Investing
Douglas Calnan, First Vice President-Investments
300 Granite Street, Braintree, MA 02184
888-320-4366 781-917-1982
douglas.calnan@ubs.com
www.ubs.com/financialservicesinc

©2008 UBS Financial Services Inc. All Rights Reserved. Member SIPC.
Fresh Garlic available August 1st from Fraser’s Garlic Farm in Churchville, NY. The same high quality Certified Organic and Naturally Grown garlics as offered for the past 15 years. We have both seed and table stock available in the following varieties: German White, Italian White, Korean Red, Pskem, Bogatyr and Ozark. For information and ordering, check us out on the web at www.fraseragarlic.com or preferably call Ed at (585) 350-8295.

For sale: 50 acre organic farm in northeast Vermont. Includes small herd of Saanen dairy goats, small creamery/cheese making facility (licensed), 4 year old barn w loft, solid well insulated 30’ yurt as main residence, guest cabin, and a 24’ canvas yurt. Entire farm off grid. one-of-a-kind place. $340,000, 802-274-1531 or skvisland1@yahoo.com.

D Acres of NH is a non-profit, farm based service organization that promotes SustainAbility through practice, experimentation, workshops, tours, and community outreach in the foothills of the White Mountains. The working organic farm offers four-season hostel accommodations and seasonal meals prepared in our commercial kitchen. This site is a regional model of permaculture gardens and sustainable building design. The 180-acre property is located in Dorchester, NH and includes perennial polycultures, annual gardens, pastures, and wooded trails for hiking, snow-shoeing, and cross-country skiing. To schedule a visit to the farm or for more information: www.dacres.org info@dacres.org 603-786-2366

Many Hands Organic Farm is offering certified organic garlic seed for sale. $12/lb plus shipping; 25 lb or more for $10/lb plus shipping. Artichoke Red Soft neck; German Red stiff neck; Magic stiff neck. Julie@mhof.net; (978) 355-2853.

Toll Free: 1.877.393.4484

Ecto-Phyte
Effective & Low Cost Fly & Lice Control Blended with Natural, Aromatic Essential Oils

Problem with internal parasites? Try Liquid Neema-Tox Nutraceutical Drench for Stressed G.I. Tracts
Organically Reared Cows Produce Healthier Milk

Milk from organic cattle that eat a fresh grass diet is likely to be better for your health, according to a new study by the University of Newcastle. This organic milk contained more good fatty acids such as omega-3 and conjugated linoleic acid known as CLA9 than milk produced at intensive commercial dairy farms. The difference was even more marked during the summer with levels of CLA9 about 60 per cent higher in milk from cattle that graze in fields. Gillian Butler, livestock project manager for the university’s Nafferton Ecological Farming Group, who led the research, said: “Our work has not looked at the impact on human health, but I would say organic milk should be better for health from what we know of the benefits of these good fatty acids. They are effective in combating cancer, coronary heart disease and type II diabetes.”

source: Growing for Market, August, 2008

Access to Pasture Rule is Alive

After many years the USDA has finished its review process and the proposed rule dealing with livestock’s need for access to pasture has been received by the Executive Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for their review. The rule is NOT judged to be economically significant (which would involve further delays), so after review by the OMB it will head back to USDA for publication on the Federal Register with a 60-90 day comment period.

According to Ed Malhby, executive director of the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance, “We have been lobbying and advocating for a clear and universal interpretation of what is meant by “a total feed ration composed of agricultural products, including pasture and forage.” While it might seem obvious that cows need to graze pasture that is nutritious, there has been much abuse by some large dairies and some genuine confusion because of the lack of a quantitative measurement in defining how much pasture needs to be consumed and how long cows need to be on pasture.

Organic dairy farmers and processors have agreed that the following standard should become a rule: All certified organic dairy operations regardless of size and ownership must work to maximize pasture and meet a minimum level of pasture intake of at least 30% Dry Matter Intake (DMI) during the grazing season, which can be no less than 120 days.

As supply increases with many new entrants into the industry, we need to ensure that we have the highest standards possible to maintain the integrity of the product in the market place. Once we have a clear standard for livestock we can move onto a clear definition of access to the outdoors for poultry!”

source: NOPMA press release, August 4, 2008

Home Depot Drops Pesticides

Home Depot, the second largest US retailer after Wal-Mart, has decided to stop selling traditional pesticides and herbicides by the end of 2008, replacing them with less environmentally harmful alternatives.

source: Acres, USA, June, 2008

Mass Death Of Bees In Germany: Pesticide Approvals Suspended

The German office for consumer protection and food safety (BVL) has ordered the immediate suspension of approval for eight seed treatment products due to the mass death of bees in Germany’s Baden-Wuerttemberg state. The suspended products are the following nicotinoid pesticides: Antarc, Chinook, Elado, Mesuro, Poncho, and Faiel, all made by Bayer; and Cruiser, made by Syngenta. According to the German Research Centre for Cultivated Plants, 29 out of 30 dead bees it had examined had been killed by contact with clothianidin, a nicotinoid pesticide. Also wild bees and other insects are suffering from a significant loss of population.

source: http://www.cbgnetwork.org/2517.html

NOP Continues Methionine Exemption Two More Years

Methionine is an amino acid necessary in the diets of poultry. It is naturally available in insects, worms, and other animals eaten by free-ranging birds. But it is difficult to get naturally by birds kept indoors. Although the Organic Foods Production Act requires “access to out-of-doors” for birds, that provision has been ignored by the organic poultry industry – which is possible largely because a synthetic form of methionine has been allowed in poultry feed year after year by the National Organic Program (NOP). In a proposed rule published in the Federal Register in July, the NOP is again extending the expiration date of the exemption allowing synthetic methionine. The program said the “loss of the use of methionine, at this time, would disrupt the well-established organic poultry market and cause substantial economic harm to organic poultry operations.” The proposed rule would extend the expiration date of the synthetic substance from Oct. 1, 2008, to Oct. 1, 2010 by amending the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances, which identifies the synthetic substances that may be used and the nonsynthetic (natural) substances that may not be used in organic production.

source: Sustainable Food News, July 14, 2008

Organic Gem 3-3-.3 Bone Char 0-16-0 contains more than 16% available phosphate (P2O5) and 32% total phosphate. It is OMRI listed and can be applied without restriction on certified organic farmland.

*Many of our products that are not OMRI listed may be allowed for use on a certified organic farm. Check with your certification representative to be sure.
George DeVault to Head Seed Savers Exchange

The Board of Directors is pleased to announce the appointment of George Donald DeVault as President and Executive Director of the Seed Savers Exchange. He succeeds Kent Whealy, a co-founder and former Executive Director. In accepting the position, Mr. DeVault said, “For me, this is not just a job. It’s more a mission. Seed Savers comprises the best of everything I have worked for all of my life as a journalist, organic farmer and gardener. It’s a natural fit. I have known Seed Savers’ founders, Kent and Diane, personally for going on 20 years, and have nothing but the highest respect for their pioneering spirit, vision, and accomplishments. Seed Savers is doing more than preserving and passing along our garden heritage. It is safeguarding our future food and our food future. Becoming the steward of Seed Saver’s legacy is both a great honor and a truly awesome responsibility.”

source: Seed Savers Exchange press release, August 6, 2008

‘Cave Man’ Diet Better for Us

One of agriculture’s lasting gifts to the world has been a vastly larger human population. But at what price? A recent study at the Karolinska Institute in Huddinge, Sweden put volunteers on a Stone Age diet of vegetables, berries, nuts, lean meat and fish. Eliminated were cereals, dairy products, and refined sugar. After just three weeks the subjects lost refined sugar. After just three weeks the subjects lost 19% of their body weight, 23% of their body fat, and their cholesterol levels were lowered by 44%.”

source: Fruit and Vegetable Markets, May 27, 2007

Monsanto To Dump rBGH

Monsanto announced on August 6 it will “divest” or sell off its controversial genetically engineered animal drug, recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone (rBGH). Monsanto’s divestment of rBGH is a direct result of 14 years of determined opposition by organic consumer, public interest, and family farmer groups.


Eating soy linked to memory loss

Frequently consuming foods containing soy may contribute to memory loss, British experts say. Experts at England’s Loughborough and Oxford Universities researched the impact of soy consumption in 719 senior citizens on the Indonesian island of Java. Researchers determined people who ate soy at least twice a day had 74 percent less memory function that those who ate it significantly less. Vegetarians and elderly women seemed to be highly susceptible to potential memory loss from soy consumption.

source:UPI, July 5, 2008

Food Companies Bet on Stevia

Corn Products International has joined Cargill and Coca-Cola as American food companies investing in stevia. CPI is working with a Japanese company to perfect an exclusive strain of the plant, as well as manufacturing technology. The super-sweet yet low calorie herb from South America has a sweetening power 300 to 400 times that of sugar. The US firms believe eventually the Food and Drug Administration will approve stevia as a food sweetener. It is already approved in Japan, China and Brazil.

source: The Natural Foods Merchandiser, June, 2008

Jury Demanded in Organic Milk Class Action Suit

A class action suit has been filed against Safeway, Publix Super Markets, Target, and Wal-Mart, among others, in federal court in the Eastern District of Missouri. The suit involves claims of breach of contract, negligent misrepresentation, breach of implied warranty, unjust enrichment, and statutory claims under several states’ consumer protection and deceptive trade practices statutes. The case is the result of 18 class-action lawsuits filed since last fall alleging Boulder, Colo.-based Aurora Dairy Corporation labeled milk as organic without meeting federal organic standards. Aurora’s organic certifier Calif.-based Quality Assurance International, Inc. (QAI) is also named as a defendant as is former organic dairyman Case Vander Eyk, Jr. Other defendants in the case include giant retailers Wild Oats Market, Inc. and Costco Wholesale Corporation. Aurora and the retailers deny the allegations. The consolidated case demanded a jury trial. Judge Richard Webber ordered the defendants to answer the complaint by Aug. 29. Once that is received, the court will schedule a conference hearing.


Golden Egg Farm

Pottery and Poultry

143-477-8872
www.goldeneggfarm.com

For more information: www.organicranch.org/fair_price.shtml

A message from the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance.

REAL PICKLES

Naturally Fermented & Raw

Northeast grown • 100% Organic

Our products are made using natural fermentation, which was essential to healthy human diets before the advent of industrial food processing. As raw products, they are rich sources of active cultures and enzymes. 100% vinegar free.

Sold in natural foods stores in the Northeast plus ... We ship UPS!

(Dial or check our website for details.)

DILL PICKLES • SAUERKRAUT • RED CABBAGE
ASIAN-STYLE CABBAGE • GINGER CARROT

www.realpickles.com (413)863-9063
P.O. Box 40, Montague, MA 01351

info@realpickles.com... We ship UPS! (Call or check our website for details.)

info@realpickles.com... We ship UPS! (Call or check our website for details.)

DILL PICKLES • SAUERKRAUT • RED CABBAGE
ASIAN-STYLE CABBAGE • GINGER CARROT

www.realpickles.com (413)863-9063
P.O. Box 40, Montague, MA 01351

info@realpickles.com... We ship UPS! (Call or check our website for details.)
Hotter than DC in July: NOFA Policy Report

by Steve Gilman

NOFA Interstate Council Policy Coordinator

There’s nothing like a southerly trip to put our northeastern summer bouts of heat and humidity in perspective. NOFA meetings in Washington, DC was just plain hot and humid, although the residents were shrugging it off -- while bracing for the real stuff that they say hits hard in August -- and it’s no wonder our legislators vacate and head for the homeland. Similarly, there were ample hot topics as well for the back-to-back National Organic Action Plan (NOAP) and National Organic Coalition (NOC) meetings we came to town for.

Although the member organizations of the National Organic Coalition are from far-flung locations in the South, North and Midwest, DC is an appropriate central meeting place. In addition to being the seat of government -- it’s the home base of the Center for Food Safety, Food and Water Watch, Beyond Pesticides and Union of Concerned Scientists as well as NOC’s Congressional representative working on the Hill. The other attending NOC members from the hinterlands represent NOFA, MFGA in Maine, Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Services (MOSES) in Minnesota, NOAAP in the Dakotas, and the Organic Farmers and Stockmen Association (OFSA) and Organic Gardening Education Network (OGEN).

The two days of meetings were held in the newly named, well air-conditioned offices of the Union of Concerned Scientists on K Street. The first day, July 16th was devoted to NOAP -- a RAFF-led project headed up by Steve Gilman, had it’s road show tour launch at the 2006 NOFA Summer Conference. Another NOAP meeting in Chicago is planned for the next meeting in December.

The Summit process aims to further engage the organic community in a re-evaluation in 2011 while keeping an eye toward major policy modifications in the 2012 farm Bill. The NOAP Summit has set a target of bringing in 200 attendees from grassroots organizations around the country, including someone from each of the NOFA chapters. The Summit organizers are also in the midst of conferring with the listening sessions that will be sent out for review by the participants prior to the gathering with the intention of honing it into a final document over the two day meeting. Planning-wise, February is right around the corner. Midst the sweltering DC heat, some meeting attendees almost longingly recalled being snowed in for days at a previous wintertime meeting in LaCrosse -- and advised participants to make air travel plans through Milwaukee, not Chicago.

NOC Meeting

Day Two was set aside for the National Organic Coalition meeting. Stepping into the bagging in a working lunch, the Agenda seemed full enough for several days work. NOC also meets via regularly scheduled monthly conference calls and had sent out the homework for the meeting so participants would be prepared to address pressing questions. The coalition members were joined by Emily Brown Rosen, Jim Riddle and Roger Blobaum -- highly experienced staff members who also serve as NOC advisers on various initiatives. And legislative coordinator, Steve Etka, came with binder-sized handouts analyzing the wins, losses and draws of the NOC organic initiatives in the recently completed Farm Bill.

A presentation by the membership committee started the day. NOC is a looking to expand, but is concerned with keeping its core values and quickly repeated its “niche” message. Discussion included defining membership parameters and looking into creating a second tier “NOC network” – an affiliate membership that could bring in a greater number of participants, with decisions still in the hands of the Board -- but further development and resolution of this issue was charted for further discussion. The committee was also charged with developing membership recruitment strategies and implementing recruitment criteria for the next meeting in December.

NOC has also taken over the important function of hosting the members of the organic community attending the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) meetings that used to be handled by the now moribund National Campaign Organic Committee. In addition to providing participants an opportunity to coordinate meeting testimony and strategy it is an invaluable networking occasion, as people come from all over the country.

Implementation time

After the group reviewed the draft budget-in-progress, our Washington representative Steve Etka handed out the hefty Farm Bill handbooks. After three years of work (the scorecard of the NOC initiative consists of sub sections that presented the NOC Farm Bill to Congress and the Appropriations process level (win, lose, or draw); pertinent legislative language; Conference committee report language; implementation actions so far and timing parameters for further implementation) the analysis also included a section on unresolved questions and additional action items needed for follow up.

As outlined on the website -- in the win category is Organic Cost Share; the Conservation Stewardship Program, the Organic Research and Extension Initiative and Organic Data Collection and Analysis. The partial win category includes Organic Conversion Assistance; Classical Plant and Animal Breeding (i.e. non-GMOs and cloning) and Organic Crop Insurance; the lose (with caveats) category are GMO Liability and Competitive Markets in Organics. NOC also worked on numerous other Farm Bill issues as they came up in conjunction with other sustainable agriculture groups. The legislative task is now to ride here on the rule making process through conference calls with pertinent parties to influence the final language and implementation process.

Further, while some Farm Bill programs are protected by the security of mandated funding, others have to go through the Appropriations process in Congress every year – and the allocated dollars aren’t necessarily there to support them when they powerfully put in for a bigger piece of the pie. Subject to Appropriations for the 2009 fiscal year are increased funding for the NOP; the organic data collection and analysis; the organic transition program; the SARE and ATTRA programs and classical plant and animal breeding and these all require further support to shepherd them through the process.

Other issues on the NOC legislative priority list are producing materials for the transitioning implementation in 2012; NOAP's role in building a lasting NOAP; the importance of charting for the PGA rule before year’s end. NOC is also looking to impact the congressional Climate Change and food security debates and legislation. Meanwhile it’s not too soon to start building initiatives to go into the 2012 Farm Bill.

The ongoing NOC agenda also includes riding herd on the National Organic Program (NOP) and the NOSB, as well as the current, non-transparent addition to which the scheduled conference calls are being snowed in for days at a previous wintertime meeting in LaCrosse -- and advised participants to make air travel plans through Milwaukee, not Chicago.

Steve walked the group through each of the 10 initiatives in the Implementation Handbook. Each initiative consisted of sub sections that presented the NOC Farm Bill to Congress and the Appropriations process level (win, lose, or draw); pertinent legislative language; Conference committee report language; implementation actions so far and timing parameters for further implementation; the analysis also included a section on unresolved questions and additional action items needed for follow up.

Although the member organizations of the National Organic Coalition are from far-flung locations in the South, North and Midwest, DC is an appropriate central meeting place. In addition to being the seat of government – it’s the home base of the Center for Food Safety, Food and Water Watch, Beyond Pesticides and Union of Concerned Scientists as well as NOC’s Congressional representative working on the Hill. The other attending NOC members from the hinterlands represent NOFA, MFGA in Maine, Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Services (MOSES) in Minnesota, NOAAP in the Dakotas, and the Organic Farmers and Stockmen Association (OFSA) and Organic Gardening Education Network (OGEN). The Natural Farmer
Compost Politics – Vermont Style: Vermont Compost Company’s Legal Fight

by Dave Rogers, Policy Advisor NOFA Vermont

The environmental, agricultural and economic benefits of compost and composting are well-known to organic farmers, gardeners and readers of TNF. High-quality compost is essential to backyard and commercial organic crop production. And composting is rapidly emerging as an important strategy in diverting organic “wastes” from commercial and community landfills. To meet these needs the number and scale of commercial composting operations have grown in recent years.

In Vermont, over the past year or so, these trends have “collided” in a regulatory, legal and political debate that will set the course for the future of commercial composting in this state. Should larger-scale composting operations be regarded as “solid waste” processing facilities, or as agricultural enterprises? Ought they be regulated under the same land use and development laws that apply to, for example, industrial manufacturing plants? How can commercial composting be encouraged while at the same time protecting environmental quality and community interests? No one seems to have the answer.

In May the legislature passed and Governor Douglas signed into law, an act (H.873) that places a moratorium on regulatory and enforcement actions related to commercial composting operations in Vermont pending the outcome of a two-year comprehensive review of related issues and the ongoing legal struggle with the State of Vermont’s Agency of Agriculture, Food and Development Act, Act 250. In June, Karl fed his turkeys; the hens forage among the compost piles for their food. Their manure is composted along with everything else. Many tons of organic “waste” that would otherwise end up in central Vermont’s landfills are converted into a valuable agricultural products - eggs and organic compost.

It would be hard to find anyone who does a better job of “closing the loops” of the local environment, economy and food system. Over the years his farming innovations, composting practices and contributions to the Vermont’s agriculture, communities and environment have been widely recognized by citizens, businesses, environmental organizations, legislators and government agencies. But the growth of Vermont Compost Company in order to meet the demand for its compost products has led to controversy and a difficult legal battle with the State that threatens its future.

Earlier this year, in response to complaints by several neighbors (who are politically well-connected to Vermont’s Republican party), the Vermont Natural Resources Board’s District 5 Environmental Commission found that VCC is operating a compost product manufacturing facility and requires a permit under Vermont’s Land Use and Development Act, Act 250. In June, Karl faced this Jurisdictional Opinion to Vermont’s Environmental Court arguing, in part, that VCC’s status as an operating farm, which has long been affirmed by the Vermont’s Agency of Agriculture, makes it exempt from Act 250.

(1970, when Act 250 was enacted, farms were specifically exempted to protect them from neighbors and others who might, for one reason or another, seek to prevent farmers from expanding or conducting farming activities. Environmental quality standards on Vermont farms are enforced by the agencies of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Contrary to allegations made by his neighbors, VCC has not been found to be in violation of these standards.)

On July 7th, in an unexpected and outrageous development, Vermont Natural Resources Board ordered Karl to immediately “cease and desist” all operations, remove all compost from the farm and pay an $18,000 fine – even though no court hearings had been held or judgments made pertaining to VCC’s pending appeal! Karl appealed this order as well to the Environmental Court.

An especially troubling aspect of this matter is that the moratorium on enforcement actions does not apply to VCC. Apparently, H.873 was “tweaked” by someone in the final days of the legislative session, without the knowledge of many legislators, such that VCC would be excluded from the moratorium. This provided the Vermont Natural Resources Board, whose Chair was appointed by Republican Governor Douglas, with the opportunity to immediately pursue its legal actions against Vermont Compost Company.

Unless the Natural Resources Board is directed by the Governor to suspend its legal actions against the Vermont Compost Company until new composting rules and regulations are developed and implemented, Karl faces a long and expensive legal fight. His legal expenses have already amounted to tens of thousands of dollars and continue to climb. They threaten to reach a point where he will no longer be able to fight the “deep pockets” of the State of Vermont. Vermont Compost Company has created a Legal Defense Fund for those who would like to help. More information about this and the entire story may be found on VCC’s website http://www.vermontcompost.com.

At the time this is being written (August 5), NOFA Vermont is helping to organize a growing group of certified organic farmers who use VCC products, as well as recycling organizations, restaurants, food coops and others who are directly affected by this case. The group has retained an attorney to represent them and file for party status on their behalf in the Environmental Court. The group is organizing under the name Friends of Vermont Farming and Recycling. It is now actively fundraising to pay attorney fees and, if funds are sufficient, assist Vermont Compost Company with its legal expenses.

Vermonters’ interest in this issue is high and growing. Letters to the editor, op-eds, editorials and news stories appear regularly in the state’s newspapers and media outlets. A recent gubernatorial candidates’ debate dwelt on the issue. At a recent tour of Karl’s farm, Governor Douglas was being circulated at farmers markets, food coops and other locations. The media and parties in other states are expressing interest. This is grassroots Vermont politics!

More information may be found at www.nofavt.org. Updates on developments will be posted on NOFA Vermont’s webpage regularly. Contact Dave Rogers, NOFA-VT Policy Advisor, if you’d like more information – dave@nofavt.org.

The NOFA Organic Land Care Program is excited to announce the appointment of Page Czepiga (pronounced “zheh-pee-guh”) has been hired as Accreditation Manager. Page, a recent University of Vermont graduate who majored in Community and International Development, recently participated in the Living Routes Ecovillage program in Findhorn Scotland. She also worked at the Vermont Hispanic Labor Pilots Project where she designed surveys, polled workers/produces at five farms and developed and published a communication dictionary that is now available for use by area farmers.

INVERNESS FARM
Growing Traditional Grains with Nature in a Sustainable Way

We deliver
Robert L. Crowe
113 Vandeusen Road
Canajoharie, NY 13317

Kelp
• Meal
• Liquids
• Soluble powder

Products for Animals, Plants, Soils
Buy Direct from a USDA Processor
41 Crase Street • Waldo, Maine 04552
888-662-5317 • 207-852-7706
www.noruekelp.com

Welcome Page Czepiga, Accreditation Manager

The NOFA Organic Land Care Program is excited to announce the appointment of Page Czepiga (pronounced “zheh-pee-guh”) has been hired as Accreditation Manager. Page, a recent University of Vermont graduate who majored in Community and International Development, recently participated in the Living Routes Ecovillage program in Findhorn Scotland. She also worked at the Vermont Hispanic Labor Pilots Project where she designed surveys, polled workers/produces at five farms and developed and published a communication dictionary that is now available for use by area farmers.

Page will be the central communication person for the NOFA Organic Land Care Program and the diverse pool of NOFA Accredited Organic Land Care Professionals. She will be organizing this year’s Update Course and assisting professionals with their re-accreditations for 2009. Page also will be sending out monthly Organic Land Care newsletters and coordinating with the credits sub-committee to provide continuing education to NOFA professionals.

To contact Page, call the CT NOFA office at (203) 888-5146 or email pczepiga@ctnofa.org.
Because of its small physical size, Rhode Island is used to playing second fiddle to the other New England states in many regards. But while only a quarter the size of the next biggest state in the region (Connecticut) it is the most people-dense of any. In fact, the Providence metropolitan area contains more people than any in New England except Boston. With this many people for customers, and with an ocean-moderated climate many of us in colder climes would kill for, winter production and sales of crops on some of Rhode Island’s 890 remaining farms is a natural.

Farm Fresh Rhode Island is a Providence-based non-profit advocacy organization that is trying to make more of this happen. It started as a research project at Brown University, but grew into an independent non-profit. It is still headquartered, however, in Brown’s Urban Environmental Lab, home to its Environmental Studies Department.

The building is surrounded by community gardens actively used by Brown students and faculty, as well as neighborhood residents. Last fall the gardens were torn out and the building put at risk because Brown was going to demolish it. But there was a push back by students and faculty and ultimately Brown decided to preserve the building for a time and allow the gardens to continue. Students and faculty members quickly rebuilt the gardens and distributed about 20 plots, plus a couple of community ones open to anyone.

Farm Fresh Rhode Island has set up farmers markets in the Providence area to enable city-dwellers to get access to local food. But those markets tend to close at the end of October, or by Thanksgiving at the latest. One of the organization’s long term goals is to build a permanent year-round farmers market in Providence which would be open 4 or 5 days a week.

“Our market would create a permanent enclosed space”, says Jessica Knapp, development coordinator for the group, “similar to a public market, where produce, meat, dairy, everything could be sold. There are a couple of markets like that in Baltimore, one in Philadelphia.”

But for now Farm Fresh Rhode Island just wants people to get familiar with buying local produce in the winter. Last November they came up with the idea of having a one-day a week wintertime market that would explore whether the community really wanted a place to buy local food in the winter. Sheri Griffin, the group’s markets coordinator, used to work at AS 220, a small non-profit art gallery and performance space in downtown Providence. AS 220 was not used during the day, so she got permission to use their display space on Saturdays from noon to 3 p.m.. Ten to twelve vendors agreed to sell there, it was advertised, and people came. It stayed open from the beginning of December until May 3.

“The entrance to the Wintertime Farmers Market at Providence’s AS 220 is well marked!”

Karla Simmons, of Simmons Farm, sets up her display of vegetables at the Providence Wintertime Farmers Market.
aren’t even many people living here, compared to downtowns in other cities. But this is a good market for people who have condos and apartments because it is handy to people to go shopping on Saturday. We had about 8 tables going in a circle. The vendors were on the inside and the customers on the outside. The Johnson and Wales chef would cook up food here, as a sort of demo. It was a festive atmosphere, which was nice in the winter.

“The first two or three months were busy and successful beyond our imagination,” she continues. “It was always packed from 12 to 3. We had at least 300 customers coming every week. They were people committed to buying local, people who had frequented farmers markets during the season. There is a restaurant next door that uses locally grown produce. They worked with us and people could come to the market, bring their family for brunch, and enjoy the day.”

The market was such a success the group is looking for a larger space this winter. They are also talking to farmers earlier, so they can prepare to have more food specifically for the market. Although AS 220 was accessible by bus, parking was a problem last winter. So Farm Fresh Rhode Island is trying to work out arrangements with local merchants who have lots but don’t use them on Saturday.

It is not a requirement of Farm Fresh Rhode Island that farms selling at their markets be certified organic. But some of the participants at the wintertime market were. Skip Paul, of Wishing Stone Farm in Little Compton, sold storage crops and greens there through the end of December, but treasures his time off in the winter and didn’t want to go into January with the market. Karla Simmons, of Simmons Farm in Middletown, brought greens as well as a selection of their organic meats, frozen and packed in coolers.

“We had 4 farms with fruits and vegetables,” says Jessica, “including an apple orchard which did very well, plus we always had a coffee roaster, a chocolate maker, a woman who made jams and jellies out of locally grown fruit, an oyster farm came every week, one farm would bring meat and eggs, we had a cheese maker and a start-up farm raising eggs came too. It was a great chance for them to start up and meet the public. We were also selling local organic Christmas trees before Christmas.”

Farm Fresh Rhode Island also had a table there to answer question and occasionally sell some out-of-state things produced on small farms. Sheri had a relative with a small citrus farm in Florida who shipped up some tangerines and grapefruits that were especially appealing to New England customers in January. There was also a farmer in Maine who grew heirloom beans, but had family in Rhode Island. The organization sold his beans at their table, too. A local bakery brought bread so that people could come and buy a lot of their staples.

“In our other markets we don’t allow non-local items, or for farmers to come one week and skip the next,” explains Jessica. “But because this was a winter market and we were experimenting, we wanted to open it up to small farms elsewhere. We told the farmers that this was just a pilot and we would re-evaluate at the beginning of March. But when March came everyone was still aboard. At the beginning of Spring the supply started to wane a little bit -- Karla Simmons took a month off, for one thing. But when we started to get asparagus and more greens it picked right up.

“We are encouraging people that this market is worthwhile and they should raise for it,” she continues. “But there are plenty of farms that value their downtime in winter, too, and they don’t want to grow anymore. We’re particularly interested in storage crops like potatoes, squash, and apples. Another thing that we are trying to put together for this permanent space in the future is a lot of storage on-site so people can grow their crops but store them there.”

Allan Hill of Hill Orchards, with his apples, was one of the markets top sellers.

Skip Paul, who sold through December, shows his tomatoes, broccoli and fresh greens.
Organic and Natural Beef
Organic Milk (Bottles)

Interested families are welcome and encouraged to come see our beef in their natural habitat. We are proud of our cattle and how they live. They graze at appropriate times of the year and have access to outdoor and sunshine all year round.

Our farm and all cattle have been inspected and passed by a third party animal welfare inspector as well as the normal organic inspector that other farms do. A specialist, third party inspector, also inspected the meat handling facility; to be sure it was being handled humanely.

Would you rather have local, well-finished beef limited amount of barley and oats during the finishing of our beef. We don’t use growth hormones or GMO Seeds, feed maintenance antibiotics or bakery waste, ever.

If your family wants safe, high quality, organic meat year round, come or call and place an order for a side at $4.00 per lb. or, a whole animal at $3.75 per lb. (plus cut and wrap).

Some customers split a whole animal with a friend. Sides will average 400 lbs plus.

Our organic meat and glass-bottled milk are in approximately 50 health foodstores as well as restaurants in coastal Maine. And, thank you for supporting Caldwell Family Farm and local organic agriculture.

Caldwell Family Farm
(207) 225-3871
www.caldwellfamsmaine.com
within sight of his parched fields. When I stopped to talk with him in mid-July we was field-applying water to his winter squash transplants from a 10,000 tanker-load he had recently purchased.

"I can get 10,000 gallons of water for $250," he says. "A truck brings it from a reservoir. That’s cheap compared to the cost of drilling wells. I’ve had no rain for 60 days -- I know it will eventually rain in August, but I need the security of the water now.

The lack of regular rainfall, while making agriculture more difficult, does not detract from Little Compton’s value for other purposes. Right now the highest use seems to be sprouting

McMansions. When Skip bought his house twenty some years ago land was $5000 an acre. Now it is more like $90,000 an acre.

At such prices, of course, farming is priced out of the market. Skip had ended up begging use of some of his fields from wealthy people, and getting the use of almost 30 acres from the town, which had implemented a 0.5% tax on property transfers to fund a town land trust.

Skip markets about a third of his produce through CSAs, a third through farmers markets, and a third wholesale – primarily to Whole Foods which has three big markets in the Providence area.

“One of the farmers markets Skip participated in last year was the Providence wintertime market. Although this year he is growing more for next winter, last fall he found out he had to make some adjustments for the wintertime customers.

“We had a bunch of parsnips and purple top turnips and I remember that for one of the first winter markets I brought them in bushels and baskets. Nobody bought a thing. My wife said ‘call Pete of Pete’s Greens’. He told me: ‘Man, bag them up and call it Skip’s Soup Mix’. It was a great idea. We sold 50 bags the next time. So packaging is big in the winter markets. We now have three soup mixes.

“Having greens is big,” he continues. “There is an explosion of interest in greenhouses – some farmers are adding heat, some not. Where we are we won’t have to add any heat – we’re so much warmer down here. We can grow year round – but we don’t want to. We only sold through December. We work so hard we want a little time off. I start in the greenhouse February first anyway, grafting tomatoes to disease-resistant rootstock. You have to take time off or you burn out. We’re growing almost ¾ of an acre of onions for the Wintertime Farmers Market, an acre of potatoes, a lot of carrots and parsnips. We’ve increased the size of those storage crop plantings."

"Let us live in harmony with the earth and the creatures, all given to us by God, our Creator."

Gail Giustozzi, Realtor
105 Old Long Ridge Road, Stamford, CT 06903
Cell/VM: (203) 561-5764 Fax: (203) 595-9615
Email: gailg@optonline.net Website: iworkforyou.us

“I work for you.”
The Organic Harvest Festival celebrates the organic community with live music, great conversation, exhibitor tabletops, organic food and drink, and The Natural Foods Merchandiser Spirit of Organic Award.

This award, presented by New Hope Natural Media since 2001, recognizes “heroes” of the organic community. Winners demonstrate commitment, innovation, entrepreneurship, passion for organic, and a determination to change the way we farm, eat, and live.

A percentage of the proceeds from this event will benefit

[Organic Farming Research Foundation logo]

Co-located with

Register Today!
expoeast.com
1.866.458.4935 or 1.303.390.1776
tradeshows@newhope.com
The Michigan State University Student Organic Farm: Year-Round Food and Learning

by John Biernbaum, Professor of Horticulture
www.msuorganicfarm.org

The story of the Michigan State University Student Organic Farm (MSU-SOF) is a lesson in how passionate people with a fresh perspective and vision can lead to exciting outcomes. In May 2008 we completed our fifth year of a 48 week Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Program that provides an opportunity for students, staff, faculty, and community members to experience organic farming, local food systems and transformative learning. We are also in the second year of a unique year long organic farming certificate program. Following is a summary of some of the key aspects of the SOF in relation to crop production and season extension that support the 48 week CSA program and learning farm.

Background

During the spring of 1999, members of the Michigan Sustainable Agriculture Network student organization met to share ideas about how to start a farm on campus where students could gain practical experience about organic farming. At the same time, a group of legislators and organic farmers were working as the Michigan Organic Advisory Committee to develop recommendations for how to advance organic agriculture in Michigan. Both groups were interested in seeing MSU develop research, outreach and teaching programs for organic agriculture. I was one of several MSU faculty members learning about organic agriculture, sustainability and the importance of local food systems.

The core curriculum of the SOF was built around four keys of success or the keys to reduce risk.

- Build Soil Organic Matter. SOM can increase water absorption, water retention, plant pathogenic organisms and reduce soil erosion.
- Increase Crop Diversity: A wide diversity of crops reduces risk of total crop or market failure and increases the opportunity to improve soil health.
- Use Season Extension: A longer production and marketing window and methods of protected cultivation can increase productivity and total sales.
- Emphasize Direct Marketing: CSA, farm stand, restaurant and institutional sales can cultivate customer loyalty and bring more income to the farm.

Our CSA marketing program is built around three 16 week sessions that align with the academic semesters. The spring session is January 15 to the end of April; the summer session from May through August; and the fall session from September through December 15. We offer only one share size intended for a family of four but many memberships split a share. Cost per session is $480 or $30 per week, partially based on an informal survey of Michigan CSA membership costs. Each week, the weight of items from 4 shares are recorded to allow estimates of share values based on market prices and comparison of share weights from season to season and year to year. Members bring their own containers and select produce from large containers of each item based on a posted white board list of share contents. The first season we had 25 memberships with the intent to grow to 50 and then 75. We decided to stop at 50 to 60 so we could focus more on the teaching. The 2007 season was the first for adding an additional 25 summer shares for 20 weeks and operating a weekly farm stand on campus from June through October. In 2007 the total of produce sales was just under $100,000 from roughly five acres of field production and 13,000 sq ft of passive solar greenhouse (PSGCH) (at ~60% bed space).

MSU is one of the top ten largest single campus universities in the US with over 45,000 students (more than 15,000 living on campus). The agriculture research and teaching farms are still contiguous with the campus and together cover over 5 square miles. The 160 acre Horticulture Teaching and Research Center (HTRC) is located at the south end of campus and is located on land added to the campus in 1965. The 10 acre SOF parcel was previously planted in research fruit trees for over 40 years.

East Lansing is in climate zone 5 with a typical winter low of -10F and occasional low of -20F. Precipitation is approximately 30” per year (average 2.5” per month). We can expect from 10 to 30 days above 90F each summer. Fifty percent frost date is May 15 and October 1 (120+ day growing season) but frost up to the end of May is common.

The Farming Program

The following highlights are intended to provide a description of some of the key farming aspects of the SOF together with our four season farming practices. More details are available at our web site under the “resources” tab including Michelle Ferrarese’s thesis about the start up of the SOF.

Soil Management. The 10 acres of crop land we have at the HTRC was in fruit trees from ~1965 when the farm became part of the University. Technically, the loam A horizon is 6 to 12 inches deep with a predominately clay subsoil. The first
fields planted had a year of soybeans and then sorghum x sudan cover crop. Prior to starting the transition to organic, composted dairy and horse manure and bedding were applied at 40 to 50 ton per acre with a winter rye cover crop. This heavy initial application provided adequate fertility and growth of both crops and weeds for several years while we learned more about the intricacies of managing fertility organically with minimal off-farm resources. Primary nutrient inputs that last three years have been from cover crops and mulches.

Almost all field plots are drip irrigated. The investment in materials and labor for placing and removing drip tape from the field are significant and one of the key steps in ensuring appropriate and timely yields for the CSA.

*Ground Cover Management.* Given the 40 years of orchard production with mowing, the seed bank is well-funded. The initial high fertility following the application of composted manure also supported a growing economy for the seed bank. We try to use the principle of allowing the weeds to "express themselves" followed by early cultivation. Our aggressive planting and production schedule with limited labor are not always conducive to timely cultivation. Each year as the production systems develop into more of a routine, cultivation and ground cover management to minimize competition has improved. Mulching with either round bales between warm season field crops or aged bedding or straw over the top of potatoes have been effective at reducing weeds, conserving moisture and building soil organic matter. Over the last few years there has been a movement towards frost seeding clover into winter rye and then tilling the 4' beds and mowing the 2’ paths.

*Crop Planning Scheduling.* Based on published rotation recommendations, quantities desired/space required and planting times, we have grouped crops into six categories / fields of equal size (0.6 acre).

A. Summer fruiting crops (1) tomato, pepper, eggplant; (2) cucumber, summer squash
B. Early spring crops (1) garlic, onion; (2) brassica, root
C. Corn (sweet, pop, flint) under-sown with clover
D. Potato (1); and leeks, celery and green beans (2)
E. Winter squash (1) and melons (2)
F. Fall brassica (1) and root crops (2)
G. Summer cover crop / fallow

The order of rotation is as listed. For many of the fields, specific crops are assigned to a particular half of the field (1 or 2) so the rotation cycle is 14 years. Our seven fields are either 150'x 175' or 80 'x 300' (0.6 acre) with 4' beds and 2' walkways. We are using approximately 4.2 acres of field production and the CSA is for approximately 240 people (60 shares x 4/share) year round and 100 (25 shares x 4/share) summer. If we round to 300 people, and account for only using 66% of the field for actual growing (4’ bed, 2’ walkway), we are using approximately 400 sq ft per person. We also need to take into account our passive solar greenhouse production area of 10,000 square feet for the CSA. The space is approximately 60% growing area so for 300 people there is 20 sq ft per person. Our beds in the houses are 2.5’ x 8’ or 20 sq ft so we make the point that we use approximately one bed per person for fresh winter greens, roots and herbs.

*Crop Health Management.* The primary herbivorous insects that require management are striped cucumber beetle, Colorado potato beetle, flea beetle, cabbage looper, corn ear worm and Japanese beetle. Striped cucumber beetle are managed by timing of planting, using large transplants, row cover and occasionally vacuuming. Colorado potato beetle, flea beetle, cabbage looper, corn ear worm and Japanese beetle. Striped cucumber beetle are managed by timing of planting, using large transplants, row cover and occasionally vacuuming.

---

**WHEEL HOES**

For Ecological Farming

Wipe your weeds out in a jiffy without using sprays!

REduced Prices!

We would like to get Valley Oak Wheel Hoes into the hands of more farmers and gardeners. There is a new, improved model that costs 850 less, and we are offering wholesale prices for bulk purchases. Shipping is still only $5 per order.

View our NEW VIDEO of the wheel hoe at: www.valleyoaktool.com

"I LOVE the wheel hoe. It is the greatest tool. It zips down the long rows like magic and is so easy to use. You have a great product." — Annie Rockwell, Parlow Mill Farm, Marion, MA

Designed to ease back strain, the wheel hoe saves labor and time and is an environmentally sound option as no herbicides or fossil fuels are needed.

Optional accessories include:
- Blades in widths ranging from 5—18 inches
- Furrower
- Three tine cultivator
- Four tine cultivator

For sales info contact us at: Valley Oak Tool Company, P.O. Box 577, Bolinas, CA 94924

Tel: 415-497-2446, from 8:00 a.m.—6:00 p.m. Pacific Time

One Year Money Back Guarantee
beetle are managed primarily by manual removal of larva. Flea beetles have been managed by row cover, occasionally vacuuming, and minimizing field residue that favors overwintering. Cabbage looper is only minimally managed by perhaps one Bt application per crop if needed. We do not have a management plan for Japanese beetles.

Crop diversity is the foundation of our soil and plant health program. With more than 60 fruit and vegetable crops in the standard rotation, we can afford to have reduced yield in limited crops. The students and farm managers have favored more of a see what happens approach to crop protection as opposed to preemptive treatment strategies. One of our new learning and experimental tools is a 0.6 acre Edible Forest Garden (EFG) planted as a combination of annual and perennial crop and insect pollen and nectar species to attract a diversity of insects. The EFG was designed as part of a graduate student project and incorporates many of the permaculture principles including guilds, above and below ground three dimensional canopy management (spatial) and development of annual and perennial crops (temporal) for immediate and long term yields. Jay Tomczak’s graduate thesis about the EFG is available at our web site under the “resources” tab.

Crop loss to soil-borne root pathogens has not been an issue in the fields or PSGHs. Recent seedling cucurbit transplant losses have been related to compost and root media quality. Powdery mildew is an issue in the PSGHs and fields for summer and winter squash crops but to this point has only been managed with good water management and sanitation methods.

Transplant Production. All transplants are produced on site in a heated greenhouse. We use a germination chamber to elevate temperature and moisture during the first stage of seed germination prior to emergence and to minimize seed scavenging by mice. We use plastic plug trays (50, 100 and 128 cells) except for onions and leeks, which are sown in rows in open flats. We have experimented with soil blocks but have not invested the time to develop the experience to do them efficiently and with reproducible quality. The increased volume of compost and root medium, and availability of wooden flats, are also issues. The root medium is typically 50% on-farm compost, 25% sphagnum peat and 25% vermiculite. We have also used coconut coir, which wets easier than peat when no wetting agent is used. The only amendment we have consistently used is Bradfield alfalfa based fertilizer at 20 to 40 lbs per cubic yard depending on the fertility level of the compost. Our compost feedstocks have varied over the years but a preferred recipe for transplant media is equal parts by volume (bales) of 1) straw, 2) compressed soft wood shavings, 3) grass (first cutting hay), 4) alfalfa (second cutting hay), 5) aged leaves/leaf fold, 6) sphagnum peat and 7) field soil. We do not add lime to our media due to the high calcium, magnesium and carbonate alkalinity in our irrigation water from limestone aquifers which is much different that the ground water from granite aquifers in the Northeast US. Fertility adjustments during production have been with fish emulsion or Omega 666 as liquids or in the past two years by top dressing flats with screened compost or worm castings (~0.5 to 1 cup per flat). Top dressing with another greenhouse shot from November 13 with a crop of head lettuce ready for Thanksgiving harvest. The lettuce area will be prepared and ready to plant in late January.
Compost during production is a valuable technique that is not part of current transplant production recommendations but appears to be very valuable for the small scale organic grower that uses on-farm resources. Detailed recommendations for transplants and compost production are available at our website under the “resources” tab.

Certification. We have been certified organic since 2004, first by Organic Growers of Michigan (OGM) and for the last two years by Ohio Ecological Food and Farming Association (OEFFA). Our farm plan records, maps, fertility history, crop rotation, yield and other records are maintained as electronic files that we use when teaching our course in Organic Certification and Farm Plans. We try to involve the students in updating the annual records in the annual farm inspection.

Storage Crops. In the first few years of production we grew items like potatoes, carrots, leeks and celeriac in the PSGHs for winter harvest. Over time we shifted to a greater emphasis on salad and leafy greens in the PSGH and increased field production of carrots, leeks and celeriac as well as maintaining field production of garlic, potato, cabbage and winter squash. We have the use of two coolers that are part of the HTRC for storage. One is maintained at 40°F and high humidity and used for potatoes, onions, cabbage, carrots (boxed in shavings or coco-cot) and recently harvested crops. Onions would not be kept here by choice if you had a colder, lower humidity cooler, but it has worked so far for us. The other cooler is maintained around 50°F and low humidity for winter squash and garlic during the winter or around 60°F and higher humidity for holding chilling sensitive summer fruits. Winter squash is typically cured in a greenhouse for 10 to 14 days prior to storage in the cooler. One of our investment priorities is to construct a root cellar for demonstration of crop storage techniques.

Our summer planted, fall harvested brassica and root crops are an important part of the season extension that does not require storage. Fall brassica transplants are set out mid July and harvested starting in late September and into late November. Brussels sprouts are an SOF tradition and in good years we have enough to hold some in the cooler until early January. The storage cabbage and carrots also come from this field. We have been harvesting leeks from the field all winter and into the spring but with the losses due to up and down temperatures last year it sounds like this fall the leeks will not be left in the field. The parsnips will over winter in the field and be ready for spring distributions.

“Family farmers are the heart of this great country.

And at their heart is a deep love and respect for the land and the animals they raise. The Animal Welfare Approved seal is a badge of honor for family farmers, since their attention to the health and well-being of their animals results in humane practices that are a model for all.”

—Willie Nelson
The Natural Farmer
Fall, 2008

18

The first principle is the protection of the crop by a greenhouse and internal layers of polyethylene or fabric. The protection from wind, rain and snow, and therefore excess moisture limits damage to the foliage. The protective layers, when covered by moisture as a result of condensation and or ice under freezing conditions, act like a cloud and trap long wave radiant energy in the greenhouse and prevent freezing of the soil and allow maintenance of temperatures in the 15F range even when temperatures outside have dropped to -20F. The second principle is the use of cold tolerant crops that can handle repeated freezing and thawing. Examples include spinach, chard, kale and many leafy greens as well as root crops like carrots and beets. A third important principle is the use of crops that allow for multiple harvests either by removing outer, larger leaves at regular intervals or by cutting the entire plant back to within an inch or so above the soil so the growing point still remains. These leafy crops are able to grow during the winter conditions of lower light and temperature. The fourth is that the crops must be planted and grown early enough in the fall season so that the majority of development has occurred before light and temperature conditions are too low for a reasonable rate of growth. There is enough light for growth in November and December, but the light also determines the temperature in the PSGH and the temperature drops to such a point that growth is very slow.

Structures

We have used single layer and double layer inflated polyethylene covered structures with a preference for double layer inflated to help prevent wind effects on the poly and to favor snow removal and slightly warmer temperatures. All our structures have roll up sides and end wall peak vents for passive ventilation. Equipment and energy costs are minimal.

We started with two 20’ x 96’ foot houses primarily due to published recommendations that wider houses would be too warm in the summer, even with roll up sides. The first houses were covered with a single layer of polyethylene. Our next two houses added another 20’ wide house and a house 30’ wide x 96’ long. Both houses were covered with a double layer of air inflated polyethylene. The 30’ wide house was not any warmer in the summer but covered more ground in the winter with less cold edge or perimeter effect. We have been recommending 30’ houses for the last few years. Our first 30’ wide house was a Ledgewood which was easy to build and a great greenhouse. We later learned of the advantages of the higher side walls so our next 30’ wide house, a Rimol Nor Easter, was built with 6’ ground posts so we could put walkways along the cold edge as opposed to down the warm middle. The added height improves the work environment and air flow.

Over the last five years we have helped farmers purchase and construct more than eighteen 30’ x 96’, houses. This summer we also helped build two 20’ x 48’ houses for projects that needed a smaller house. The smaller houses certainly went up much faster and with what seemed like less work. With the rising price of steel, it may be more common for smaller operations to start with a smaller house. While we started smaller and worked up, when it came to selecting a PSGH for farmers selected to be part of a research study of the economics of PSGH production, we started them with a 30’ x 96’ house. For many of the farmers, the first learning year was not that economically productive. They are growing...
into the structure and space but life would have been more difficult if they were paying off a loan. The lesson is to start with a reasonable size that you can afford and use efficiently and then add space.

** Beds and Covers

All our houses run east and west and, in four of five houses, the beds run north and south. We started with 17" beds but have grown to 20" beds for research and data collection purposes. The beds use between 55 and 60% of the floor area, which is low. With the last 30" wide house, the beds are 25" long across the house. We shifted from 30" beds to 40" beds with 8" walkways which allows one bed to be centered under each truss and creates up to 70% bed space. This is the first time we have run 40" beds. We have been able to efficiently water with drip irrigation. The beds in the center of the house also allow a single large winter covered tent area.

Our interior covers started as row cover approximately 12" to 15" off the ground. All our interior covers are now used roof polyethylene. We don’t have any hard data to support that the crops are better under polyethylene. With the management system we have, the polyethylene holds up longer than frost fabric and is more forgiving if someone forgets to recover crops until after the temperature has dropped below freezing. We have used a variety of wire and plastic pipe supports but over time have shifted to exclusively internal supports using a combination of 1/2 and 3/8 inch conduit to provide a tent approximately 40" tall that allows production of leafy crops such as kale, chard and collards. This system is described and illustrated in the wonderful High Tunnels publication available at (www.uvm.edu/sustainableagriculture).

The right crops at the right time

In our initial research we grew 30 different baby leaf salad greens (BLSG- aka spring mix) and then reduced that to 20 species. Of these 20 species, five are considered “fast” crops are red Russian kale, mizuna, tatsoi, (Red Russian, Winterbor, Redbor, Tuscano), chard (Bright Lites) and collards are sown in plug flats in mid July and put in beds between August 15 and 20. We wait until the soil cools off to direct sow spinach for full size leaf harvesting, usually the later part of September. These leafy greens are harvested all winter long removing the lower leaves for bunching or bagging for spinach.

Multiple harvest crops include parsley, which is carried over as large plants from the spring, and cilantro direct sown late, with the spinach.

Other key fall crops include head lettuce (Four Seasons, Winterbor, Redbor, Tuscano), chard (Bright Lites) and collards are sown in plug flats in mid July and put in beds between August 15 and 20. We wait until the soil cools off to direct sow spinach for full size leaf harvesting, usually the later part of September. These leafy greens are harvested all winter long removing the lower leaves for bunching or bagging for spinach.

The SOF is first and foremost a “teaching/learning” farm. A basic premise leading to the start of the SOF was that university students are not learning about farming because much of crop agriculture happens in the summer when students are away from campus. In our landscape and floriculture teaching programs students are involved in learning and practicing skills during the academic year. We proposed at the start that the PSGH was the perfect tool to get more students involved in farming.

Students were able to design their own greenhouse and plant, maintain and harvest crops right through to the middle of December when they went home for break. When they returned in January they were right back on the farm, planting, nurturing and harvesting until they left in May, unless they were one of the summer interns that farmed full time in the summer. Independent of what the PSGH can do for a round yard with 100 beds full of vegetables, the PSGH is a valuable tool for educators at all levels.

With Laurie Thorp who worked on school gardening and NCSARE funding we built a 30’ x 48’ PSGH at an elementary school for students from downtown Lansing. With a graduate student to guide the planting and work with teachers, the project was a great success. Emily Reardon’s thesis is available at our website under the “resources” tab. The idea of a garden at every school is not just for mild California conditions. With a PSGH, students at every school can be involved in growing fresh local vegetables throughout the academic year. In the past year we have been working with community gardening groups and recently a Karean club to build PSGH’s to help with gardening education, the availability of local food and cultivating the next generation of farmers. Where heated greenhouses are often too expensive and require more skill to manage, the PSGH can be a great place to get started.

The MSU-SOF is a collection of ideas from many farms. Together we have nurtured a teaching farm that practices the principles of year-round organic local food. I hope you get a chance to visit us through our web site or at the farm. The vision that has been an inspiration for me over the last decade still describes the story and picture I enjoy helping cultivate.

*Friends and families using facts and feelings to faithfully, physically and fearlessly farm for food, feed, fiber, flowers, fuel, fertility, fun, freedom and the future.*

** Conway School of Landscape Design**

Master of Arts in Landscape Design

Founded in 1972, the Conway School of Landscape Design teaches ecologically and socially sustainable design of the land through real projects with real clients. Located on a 34.5-acre wooded campus, the 10-month program for 19 students examines inter-relationships between natural and cultural systems across scales; gives training in integrated communications skills; offers a humanities perspective; and emphasizes collaboration, not competition, with individual educational goals and a very favorable teacher to student ratio.
The Pre-Thanksgiving Farmers Market

by Karen DiFranza

The story of local agriculture is always entwined with stories of community. Food is an essential ingredient in health, pleasure and social cohesion, and, therefore, the growing and marketing of food is at the center of any culture. That is, it was until modern transportation enabled agriculture to move out of town. Trains, planes, trucks and cars severed the connection that once bound farms to communities and eliminated the link of the local market. Today we have begun to realize the hole this leaves in society, and many of us are seeking ways to re-instate local agriculture and its local markets.

On the Sunday before Thanksgiving in 2007, the Hubbardston Historical Society (HHS) approved a plan to hold an indoor farmers’ market at the historic Williamsville Chapel built in 1888. The HHS owns the chapel and has been restoring the building since 2001. Most members of the HHS wish to restore the chapel to its original use, as well. Although the chapel once offered religious services, many of us are seeking ways to use it for worship and community center.

At their annual meeting in October 2007, the Hubbardston Historical Society (HHS) approved a plan to hold an indoor farmers’ market at the historic Williamsville Chapel built in 1888. The HHS owns the chapel and has been restoring the building since 2001. Most members of the HHS wish to restore the chapel to its original use, as well. Although the chapel once offered religious services, many of us are seeking ways to use it for worship and community center.

Pre-Thanksgiving Farmers’ Market. It was a magical experience for everyone.

Customers were in a buying mood and some vendors sold out the first hour.

In 1873, as the story goes, a woman from West Townsend was riding her horse to the center of Hubbardston about 4 miles away to attend church on a Sunday morning. The woman was thrown from her horse and killed. This event was disturbing to residents of the community, whose Ladies Union Social Circle came together to organize a fund: the village would have its own chapel to serve as a place of worship and community center.

By today’s standards, the next chapter in the legend is even stranger than the opener. The women’s group raised $4500 for 15 years, until they had enough — about $2000 — to pay cash for the new building. And so, in 1888, the residents of Williamsville completed their project.
The style of this charming structure is rural Victorian: a toned-down complement to its more ornate and gee-gawed town and city cousins. It has a turret and, as many homes of that period, several motifs of shingles on its wood frame. Each tall, narrow window has two columns with 4 panes, the top two of which are stained glass in shades of mauve, yellow/gold and blue. In the fall, the yellow/golds match the hues of foliage outside the chapel windows so well, they melt your heart. The sanctuary or main hall of the chapel has no pews or fixed seating, allowing for a variety of uses. Just a small stage stands at one end of the hall devoid of religious symbols or implements. A sermonizing minister or a foot-stomping fiddler could feel equally at home presenting their talents from this platform. As your eyes take in the room’s simplicity, a small serving window on one end speaks of hot meals passed through it from a tiny kitchen whose amenities included a wood cookstove and dry sink. You realize that the hall was a place of gatherings and festivity marked by the sharing of homestyle repasts. In 1880 there were about 200 farms in Hubbardston, with 1000 cows, heifers and steers and hundreds of sheep and swine. The chapel kitchen cooks did not need to look far for locally grown food.

The foyer of the building opens not only onto the main hall and the tiny kitchen; a door on one side opens onto a cloakroom with 50 hooks for outerwear, reflecting the intimate scale of gatherings in this small community. Another door opens onto a front room with windows on three sides and its own wood stove. This room has floor-to-ceiling folding doors which allow it to become part of the main hall as needed. For small winter gatherings, the doors could be closed and the woodstove fired up to heat only the social circle that met there for spiritual or recreational purposes. No thermostats to crank up a billow of heat. Just the stove that gave you what you needed, where you needed it. Someone in the village had to cut and split and haul the wood, and they used it as economically as possible.

When you visit the chapel today, all is as it was. Villagers eventually added on a full-size kitchen in 1920 to accommodate what must have been a growing number of members and events. Because rural areas were slow to modernize, this updated version is much more a snapshot of the 19th century than the 20th, with an ornate cookstove, cabinets of wainscoting and a dry sink. Still no water on the premises. And so it remains. Down a flight of stairs from the “new” kitchen is a partial basement with a two-seater outhouse.

As we take steps to revitalize the ancient model of local agriculture and community, this building that was once a part of that model’s infrastructure beckons us and offers a link to some valuable pieces of history. On that October night last fall, members of the Hubbardston Historical Society recognized the link and took a chance on organizing a pre-Thanksgiving market at the chapel with only 4 weeks to prepare. There would be outreach to area farmers and food artisans, publicity to bring in the public and preparations within the chapel to ready it for the event. The chimneys seemed to be in good condition, but no one had lit a fire in them in a long time. Having heat from a woodstove on a late November day and the smells of mulled cider...
baking on it seemed like necessary elements of the vision.

In the 21st century version of advertising the market, email played an important role. By contacting the market masters of local farmers markets, email went out to all their vendors soliciting their participation. No one wanted local farmers to lose money if consumers didn’t show, so the registration fee was set at $10/vendor. The Historical Society offered 18 spots for vendors, and these filled within a week. After three spots went to non-food vendors, the HHS determined to save other openings for locally-grown/prepared foods only.

With registrations in hand, advertising went out to newspapers and to personal email addresses of local folk. The following email reached 150 addresses, and many of those passed it along:

Dear Friends:

Here’s some information on a wonderful event coming up on Sunday, November 18 at the Hubbardston Historical Society’s Williamsville Chapel. Please join us for this festive occasion and plan to do some of your Thanksgiving dinner shopping from noon to 3PM that day. This is the only venue for local foods from organic turnips to home-made organic apple-onion tarts in a parsnip-sweetened crust!

Please email this message on to local friends who might like to attend. See you there!

*The Hubbardston Historical Society is hosting an indoor pre-Thanksgiving Farmers’ Market on Sunday, November 18, 2007 from noon to 3PM at the historic Williamsville Chapel in Hubbardston. The chapel, a community gathering place built in 1888, will be decorated for the season and kept cozy with an inviting fire and hot mulled cider on the woodstove. Vendors will be selling quality homemade and homemade foods for Thanksgiving dinner, including organically grown root vegetables and greens, herbs, grass-fed turkeys, lamb, veal and beef, local cheeses, homemade pies, candied and other baked goods. Growers will also offer gourds, wreaths and seasonal decorative items. Live music by local musicians will infuse the setting with holiday cheer.

This is a unique opportunity to buy locally grown foods for your Thanksgiving table and a wonderful way to support local agriculture. We hope you will join us for this special event. The Williamsville Chapel is located at 4 Burnshirt Road just as you turn off Williamsville Road in Hubbardston heading north toward Templeton.

HHS members festooned the chapel with garlands of bittersweet and lined window sills with dainty, colorful gourds. The stage sported an arrangement of pumpkins and squash, and, as promised, the air was warmed with wood heat and spiced with fragrant mulled cider. By noon, vendors were in place with mouth-watering displays of baked goods, crisp organic apples, root-cellar vegetables, meats and local dairy treats. AND, the normally quiet road outside was lined with cars.

The crush of buyers was shocking at first, but the atmosphere was un hurried and friendly. Both vendors and consumers were patient with the crowd, and the smiling faces of acquaintances stopping to chat were indicators of the day’s good cheer. Folk songs by a choral group from the elementary school and other local musicians enhanced the gay festivity. The day even turned out to be sunny enough for some vendors to set up on the lawn, with the afternoon sun bouncing off the chapel behind them.

In retrospect, there were two inseparable draws to this market. One was that people seemed to be hungry (in both a literal and figurative sense) for the goodness of locally grown/prepared foods for their holiday feast. They were looking for quality and for connection to the producers of these foods, the kind of quality and connection you don’t find in a supermarket. And, no doubt, some were interested in the sustainability of food that has not traveled thousands of miles and in the sensible model of keeping your money within the community when you buy.
Running a Winter CSA At Blue Heron Farm

by Jack Kittredge

The Finger Lakes region of New York is about as beautiful as you can get for farm country. Gently rolling land, dotted with family-size farms and orchards, gradually drops to the gleaming lakes. Drawn by their deep, clean water, summer tourists flock to the region.

The Finger Lakes region was always a big fruit-growing region – peaches and cherries and some apples. The lakes moderate the climate so you don’t get as bad frosts in the spring, which kill the flowers before pollination. You also get two or three weeks longer for ripening in the fall. Also, in some areas the land is steep and rocky and the soil is terrible for anything else.

Welch’s Grape Juice came in during the sixties and convinced a lot of tree fruit growers to take their orchards out and put in juice grapes. So a lot of growers did that, thinking there would be this processing plant and great market. But Welch’s never built their plant. By then, however, local growers had gotten their feet wet in the grape growing business.

When New York passed a law making it easier for small grape growers to set up “estate vineyards” to bottle and process and sell their own wine, the idea took off here. The soils, climate and experience for vineyards all existed already, and the tourists provided a ready market. As a result, the Finger Lakes area has experienced a boom in local vineyards and many lake-side farms have been converted to small wineries.

Blue Heron Farm, however, located between the two biggest lakes, Seneca and Cayuga, is still a mixed vegetable operation – the same as it was when owners Robin Ostfeld and Lou Johns founded it 22 years ago.

“We moved here from Western Washington, near Seattle,” says Robin, “Lou’s from there and we were farming there, but I’m an East Coaster and my family convinced us to move closer. Also the land prices here were a fraction of the prices out there. That was a big convincing reason. We really liked...
the Ithaca region and the markets there, only 20 miles away. Land prices are still very reasonable here compared to the rest of the country. Although the vineyards have driven up the prices. There must be forty or fifty wineries within 20 miles of us!”

The couple bought 154 acres in Lodi with three fields and a lot of woods, and proceeded to put in all the vegetables from A to Z, plus some flowers and strawberries.

“The soils here are not very pretty for vegetable ground,” says Lou. “They’re shallow, clayey, full of rocks. But they’re getting better. We produce on 10 to 12 acres, plus we keep another 3 to 5 fallow, out of production in any one year. We can do tractor planting and tillage all right. But most of the harvesting is by hand.”

They joined the Ithaca Farmers Market and the Finger Lakes Growers Coop, and their first year went all the way to New York City, to the Greenmarket, to sell their produce.

“We stopped that,” says Lou. “And we left the Finger Lakes Growers after ten years. We sold to Wegman’s for a while, but didn’t like dealing with conventional grocery stores. There’s a huge turnover in the staff, there’s a huge bureaucracy. Every item of yours has to be in their system. Recently some chains are getting the local food idea and managers are being told to look for local produce and make it happen. But for us they were impossible to deal with in the past. We prefer to sell as locally as we can.”

“In the winter,” she continues, “we primarily market through our winter CSA, but we still supply the food coops and keep selling to the restaurants that are open. Our restaurants are medium to high priced places and they like to work with root crops during the winter because of the locavore movement and the benefits of supporting local farms.

Blue Heron Farm is certified organic and has 5 full time and about 4 part time employees, besides the owners. That’s from June through November. In the winter it is just Robin and Lou. The hired labor supply is irregular and the farm advertises in a number of venues. Some of the workers are family, some friends, some local people.

Lou and Robin have one child -- a daughter who is 23. She wants to be a doctor and is at Bennington College in Vermont taking a lot of science courses in a program called ‘post baccalaureate pre med’ and seems to be enjoying it.

One of the most interesting aspects of Blue Heron Farm is their highly successful 110 member winter CSA. It involves 6 pick-ups from January through March (the months the Ithaca Farmers Market is not open) and consists primarily of root crops and winter squash, but also some stored greens as well as fresh kale and spinach. Perhaps the couple describe it best on their website www.blueheronorganic.com:

“The long cold winters in our region make vegetable farming economically challenging. To address this problem, we decided many years ago to grow crops suitable for storage and to develop facilities to keep them as fresh as possible all winter long. In 2006, we built a passive solar greenhouse and grew a successful crop of winter kale. We’re confident that we can supply each share at least 2 installments of fresh greens during the winter.

Every 2 weeks in January, February & March you will pick up a box of mixed vegetables. In the Ithaca area we will deliver every other Saturday and Tuesday afternoon to the Greenstar Coop parking lot. A pickup in Watkins Glen is also available, call for details. The location and dates will be confirmed in a December mailing.

We want to make it as easy as possible for you to get your produce. You can choose to pick up either on Saturdays or Tuesdays. If, on occasion, you can’t pick up on your regular day, we will hold your produce until the next delivery. If you don’t pick up the second time, the food will be donated.

You’ll always find at least 6 different items. Potatoes and carrots will be included every time. Beets, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, celeriac, garlic, leeks, ...
onions, parsnips, radishes, rutabagas, winter squash, shallots, and turnips will make an appearance once or twice, and maybe more. Kale, spinach, or another delicious leafy green will be available at least twice, and possibly more, depending on the weather. Recipes are included every time.

We have a limited number of shares to sell, so sign up early to avoid disappointment.

Cost for a full share, a total of 6 boxes, is $150.00 (2008). A full share will contain 15-16 lbs. of produce (90-96 lbs. total).

Half shares are $80.00 (2008). Half shares will have 7-8 lbs. each time (42-48 lbs. total).

Since initially getting involved with the Finger Lakes Marketing Coop, Lou and Robin were growing winter storage crops. But so was everyone else, so prices were low and the markets saturated. They figured there had to be a better way.

“We spend all this time developing markets,” sighs Lou, “and then at the end of the year we didn’t want to shut it all down. And we didn’t want to go without winter income. It’s a major part of our planning. In the fall every other grower has produce and the market is flooded. But come late November the demand goes up and by January you can sell an awful lot.”

“So in 1997 we started a winter CSA,” adds Robin. “At that point I’d never heard of a winter CSA. But it was surprising how many people were interested.

Last year the CSA was about two-thirds of our winter income, and the rest was wholesale sales. We sell more in January than we do in October.”

“One of the nice things about winter selling,” she continues, “is keeping in touch with our customers. The whole idea behind it was that one fall the farmers market was closing and all our customers were asking us how they could get our produce during the winter. They really looked forward to getting our produce and were going to miss it and their connection to the farm. Winter is such a time of shutting in and losing your connections. That has been one of the nice things about a winter CSA. It is nice to have structure for our days in the winter, too. We average 2 to 3 days a week of 5 hours each during the winter. It was stressful to not have any money coming in all winter, so it helps to have an income.

“The Internet is a really big help for people not knowing what to do with something. I don’t know how many millions of recipes are up there! You can search for anything! We don’t do a newsletter, but do enclose a list of what is in the order so people can check it and know what something is they don’t recognize. We’re also going to do a blog on our website.”

Important to the CSA’s success is the farm’s cooperation with Greenstar in Ithaca.

“They’re pretty cooperative with us,” says Lou. “They let us use their entryway for distribution. Of course it brings customers to the coop and they’ll shop for other stuff once they are there. They also save half-bushel waxed boxes for us, which we use for packing people’s shares. The boxes are reusable many times, but they’re not recyclable so most of them get thrown out. Think of the millions of single-use waxed boxes that go into landfills in this country. There’s no system for them to get back to California.”

Blue Heron has also formed a linkage with Liz Henderson at Peacework Organic Farm, about 50 miles away. Peacework members make a bulk purchase of 50 Blue Heron winter shares. They do the entire breakdown, the bookkeeping, and send a check for the 50 shares in a lump sum. Robin and Lou ship the food to them every two weeks through a distributor 10 miles away who is going to the Rochester food coop. Peacework and Ithaca get deliveries on alternate weeks.

Comparing the labor involved in servicing Peacework and Ithaca members, Robin and Lou are very conscious of the work involved in breaking down the produce into individual orders and are trying to get the Ithaca shareholders to do that.

“We’ve been boxing things into individual CSA orders here at the farm and driving them down to Ithaca,” says Robin. “But it takes a good bit of time. There are 30 boxes for the shares, and then 30 bags for the half shares. Then you have to weigh out your carrots and potatoes. We’d like to start having shareholders break down their own shares there. We need to find a good place to do it. It would be too messy and obtrusive at the coop. We need to find a heated garage, or we’ve thought about doing it in a heated garage.”

Blue Heron has also formed a linkage with Liz Henderson at Peacework Organic Farm, about 50 miles away. Peacework members make a bulk purchase of 50 Blue Heron winter shares. They do the entire breakdown, the bookkeeping, and send a check for the 50 shares in a lump sum. Robin and Lou ship the food to them every two weeks through a distributor 10 miles away who is going to the Rochester food coop. Peacework and Ithaca get deliveries on alternate weeks.

Comparing the labor involved in servicing Peacework and Ithaca members, Robin and Lou are very conscious of the work involved in breaking down the produce into individual orders and are trying to get the Ithaca shareholders to do that.

“We’ve been boxing things into individual CSA orders here at the farm and driving them down to Ithaca,” says Robin. “But it takes a good bit of time. There are 30 boxes for the shares, and then 30 bags for the half shares. Then you have to weigh out your carrots and potatoes. We’d like to start having shareholders break down their own shares there. We need to find a good place to do it. It would be too messy and obtrusive at the coop. We need to find a heated garage, or we’ve thought about doing it in a heated garage.”
Robin shows the empty horse barn she and Lou converted to a walk-in cooler to store root crops and cabbage for winter markets.

The key to making the winter CSA work is planting, harvesting, and storing the right crops at the right time.

“We store everything we can,” says Robin, “all the different root vegetables: Brussels sprouts, leeks, cabbage, onions, garlic, winter squash. We’re able to keep those in pretty good shape usually through the end of April. Some things we move faster than others, and some of the harder root vegetables we continue to sell at the farmers market in April and into May. Then we have a passive solar greenhouse where we have kale that keeps growing through the winter, and spinach that we plant so we can have early spinach in March. Kale and spinach are the only things we actually grow in the winter. And that is of limited quantity and pretty much just for our CSA.

“The greenhouses are double skinned,” she continues. “We start planting kale in August in the field, dig it up in November and replant it in the greenhouses. The plants continue to grow during the winter, and then make a nice crop of florets out of the leaf nodes. We call it Kale raab. We give it to the CSA in March and have it at the farmers market in April. We get a lot of pickings.”

A winter CSA puts a big demand on your planting schedules for midsummer and late summer. More so than if you are just growing for the fresh market. A lot of ground is tied up in carrots and beets and turnips that aren’t going to fresh market sales. And there is a lot of greenhouse seed starting that you just wouldn’t otherwise be doing.

“It starts with the ‘parsnips that you plant in April,’” recites Lou. “Then there are the onions, celeriac – those are all started early. In July we plant beets and carrots and rutabagas. After these cucumbers come out of this house we’ll put kale in there. You are forever planning your plantings.”

Lou and Robin put a lot of energy into proper storage facilities for the different crops they wanted to provide during the winter. They had an old 1880s barn with horse stalls and a loft for hay storage. They put cement floors in the existing stalls, rodent-proofed them with wire mesh all along the walls, sprayed foam on the walls for insulation, and put in cooling units.

“Often in the early to mid fall it is quite warm,” says Robin, “and you can’t rely on natural cooling. With these units we can refrigerate everything down to 35 degrees. They are like walk-in coolers but they are extremely efficient because of the spray foam. In the winter we don’t normally cool, just circulate the air. But in the fall we can bring the temperature down quickly. We put water on the cement floors to keep the humidity up.

“But in the fall we can bring the temperature down quickly. We put water on the cement floors to keep the humidity up.

“Then we have a different room for onions and garlic,” she continues, “and a different room for squash. They have the same insulation, cement floors and rodent proofing, but are not refrigerated. Each has a small heater connected to a thermostat that can maintain the room temperatures at 40 and 50 degrees F respectively. We cure winter squash first in the greenhouse. We keep it at about 70 degrees for a couple of weeks and it will continue to ripen there. We find we get better long-term storage that way. We don’t manage the humidity in the onions and garlic or squash stalls. They just get the ambient humidity – which is fairly low in the fall and winter.

“Brussels sprouts we cut as late as possible, usually right before Thanksgiving, and line boxes with garbage bags. Once they are filled we close the bags and put them in the cooler with the root crops. They’ll keep at least until January. We used to just put them in boxes unbagged, but they dried out. The garbage bags seem to retain moisture.

“Then we have a different room for onions and garlic,” she continues, “and a different room for squash. They have the same insulation, cement floors and rodent proofing, but are not refrigerated. Each has a small heater connected to a thermostat that can maintain the room temperatures at 40 and 50 degrees F respectively. We cure winter squash first in the greenhouse. We keep it at about 70 degrees for a couple of weeks and it will continue to ripen there. We find we get better long-term storage that way. We don’t manage the humidity in the onions and garlic or squash stalls. They just get the ambient humidity – which is fairly low in the fall and winter.

“Brussels sprouts we cut as late as possible, usually right before Thanksgiving, and line boxes with garbage bags. Once they are filled we close the bags and put them in boxes with garbage bags. They just get the ambient humidity – which is fairly low in the fall and winter.

“In the cooler stalls we keep the root crops – rutabagas, parsnips, turnips, celeriac, potatoes, radishes, beets and carrots – plus Brussels sprouts, and leeks. Each of the two cooler rooms is about 12 by 22 feet. Polystyrene lines the ceiling and we have drains in the floor for water when we wash the facility down. We keep cabbage loose in a bin in the cooler stalls. We trim it right before we sell it. If we didn’t have this bin we would have had to box all our cabbage in the field. Everything except the cabbage is in waxed boxes, stacked on pallets, with the field dirt right on them. We wash them

Robin showed the empty horse barn she and Lou converted to a walk-in cooler to store root crops and cabbage for winter markets.
just before we distribute them. We find that a fine coating of our soil keeps them from drying out. We’re doing hundreds of bushels of root crops and boxes are the easiest way to pack them.”

For carrots – both because of their soils and the actual shape of the carrot – they grow the Chatennay variety. They’re shorter and blockier and don’t lose moisture or dry out, so they tend to be the best storage carrots. In addition, their flavor improves with age. Lou and Robin break the tops off so no greens are on them. Beets get trimmed with a knife but they leave a little of the stem. They prefer beet varieties that have a high sugar content such as Red Ace, for which organic seed is widely available.

Garlic is stored upstairs in the hayloft. It is tied in bundles in the field and then hung from cables in the hayloft until the weather gets close to freezing. Between the end of harvest in August and storing it in an insulated stall in late December for the CSA, a lot is sold fresh.

Lou feels that storage conditions are crucial to maintaining a healthy and attractive product for 3 or 4 months.

“We try to hold our coolers at 36 degrees,” he says. “If you are at 40 degrees your storage time is really cut down. You need to work with someone who fully understands cooling and refrigeration. In high humidity refrigeration like this the temperature of the coil is set to be not many degrees colder than the room – so you don’t get a lot of condensation freezing on your coils. That keeps a lot of the humidity in the room. If you look at the inside of an air conditioner, that coil is really cold so room air passing over it drops moisture that freezes on it. In that case the cooling cycles on and off so the coil can unfreeze and let the water run off. Here, the amount of coils in the room are sized with enough to not require them to run much colder, but to let them cool the room by being only a little colder than the air.”

Lou and Robin thought about doing a root cellar instead of coolers, but the cost would have been

---

**WE DOO MOO**

**SOILS, COMPOSTS AND MIXES FOR HEALTHY PLANTS**

---

**Nature’s Best. It’s a Way of Life.**

For more than 55 years, we have been offering farmers across the nation feeds that's second to none in performance, quality, and consistency. Nature's Best Organic Feeds™ has formulated a complete line of nutritionally based organic products with the ideal balance of vitamins and minerals.

- Prompt Bag or Bulk Delivery
- Consistent Feed Mixes
- Dairy, Turkey, Egg, & Hog Pellets
- Corn, Roasted Soybeans, Soybean Meal, Oats, Barley, Hay, & Compost
- Custom Feeds

When organic feeds are a way of life on your farm, trust Nature’s Best. To learn how your farm can benefit from Nature’s Best feed, call us today at 800-767-4537 or visit www.organicfeeds.com.

**VERMONT NATURAL AG PRODUCTS, INC.**

Middlebury, VT • 1-800-639-4511
e-mail: moodoovt@sover.net
www.moodoo.com
much more than retrofitting the barn and wouldn’t have enabled them to bring the temperature down close to freezing in the early fall. As they were able to afford more improvements in later years, they went back and sprayed an extra layer of foam on top of the first. When the winter squash storage stall is not in use they use the room to warm up seed potatoes to sprout them. They keep bags in the dark there for ten days to two weeks at about 75 degrees. What that does is initiate all the eyes to bud out. If you don’t do that, normally what you will get is a bull sprout on the one end that will start growing vigorously. It produces a hormone that suppresses all the other eyes. After you get them all sprouted, you cut your potatoes and expose them to light in shallow trays and the sprouts green up and start growing. Then you put them out in the field. What you get is about two weeks quicker growth. They emerge much quicker in the field, get a jump on diseases and pests and give you an earlier harvest.

Of course storage adds value to the crops, and Lou and Robin make sure that they recover their investment by selling the root vegetables at a price that covers the cost of storage. In January, for instance, they get $1 a pound wholesale for potatoes – whereas in October they usually can’t get more than 70¢.

“But the volume is the real difference,” stresses Robin. “I can’t sell that many in October because everyone else has them. But in January I’ll sell a ton of them! Besides the competition being less, people are eating more potatoes and root vegetables in the winter.”

I asked Robin and Lou what the pluses and minuses of running a winter CSA are.

“Around here in the summer there is a huge amount of production,” sighs Robin. “There are a lot of farmers with the same perishable items. We found there was a lot of security in having crops that didn’t have to be sold – that had a huge window of freshness. It’s a much more relaxed way of marketing. The root vegetables just keep getting sweeter and sweeter! Plus it spreads out our labor. If we were trying to do it all in the fall we’d have to hire more people.

“And we can’t drop that much stuff on our markets all at once anyway,” says Lou. “If we spread it out they can take it in smaller deliveries all winter. But on the minus side the infrastructure costs are significant. We did it all piecemeal – it’s used, cobbled together, and in an old barn. But still, even though it was parsed out over 15 years, our overall investment is large. We don’t like to be using the energy to run the coolers and heaters, even though the costs seem pretty minor. When we shut the system off in March it’s insignificant on the electric bill.
VEGETABLE GROWERS:

Bejo offers a range of organic or untreated varieties for your winter and earliest spring sales! Plan ahead now to include overwintering and cool weather crops in your 2009 season lineup!

Overwintering can bring early market income, with most of the labor and maintenance done the previous season. Just harvest, clean and sell! Try overwintering Bejo Winterbor kale and Bandit Leek next season. Mulch Nectar carrots in the field and continue to harvest into the winter. Call your local Bejo dealer or 315-789-4155 for more information.
Growing in the Winter Greenhouse

by Harvey Ussery

Soil Care

You should be as concerned about improving soil quality in the greenhouse as in the garden. I grow a cover crop of cowpeas in the off season to improve the soil. Another possibility is the growing of forage crops—grain grasses, mixed crucifers, peas, etc.—as cut-and-come-again green fodder for poultry or other livestock in the winter. The biomass of the root systems of some of these plants, especially rye, is quite large. If you rotate your forage plots over the greenhouse beds, their soil will over time increase in tilth, fertility, and humus as the spent root systems decompose.

Use of compost is of course always a good idea, especially for its boost to the microbial populations in the soil. As in garden growing, mulches help moderate the temperature in the soil, conserve soil moisture, and decompose over time, increasing soil tilth and fertility. (Do note, though, that use of heavy mulches could encourage slugs, since there are apt to be inside the greenhouse fewer natural controls on their population than in the garden.)

One caution regarding soil care in the greenhouse: It is important to avoid over-fertilizing with nitrogen. Green leafy crops can sometimes accumulate unhealthy levels of nitrates, especially in the low light conditions of the winter greenhouse. I never add nitrogen fertilizers in the greenhouse. Composts are a good source of fertility, though it is better to use plant-based rather than manure-based (higher in nitrogen) composts. I am even concerned about the nitrogen fixed by the summer cowpea cover crop, and plan to follow it with a quick mixed grain cover to “sop up” some of the nitrogen before the fall greenhouse planting season comes in.

The Moderated Winter

A homestead greenhouse can add tremendously to sustainable food production. However, adding huge amounts of artificial heat in order to grow tomatoes in January or cucumbers in March is anything but sustainable. Hence, I strongly recommend relying on the protection from winter’s extremes provided by the structure itself, and on naturally cold-hardy plants, in order to bring in your winter crops. Let’s look at each of those points in turn.

Most new greenhouse owners are surprised to learn that a plastic-skinned greenhouse gets quite cold at night, it loses that stored energy at a prodigious rate, and the greenhouse acts to slow the temperature plummets from a high of 40° F in the night to find only a quarter of an inch of frost on the surface of the growing beds. That quarter inch is no problem—as long as there is no freezing deep into the root zone, the plants are not unduly stressed.

Two factors make possible the survival of cold hardy plants through freezing temperatures. I referred above to the way the growing beds store solar heat during the day, and can lose that heat profusely before the ground starts to freeze. But by the point that the ground does start to freeze, it’s morning, and the cycle begins anew. I’ve gone into my greenhouse many a morning after a 10° night to find only a quarter of an inch of frost on the surface of the growing beds. That quarter inch is no problem—as long as there is no freezing deep into the root zone, the plants are not unduly stressed.

The other way in which the structure protects its sheltered plants is by moderating the extremes of winter. Plants which are adapted to low temperatures will still be badly stressed if the temperature plummets from a high of 40° F in the late afternoon to 18° by dark; or if sharp winds join in on the abuse (“wind chill” isn’t just a problem for us humans); or if they get rained on in low temperatures. The greenhouse acts to slow the abrupt temperature changes, and to keep wind and cold rains at bay.

Remember, however, that the moderating influence of the greenhouse is effective only when we are growing naturally cold hardy plants. I have harvested lettuces, completely exposed in the garden, in mid-December in a fairly benign winter. Spinach will often survive a cold winter in the garden, and rejuvenate when encouraged by the sun come spring (here in Zone 6b). You might say that we are using the greenhouse to imitate for naturally cold hardy plants like these an unusually mild winter—not to teleport them to somewhere in the tropics.

You could think of the soil inside the greenhouse as a rechargeable battery. During the day, it charges from the heat energy of the incoming sunlight. At night, it loses that stored energy at a prodigious rate, true, but it has a huge amount of heat it can lose before the soil starts to freeze.

The way in which the structure protects its sheltered plants is by moderating the extremes of winter. Plants which are adapted to low temperatures will still be badly stressed if the temperature plummets from a high of 40° F in the late afternoon to 18° by dark; or if sharp winds join in on the abuse (“wind chill” isn’t just a problem for us humans); or if they get rained on in low temperatures. The greenhouse acts to slow the abrupt temperature changes, and to keep wind and cold rains at bay.

Remember, however, that the moderating influence of the greenhouse is effective only when we are growing naturally cold hardy plants. I have harvested lettuces, completely exposed in the garden, in mid-December in a fairly benign winter. Spinach will often survive a cold winter in the garden, and rejuvenate when encouraged by the sun come spring (here in Zone 6b). You might say that we are using the greenhouse to imitate for naturally cold hardy plants like these an unusually mild winter—not to teleport them to somewhere in the tropics.

Two factors make possible the survival of cold hardy plants through freezing temperatures. I referred above to the way the growing beds store solar heat during the day, and can lose that heat profusely before the ground starts to freeze. But by the point that the ground does start to freeze, it’s morning, and the cycle begins anew. I’ve gone into my greenhouse many a morning after a 10° night to find only a quarter of an inch of frost on the surface of the growing beds. That quarter inch is no problem—as long as there is no freezing deep into the root zone, the plants are not unduly stressed.

Photo by Harvey Ussery

Harvey grows as many cover crops in his greenhouse as possible, both to improve the soil and as green fodder for his poultry. Note the uses to which he puts his greenhouse in addition to growing winter greenery: He keeps a flock of poultry (chickens, ducks, and geese) in one end of the greenhouse over winter; gets an early start on warm-season crops like tomatoes; and runs an extensive vermicomposting operation in pits dug into the center of the greenhouse (under the heavy bin lids you see in the picture). The bins are dug 16 inches into the earth down the center of the greenhouse. The plywood lids (3/4 inch on 2x4 framing) cover the bins and provide access down the center. Harvey’s original idea was that he needed access down the center anyway, so he wouldn’t lose a significant amount of growing space if he dug them into the earth and put down bin lids heavy enough to support any load, e.g. a loaded wheelbarrow.

Photo by Harvey Ussery

Lettuces—in an incredible array of sizes, colors, shapes, and textures—are worth growing for their beauty alone. They like cool temperatures, rich soil, and a steady supply of soil moisture to make sweet, tender salads.
The Mirror Season

Experienced gardeners may have some difficulty adjusting to the paradoxes of winter gardening. Unlike in spring, when the season is generously opening our into greater warmth and longer days, in the fall it is shutting down into a time of ever-greater darkness and deeper chill. The implications for growing are tricky, and take some getting used to. This reversal in the general trend of the season is perhaps the biggest adjustment the winter gardener has to make. We have to re-learn many of our assumptions, particularly about choosing the right crops. Do remember that the biggest challenge is apt to be the reduced photoperiod, rather than the low temperatures (assuming we make appropriate choices of cold hardy crops).

The bad news: During the darkest time of winter, there is insufficient solar energy to support vigorous growth. If we have started our plants too late to make most of their growth before the short days, they will indeed survive the cold temperatures, but instead of growing actively will sit and wilt, awaiting summer days.

The good news: On the other hand, if we get the timing right to produce, say, a mature head of lettuce by the dark days, the window of opportunity for harvest expands enormously. That perfect head of lettuce that would demand “use it or lose it” within a matter of days in June, will sit contentedly in prime condition, awaiting your pleasure, for two or even three months in the middle of winter.

One implication of the dormancy at the heart of the winter harvest season: When you start your crops in the late summer or early fall, start far farther than you think you will need. As you make your earliest harvests, you will not be able to start new crops, but if you have plenty “in the bank” at that point you can continue making generous harvests until longer days make possible some late-winter crops.

Watering

It is best to water deeply from time to time (in lieu of frequent shallow waterings). Water in the morning, as soon as the frost is off the leaves, to give the plants time to dry before descending into nighttime cold again. Avoid over-watering, which makes plants “sappy,” less able to stand the cold and other stressors (and less flavorful and nutritious as well). Test the soil with your finger: As long as you feel good moisture half an inch or so deep, it is better not to water.

Ventilation

It is important to appreciate how hot a closed greenhouse can get on a sunny day, even if the temperature outside is quite cold. Do not stress your plants by leaving the doors to the greenhouse closed when it is sunny. I typically shut up my two large doors (one at either end) at night, then open them wide during the day. If the day is unusually cold, blustery, and cloudy, I will prop the doors partially open. However, I always ensure there is some air movement through the greenhouse during the day.

Incidentally, I found that open doors at either end of the structure provide sufficient ventilation during the winter—exhaust fans were superfluous. I know growers with 20 x 96-ft greenhouses who report that ventilation is adequate using open doors alone. Remember that as the air in the greenhouse heats in the sunlight, it will rise and exit the structure, and more air will be drawn in from outside, providing constant natural air exchange.

Insects

My approach to leaf-eating insects in the greenhouse is, as in the gardens and orchard outside, not so much about control as about balance. Hence I encourage all the flowering plants I can inside the greenhouse. I planted yarrow throughout the beds a couple of years ago, and it blooms late into the fall and early in the spring. Perhaps it is the flowering yarrow that encourages the obvious increase in lady beetle population—in any case, I now have far less trouble with aphids in the late-winter, early-spring greenhouse. I also allow unharvested chicories, crucifers, and onions (grown from bulbs discarded in the kitchen because of sprouting) to flower and boost insect populations.

My impression is that the insect season gets an early start in the warmth of the spring greenhouse, then the lady beetles and their comrades migrate out into the garden as it starts to bloom, boosting earlier insect diversity there.

And speaking of insects: Be aware that a greenhouse provides good habitat for black widow (and other) spiders. It is important not to leave stacks of empty plant pots and cell-packs lying about—the dark space between such cast-offs and the ground is just where our lady of the shadows likes to set up, weaving her scraggly web, making a yellowish cocoon for her eggs, and awaiting prey. In my greenhouse, the undersides of the vermicomposting bin lids are also prime real estate. Though feared for her venomous bite, the black widow is shy and unaggressive. Just respect her need for privacy and watch where you put your fingers. Sooner or later you’ll likely see her. Tell her I said hello.

Chard (or “Swiss chard”) is botanically simply another beet (Beta vulgaris), but one bred for its beautiful tops which make a “nice mess of greens,” instead of a bulbous root. Note also the lacy foliage of yarrow on the left. Numerous patches of yarrow throughout Harvey’s greenhouse seem to have boosted the lady beetle population and greatly reduced aphid opportunists in the late winter, early spring.

Harvey Ussery and his wife Ellen live on 2-1/2 acres near the Blue Ridge in northern Virginia, where they produce much of their own food, and offer their homestead as model and inspiration to others aspiring to the homesteading life. Harvey is a regular contributor to Backyard Poultry and Mother Earth News. Countryside & Small Stock Journal is currently publishing in several installments his “The Integrated Homestead,” based on his presentation at the 2007 conference of the Western A. Price Foundation. Visit his website at www.themodernhomestead.us.
Johnny’s has organic garlic for fall planting.

- Over 230 organic seeds and supplies.
- Superior products, information, and service since 1973.
- 100% satisfaction guaranteed.

Order online at Johnnyseeds.com or call 1-877-Johnnys (564-6679)

New Printing of the Classic Book on the Ecology of Gardening and Farming

Every gardener and farmer could benefit from having Companion Plants, the pioneering book on the phenomenon by which particular plants thrive in the presence of certain species and do poorly in the company of others.

The observation of these relationships stimulates imagination and sensitiveness of observation to other living relationships and thereby opens new doors to further understanding of the world of nature.

$18.95 To order: Call (888) 516-7797 Fax (541) 998-0106 Email info@biodynamics.com

Companion Plants

To find out more about biodynamic agriculture, visit:

www.biodynamics.com

Check out articles from the updated Biodynamics journal. Consider becoming a member—you will receive the journal 4 times a year, enjoy discounts on literature and conferences, and help to support national and regional initiatives of the Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association. For more info: (888) 916-7797.

Small Potato Equipment

1-Row 3-pt Hitch Potato Diggers
1-Row Pull Hitch Potato Diggers (Shown w/Sweet Potato Option)

Potato Seed Cutters
1-Row & 2-Row Potato Planters
Water Cages for early frost protection

We also have Hilling Discs & Landscape Fabric Pins

Made in the USA and shipped to all 50 States.

Email: ussmallfarm@yahoo.com
Website: www.ussmallfarm.com
1-888-522-1554

US Small Farm Equipment Company
5428 Road 57
Torrington, Wyoming 82240

Peaceful Valley Farm & Garden Supply
Grow organic...for life!

TOLL-FREE (888)784-1722 ESTABLISHED 1976, GRASS VALLEY CA

GrowOrganic.com

Best selection around (over 4,000 items)
Great prices & generous quantity discounts
Freight Allowances up to $400 on large orders
Need a competitive quote? Call Hope at ext. 100

Certified organic vegetable & cover crop seeds, OMRI and/or NOP-listed fertilizers and weed & pest control, beneficial insects, growing and propagation supplies, irrigation and watering supplies, quality tools, floating row covers...etc.

Free 168 Page Catalog
Cold Weather Greens Production

by Paul and Sandy Arnold

Pleasant Valley Farm is located in a valley in a rural town 25 miles northeast of Saratoga Springs, New York. We have been operating it as an organic fruit and vegetable farm since 1988. We have 2 children, Robert (age 15) and Kimberly (age 12) who are homeschooled and help on the farm. We own 60 acres and rent our neighbor’s 120 acre farm, both of which have somewhat limited tillable soil for good vegetable production. We use a total of 6 acres for vegetable production, 1/2 acre for large fruits and 1/6 acre for small fruits, and keep another 4 acres in cover crops for rotation. We grow a diverse selection of more than 40 types of vegetables and fruits with organic methods for retail sales at three area summer farmers’ markets and two winter farmers’ markets.

We had outgrown our original 17’ x 24’ hoop-style greenhouse and started building our new 30’ x 48’ gutter connect, polycarbonate greenhouse in the fall of 2002. The greenhouse was manufactured by Rimol Greenhouse Company to include all the details we wanted, including an automatic ridge, automatic roll-up sides, and rolling benches. In 2003, we installed radiant floor heat and grew on the ground for several years. Then, starting in 2005, rolling benches were added over a two year period. The rolling benches were equipped with Radiant Root heat mats that give uniform heat through a series of narrow (3/16”) tubes spaced ½” apart that carry the 100 degree water through them. The mats are made of very sturdy black PVC that we felt would last our lifetime. Flats and pots are set directly on the mats and through a series of valves, we can have a different temperature on each of our 14 benches. The rolling benches allow efficient use of the greenhouse, by having only one 2 foot aisle on each side of the greenhouse.

The heater for the greenhouse consists of a Takagi instant-on variable flame propane-fired unit with a range of 30,000 to 175,000 BTU’s. The boiler is set up with 5 heating zones, two for the greenhouse floor, 2 for the benches (one on each side) and one for the small barn attached to the greenhouse, which is used as a potting shed and a winter washing station. Each zone has its own high-volume circulator. The system also has a heat-exchanger which produces warm water. The warm water, which is used to water the seedlings, is beneficial for enhanced growth and for saving energy.

Before late fall production of greens tapers off, we begin preparation for production of greens in the greenhouse on the heated benches. Our first winter production was trialed with seedings in February 2006. 1020 plastic trays were filled with Vermont compost potting mix (regular mix) and we seeded 5 varieties of lettuce and 3 Asian greens (tatsoi, mizuna, and mustard), which were used for mesclun production. The trays were seeded weekly and the mesclun was sold for $10 per pound in March and April. By May 1st, our tunnel greens are ready, and the greenhouse production ceases to allow us to raise all our transplants for the farm.

In January 2007, we started production of the mesclun in trays and added arugula as another product to add diversity to our table at the markets. We switched to using 13”x17” trays that are 3” high, which fit perfectly on the foot by 13 foot benches, and we also started mixing our own soil, giving us very uniform, healthy growth and saved us money. In 2007, the arugula was continued weekly for the entire year and the production was a great success.

On November 1st of 2007, we started seeding mesclun in hopes of having greens for the markets when the outside fall production waned.

Early winter production seedings (greens for December & January) consist of 4 lettuces: black-seeded simpson, red sals, red salad bowl, and pluto II Romaine and 4 Asian Greens: red mustard, ruby-streaks mustard, kyona mizuna, and tatsui. Seven shallow rows are indented per each tray and we shoot to have 25 seeds per each row, utilizing a Gro-More vibrating hand-seeder (about 1/2 tsp of seed per tray). We plant 6 trays of each variety for a total of 48 trays per week for mesclun, and also plant 12 trays of arugula each week. The air bench thermostats are kept at 40 degrees, which gives the soil a temperature of between 50-60 degrees. Single or double P-19 rowcovers are kept over the benches on cold nights and on cold, cloudy days. They are removed during warm temperatures and sunny days. The HAF fans are run almost continually to control dampness, keep rowcovers dry, and prevent diseases.

The greens are harvested with a Johnny’s produce knife into 5 gallon buckets, spread across our washing table bench, misted, tossed, and bagged into vented clear plastic bags with 1/2 pound per bag. These are sold for $4 per bag ($16 per pound) at our 2 weekly farmers’ markets. We can get 2 or 3 cuttings off each tray, then the soil is recycled and amended to utilize for potting up large perennials. Arugula is harvested similarly, however we put only 1/8 pound per bag and sell it for $2.50.

We are trialing many new greens and are continually learning more each year since our growing system is unique. Some of the new seedings consist of yukina savoy, green wave mustard, black summer pac choi, mei qing choi, fuyu shomi pac choi, bull’s blood beets, yellow swiss chard, and also a new lettuce mix from Johnny’s seeds that has varieties specific for winter growing, giving more color and cold-weather vigor. In summary, after our limited years of trialing this system, we have had our ups and downs of success, but look to perfect it since we feel it can be a lucrative venture. The radiant heat gives us the advantage of reduced fuel usage. The demand for greens is very high and increasing all the time, especially in the winter months. As we gain knowledge on winter growing, we will continue to strive to meet this demand.
We have been farming in Washington County, New York, since 1983. The most recent turn our business has taken is towards growing greens in the winter. This winter we will have just over 10,000 square feet of growing area under cover, in three high tunnels. Two of those tunnels have a ground heating system.

We will grow baby spinach, a mild and spicy mesclun, baby bok choy, and arugula. Our goal is to generate nearly half of our income from November to May. The story of how we got to this point on our farm is about markets primarily, and about our preferences and skills as growers.

For years we farmed as many market growers in New England have done - growing and selling enough on 10-15 acres in the five months from June through October to generate an income to cover the entire year. We have marketed in several ways, including CSA, bulk storage vegetable sales in the fall, retail at markets, and wholesale. For the last 10 years we have settled on a mix direct retail at farmers markets and wholesale to a medium sized natural food store in Albany, NY. To stay profitable at our scale of production we have found we need to keep wholesale marketing down to about 1/3 of total sales.

While our climate and soils certainly allow for the creation of enough value in the five month growing season, this style of growing makes for a very busy growing season, with a labor force that must fluctuate a lot over the year, and income that when plotted over the year looks like a classic extreme bell curve. It also creates a basic disharmony in our lives at this point. We are now raising two young children, and during their summer break we are too busy to spend much time with them.

About five or six years ago our Farmers’ Market in Troy, NY, decided to try a year round market. An urban renewal project from the early 1970's provided us with an excellent venue - the Atrium in downtown Troy is a large, naturally lit indoor space with covered parking, lots of space, surrounded by other retail stores, coffee shops, and a post office.

Our strategy for this first winter market went something like this: We had some experience with season extension under row covers, and we had built our first high tunnel which was a Ledgewood model, 21’ X120’. This was a simple structure, no heat, single layer poly, and manual roll up sides. We built this tunnel for tomato production, and had had success with that crop because it gave us a one month jump on the season, and eliminated the blight problem. We also much preferred the permanent overhead support provided by the structure of the high tunnel.
Local Growers Wanted!

Whole Foods Market is actively looking for local growers and artisans. If you are interested in selling to Whole Foods Market, we want to hear from you!

Whole Foods Market has set up an annual budget of $10 million to promote local agriculture through long-term, low interest loans.

For Information

For information on our loan program or selling your product to Whole Foods Market, visit a store near you or call our Local Products Forager at 617-492-5500

MASSCHUSETTS LOCATIONS


www.wholefoodsmarket.com
Fall, 2008

At this point we realized that perhaps with the winter under multiple layers of row cover. It was slow. Demand had not yet peaked for our supply, so we just completed our third and largest tunnel, a Rimol 34’ X 120’, also heated. We enjoy gardening in the winter; the greenhouses are a cheerful place to be. The type of work now being done in the winter is all for the highest value crops - greens! We have cut back on fall root crops - no storage carrots or potatoes - eliminating these large crops during the growing season means we need less labor then. Our winter labor now will be less washing of roots and more work in the greenhouses. Our labor force is more oriented towards year round part time workers. By offering year round work we can keep more experienced and committed people.

As oil prices rise by large percentages, we will have to keep an eye on costs. Our two heated houses, which last year would have cost $2,000 to heat, will now cost $4,000. We could add supplemental wood heat, or increase nighttime insulation. Covering the earth inside these houses at night is critical. Oil use would be 3 or 4 times as much without a covering system. As soon as solar gain stops as the sun goes down, which around the solstice can be as early as 3:30 pm, the covers need to be in place. Currently we use 3-4 layers of row cover, and are working on a system to roll the covers on and off; as we expand, covering and uncovering becomes a bigger chore.

No doubt our farm will continue to change, we’ll see how all this plays out this year. We definitely feel less pressure to produce this summer, and are glad to concentrate on the crops we grow best, and have more time for family activities. Our hope is that even during the winter we can earn enough to pay off debt incurred building these rather expensive high tunnels and heating systems.

The Next Step

As the Market grew demand exceeded supply, so we built another high tunnel, this one a larger Rimol brand, 30’ X 120’, with automatic roll up sides, also heated. That first year in this house we also planted some of our mesclun and arugula in the fall, and with the use of row covers kept production up until mid December. What happened next is when things really got interesting for us. Some of the row cover was left on the ground where it had last been put when the arugula was uncovered the last time in the fall. When we lifted this in the spring, there was a long row of Arugula that had survived the winter under multiple layers of row cover. It was at this point that we realized that perhaps with a small amount of additional heat, just enough to keep the ground from freezing, we might expand our production of winter greens. There is not much new under the sun in agriculture, it’s all been done before, but this is when it occurred to us that a small amount of additional heat might work for our situation.

That spring we dug up the ground in the new house, and installed a ground heating system using basic radiant floor materials, and oil-fired hot water. We buried the pex tubing underground at 1’ intervals 16-18 inches under, deep enough so that tractor tillage was still an option. The next winter we planted a variety of winter greens but not lettuce. We used wire hoops and 3 layers of row covers to cover the whole house at night. We maintained a soil temperature of 47 degrees 6 inches under the surface, and found that under the row covers at night the temperature never dropped below 27 degrees. We burned 400 gallons of oil, 90% of it between November 15th and February 1st. We have found that by February, no matter how cold the nighttime temperatures, if the weather is sunny there is enough solar gain during the day (5 degrees of soil temp rise) that no additional heat is necessary.

The next two years we worked on our growing techniques for all these new (to us) winter crops. Many of the mix ingredients are the same as in the warm season, with a few changes made to accommodate the different light levels and temperatures. The planting schedule is critical for continuous production. Succession planting begins the first of October, and proceeds weekly, as we work our way into November, seedings become more frequent, and by mid-November plantings are every three days. Unlike in the spring, when plantings need to be stretched out for continuous harvest, at this time of year 3 days apart in the seedling schedule can translate into 3 week intervals in the harvest. Most crops are harvested 2-3 times before renewing the beds with new seedlings later in the Winter. Productivity really jumps in the late winter and early spring, when light levels, temperature, and day length are up. In February and March, production is way up, and in late March, April, and early May, when we usually considered the lean times for local food around here, the production from these established, well rooted crops, many of which were planted in January and February, is off the charts, and in addition to all the mixes our market table is full of lots of large greens, which have grown too large for mixes, and are sold on their own - things like chard and kale.

Regarding spinach: As mentioned, spinach production from the unheated house was very good, but when we planted spinach in the heated house the results were even more impressive. In March and April spinach planted in January can be cut every other week, with high very quality and quantity.

Final Notes

Needless to say, the addition of a wider variety of fresh greens in midwinter was met with great enthusiasm by our customers at market. We can sell 2-3 times as many greens at a winter market vs. a summer market. Prices are slightly higher then as well. Demand has again exceeded our supply, so we built another high tunnel, this one a larger Rimol 34’ X 120’, also heated. We enjoy gardening in the winter; the greenhouses are a cheerful place to be. The type of work now being done in the winter is all for the highest value crops - greens! We have cut back on fall root crops - no storage carrots or potatoes - eliminating these large crops during the growing season means we need less labor then. Our winter labor now will be less washing of roots and more work in the greenhouses. Our labor force is more oriented towards year round part time workers. By offering year round work we can keep more experienced and committed people.

As oil prices rise by large percentages, we will have to keep an eye on costs. Our two heated houses, which last year would have cost $2,000 to heat, will now cost $4,000. We could add supplemental wood heat, or increase nighttime insulation. Covering the earth inside these houses at night is critical. Oil use would be 3 or 4 times as much without a covering system. As soon as solar gain stops as the sun goes down, which around the solstice can be as early as 3:30 pm, the covers need to be in place. Currently we use 3-4 layers of row cover, and are working on a system to roll the covers on and off; as we expand, covering and uncovering becomes a bigger chore.

No doubt our farm will continue to change, we’ll see how all this plays out this year. We definitely feel less pressure to produce this summer, and are glad to concentrate on the crops we grow best, and have more time for family activities. Our hope is that even during the winter we can earn enough to pay off debt incurred building these rather expensive high tunnels and heating systems.

The availability of fresh spinach at our first winter market was very well received by our customers. That first year the market quickly grew to the point where we could sell more spinach than at a busy summer market, and squeezed early greens production in the spring, and squeezed in some crops, basil and greens, in between the tomatoes before they grew too large. For this first winter market we planted this house to spinach. We also planned to bring storage crops such as carrots, beets, onions, potatoes, butternut squash, and shallots.

Greens cannot be picked until they are thawed, but then they look great! Greens are well received by winter customers, and command a good price.
Thank you farmers, for all that you do.

From all the folks at Stonyfield Farm

Stonyfield.com
Service. A high point this year was the sold out local dinner on Saturday night. All the food for this delicious meal was local and organic: produced on a certified organic farm in one of the seven NOFA chapter states.

Kirsten Bower of NOFA/Vermont was honored as the NOFA Person of the Year for over eighteen years of work for the organization. Unfortunately, due to an injury, she was unable to be present and the ceremonial award shovel was presented to her likeness in the form of a smiling, waving, cardboard effigy! Also honored was Juanita Nelson, a long time supporter of the civil rights and local food movement. Juanita briefly addressed the audience at the Annual Meeting on Friday night.

When the hundreds of people who attended the conference headed home, there was no doubt they took with them new knowledge and insight to farm and garden organically. There is no doubt that they will help to bring about the important changes in food production of which Arden Andersen and Mark McAffee spoke and to help spread NOFA's message well beyond the three day conference.
Solar Gardening: Growing Vegetables Year-Round the American Intensive Way
by Leandre Poisson and Gretchen Vogel Poisson
published by Chelsea Green, 1994
www.chelseagreen.com
 paperback, 288 pages
$31.96 sale price
review by Jack Kittredge

This is a classic (in the sense that Eliot Coleman’s book the “Four-Season Harvest” is a classic) by a couple that went “back to the land” in New Hampshire at the end of the 1960s. They spent decades raising their own food and experimenting with ways to use solar energy not only for growing but also for house heat, cooking, hot water, and more. They drew inspiration from the Nearings, attended early NOFA gatherings, and by the time this book was written in 1994 had students flocking to learn from them.

Leandre taught at the University of New Hampshire before becoming a fulltime homesteader and had familiarized himself with a number of different growing systems developed by indigenous and European cultures. He was fascinated by the “marais” market gardeners who thrived on the outskirts of Paris as it grew to a population of over 2 million during the nineteenth century. Their system (also called the “French Intensive” system) extended the season by growing plants in solar microclimates created by bell-shaped glass enclosures called “cloches”. Extra heat was added to the mix with scoops of rotting horse manure collected from the well-littered streets of Paris. According to one scholar, at the height of the marais system (about 1880) one-sixteenth of the land area of Paris was under cultivation by some 1800 marais farmers averaging just under 2 acres each and using over 6,000,000 cloches to produce more than 100,000 tons of extended season vegetables and fruits. That is some 55.5 tons (111,000 pounds) of food per farmer, or close to 60,000 pounds per acre.

Poisson has designed a number of modern devices to duplicate marais productivity in the northern belt of the U.S. Where the French used glass, he prefers the lighter (and easier to work with) fiberglass. The three growing aids he uses are cones (analogous to cloches with a 36 inch diameter at the base), pods (similar to modern cold frames and 4 x 8 feet at the base), and pod extenders (structures to raise and widen the effect of a pod to 8 x 8 feet at the base). Cones go over one or a small number of plants to solarize their immediate environment. Pods go over a bed for the same purpose. Pods atop pod extenders create a tiny greenhouse in which you can grow and work.

The Poissons divide crops into heat-loving, cool-hardy, and cold-tolerant crops. Each of these groups is further subdivided into short-season, mid-season, long-season, and perennial crops. This organization is important for following their rotations later, as they step you through each month in continuous gardens in the northern, moderate, and southern belts of North America.

In the northern zone, for instance, where most of New England lies, in January one harvests kale, collards, mustard greens and leeks for fresh crops from an insulated pod/extender bed, and digs up carrots, parsnips and salsify from another pod marking the root crops and keeping the soil from freezing. One also keeps the snow off the outdoor appliances and starts lettuce and spinach inside the house. In February, as soon as weeds appear in the insulated bed, the soil is warm enough to germinate short season cold greens such as corn salad or mustard greens. Keep harvesting your fresh greens and root crops to make room for the new plantings, and gradually remove any mulch to let the sun warm the soil. In March you empty the insulated beds and direct-seed short and mid-season cool-hardy and cold-tolerant vegetables. By the end of March you can start seed for celery or members of the cabbage and onion families. This is also a good time to clear some snow off your beds and set out the cones, mulching around the edges, to preheat the soil. You can also use the cones to force greens from over-wintered vegetables like Swiss chard or endive roots, or force perennials such as asparagus, rhubarb, or sea kale.

Skipping the warmer months of April through October, we pick up again with the Poisson’s garden after Halloween. In November you harvest Brussels sprouts, winter cabbage and root crops, and either dig up and store or mulch and mark with a stick any root crops you have selected for spring forcing. In
December you neither plant nor transplant anything. You still harvest fresh vegetables from the insulated pod/extenders, and from under mulch in the open garden. Mostly, however, you eat storage crops from the root cellar, and squash, onions, garlic and shallots.

Leandre is the kind of guy who gets things free and figures out how to use them. He constructs energy budgets for materials and works out whether more effort went into creating the material than its use will save. He loves recycling things and I'm sure would be a first-class dump picker (if they still allowed that noble but vanishing profession). He has put together the price of making his own biodynamic material - glowes, manure, etc. - and you might find in a beginning Qigong class when they look into the atmosphere, in your body etc. Sort of what you would benefit from a massive multimedia overhaul. The book is text heavy and since much of the information will be new and somewhat puzzling to most readers, a lot of it could be better delivered using short videos (which could be included on a companion DVD or made available on the "Sacred Spirituality with the Food We Eat" website, http://www.sacredspiritualitywithfood.net). Walking the labyrinth visually or watching some of the ceremonies described in the book would make this material a lot more vivid and have an impact that just doesn’t come across easily in the current format. But for anyone who wants to work at it, digging through “Sacred Spirituality will root out some worthwhile fare.

Managing Water: Avoiding Crisis in California by Dorothy Green University of California Press, 2007 review by Larry Siegel Not quite academic (footnote-free and generally lacking documentation), “Managing Water” is nonetheless a dry read. (One would hope a book about water would not be dry.) Focusing on the greater Los Angeles area, the author at the outset summarizes the sources of water supplies. This is followed by interminable descriptions of many of the hundreds of water agencies operating in the area. Section one on water use and quality and water quality were a bit more interesting. All of three pages are devoted to providing the elements of a sustainable state-wide policy. Maps, charts, and photographs abound but they are poorly reproduced and too busy with detail to be useful to the casual reader. It is bewildering why the author did not pursue matters of a more scientific nature extensively, since it consumes the lion’s share of the state’s waters.

I am bemused by the fact that the book reached the hallowed halls of The Natural Farmer’s headquarters. “Managing Water” will be of interest to a small number of readers and I do not imagine any of them residing anywhere but southern California. For an alternative look at water, I would recommend “Mayordomo: Chronicles of an Acquia in Northern New Mexico” by Stanley Crawford. Crawford was a water conservator and truck farmer who established roots in rural, Hispanic New Mexico. (His “Garlic Testament” is also highly recommended.) Some foods and acuqias are a community irrigation ditch. Crawford spent several years as the mayordomo, the ditch manager, and recounts issues of water while wallowing in it. Dry it is not.

Kitchen Literacy: How We Lost Knowledge of Where Food Comes from and Why We Need to Get It Back by Ann Vileisis Island Press, 2008 331 pages review by Winton Pittoc An advertisement in a popular women’s magazine advocated for “buying foods as near the hallowed halls of The Natural Farmer’s headquarters. ‘Managing Water’ will be of interest to a small number of readers and I do not imagine any of them residing anywhere but southern California. For an alternative look at water, I would recommend “Mayordomo: Chronicles of an Acquia in Northern New Mexico” by Stanley Crawford. Crawford was a water conservator and truck farmer who established roots in rural, Hispanic New Mexico. (His “Garlic Testament” is also highly recommended.) Some foods and acuqias are a community irrigation ditch. Crawford spent several years as the mayordomo, the ditch manager, and recounts issues of water while wallowing in it. Dry it is not.

Kitchen Literacy: How We Lost Knowledge of Where Food Comes from and Why We Need to Get It Back by Ann Vileisis Island Press, 2008 331 pages review by Winton Pittoc An advertisement in a popular women’s magazine advocated for “buying foods as near the hallowed halls of The Natural Farmer’s headquarters. ‘Managing Water’ will be of interest to a small number of readers and I do not imagine any of them residing anywhere but southern California. For an alternative look at water, I would recommend “Mayordomo: Chronicles of an Acquia in Northern New Mexico” by Stanley Crawford. Crawford was a water conservator and truck farmer who established roots in rural, Hispanic New Mexico. (His “Garlic Testament” is also highly recommended.) Some foods and acuqias are a community irrigation ditch. Crawford spent several years as the mayordomo, the ditch manager, and recounts issues of water while wallowing in it. Dry it is not.

Kitchen Literacy: How We Lost Knowledge of Where Food Comes from and Why We Need to Get It Back by Ann Vileisis Island Press, 2008 331 pages review by Winton Pittoc An advertisement in a popular women’s magazine advocated for “buying foods as near the hallowed halls of The Natural Farmer’s headquarters. ‘Managing Water’ will be of interest to a small number of readers and I do not imagine any of them residing anywhere but southern California. For an alternative look at water, I would recommend “Mayordomo: Chronicles of an Acquia in Northern New Mexico” by Stanley Crawford. Crawford was a water conservator and truck farmer who established roots in rural, Hispanic New Mexico. (His “Garlic Testament” is also highly recommended.) Some foods and acuqias are a community irrigation ditch. Crawford spent several years as the mayordomo, the ditch manager, and recounts issues of water while wallowing in it. Dry it is not.
Attending The Organic Summit

by Jack Kittredge

Earlier this summer I was invited to attend the “Organic Summit”. This is a three-day event in June at which organic farmers, certifiers, and representatives of organic groups such as OMRI (the Organic Materials Research Institute), OFRFF (the Organic Farming Research Foundation), The Organic Center, the Community Food Security Coalition, the Center for Food Safety and the Rodale Institute get to mix and mingle with middle managers (and sometimes founders) of such Organic Industry companies as Whitewave Foods, Horizon Organic, the Organic Trade Association, Honest T, Organic Valley, Target (Target? Yes, Target!), Small Planet Foods, Albert’s Organics, Kruger, Smucker, Dagoba Organic Chocolate, Safeway, and Coca-Cola (Coca-Cola? Yes, Coca-Cola!)

There were about 160 of us there, fairly evenly mixed between players from the Industry and the broad set of farmers, researchers and policy people representing the Movement, if you will. The primary purpose of the event, besides being educated by the plenaries, panels, and break-out presentations, seemed to be to mix these diverse folks together so they aren’t quite strangers to each other, and avoid another disastrous split in the organic world such as happened a couple of years ago around the controversial Congressional amendments sponsored by OTA to the Organic Foods Production Act.

The Organic Summit is put on by New Hope Natural Media, publishers of such Industry journals as Delicious Living Magazine, Functional Ingredients Magazine, The Natural Foods Merchandiser, and Nutrition Business Journal, in partnership with the Organic Farming Research Foundation – created by the California Certified Organic Farmers and dedicated to funding research that furthers organic farming. Together they have raised serious funding from sponsors like Horizon Organic (Dean Foods), Silk (Whitewave Foods), Origins Organics (an Easté Lauder personal care company), Cascadian Farm (General Mills), and Muir Glen (General Mills) to put on this event at an upscale hotel and conference center in the lovely heart of the organic food industry – Boulder, Colorado. Most of the industry people paid hefty fees to register, eat and sleep at the event. Many of the farming contingent were invited guests or speakers who were subsidized by the organizers (including our own Steve Gilman, speaking on the Domestic Fair Trade Movement).

The opening keynote featured the global president of Origins Organics talking about the growth of the natural organic personal care industry in the last couple of years (growing faster than organic foods).

Two more days followed of presentations and discussions. Among my favorite were Fred Kirschenmann, North Dakota grain farmer talking about the importance of not squeezing out mid-sized farms in the fight over small local versus industrial operations, and Jim Thomas from ETC Group warning about the rapid development of nanotechnology – including in organic food and its packaging – and the need for caution in proceeding with this untested new technology.

I was also interested to see just how rapidly this market is growing. There were presentations on a retirement community designed around permaculture and organic gardens in Costa Rica with units for $300,000 and up, a traditional French organic wine company now, for environmental reasons, packaging their product in aluminum “tetra-paks” which are more recyclable than glass and a fifth of the weight, and stories by the founders about selling a start-up organic chocolate business to Hershey’s and a bottled organic tea company to Coca-Cola.

Was the Organic Summit a success? I came away realizing that the “Industry” players are often individuals with passion and commitment to a better earth. I also realized that the corporations that are rapidly moving into this marketplace are learning how to culture it and grow the small organic companies that they have bought to give them entry. Will the farmers’ concerns for high standards and the long-term interests of the organic name prevail over temptations to make a quick buck by lowering the threshold and allowing a synthetic dye here or caking agent there? That is a tougher call. American corporations are notorious for fixating on the short-term for growth and returns, which is in strong contrast to the long-term thinking necessary for building soil, cleaning water and reestablishing biodiversity.

But it certainly can’t hurt that we can talk to each other, enjoy common experiences, and try to find joint values and goals that let us work together despite the pressures and demands of the immediate moment.

---

John Ikerd, professor emeritus at the University of Missouri, speaks with Jerry DeWitt, director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, and Gary Zimmer of Wisconsin’s Bio-Ag consulting firm.

---

ORGANIC FARMETTE -- Foster, RI. Antique home on 6.5 organic (for more than 30 years) acres with berries, fruit, and large fenced vegetable garden. Indoor cooking hearth, outdoor bake oven, barn w/studios, cabin, screened timber-frame porch, pool, trail. Restored and energy efficient. Pls call 774-202-2035
Are Northeast Farms in a Financing Fix?

by Dorothy Suput, Executive Director, The Carrot Project

We paid for our land with our credit card.
-- Becky, a New York farmer

For today’s small, mid-sized, and limited-resource farmers, finding sufficient capital to finance their businesses can be a challenge. Tightening regulations, limited USDA-Farm Service Agency budgets, and consolidation of lending institutions have resulted in fewer lenders with agricultural expertise or mandates. Community development finance institutions (CDFI) finance many small businesses, but were designed to address urban issues and typically have little or no agricultural expertise. The dominant agricultural lenders in the Northeast do offer credit, but do not adequately serve small and mid-sized farm operators who run start-ups, want to expand their operations, have unique business models, or lack adequate collateral.

The Carrot Project is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to making loans and guarantees available to small and mid-sized farmers, as well as to limited-resource farmers and those using ecologically friendly practices. As part of a study to better understand the financing obstacles facing small and mid-sized farms, 700 farmers, in New England and New York, responded to a survey about financing. The study found that 25% of small farmers who applied for financing couldn’t get the money they need and that start-up farmers may benefit from alternative financing services and business technical assistance. Short- and intermediate-term loans at a median amount of nearly $30,000 are sought by farmers, along with flexible payment options, additional security, and farm real estate financing at a median amount of $165,000. Findings also identified interest in equity financing. Their answers make it clear that there is a need for new forms of technical and financial assistance that address the needs, particularly, of start-ups and expanding businesses.

Debt Financing

The farms most likely to apply for operating or capital financing were those with managers or expertise or mandates. Community development finance institutions (CDFI) finance many small businesses, but were designed to address urban issues and typically have little or no agricultural expertise. The dominant agricultural lenders in the Northeast do offer credit, but do not adequately serve small and mid-sized farm operators who run start-ups, want to expand their operations, have unique business models, or lack adequate collateral.

The Carrot Project is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to making loans and guarantees available to small and mid-sized farmers, as well as to limited-resource farmers and those using ecologically friendly practices. As part of a study to better understand the financing obstacles facing small and mid-sized farms, 700 farmers, in New England and New York, responded to a survey about financing. The study found that 25% of small farmers who applied for financing couldn’t get the money they need and that start-up farmers may benefit from alternative financing services and business technical assistance. Short- and intermediate-term loans at a median amount of nearly $30,000 are sought by farmers, along with flexible payment options, additional security, and farm real estate financing at a median amount of $165,000. Findings also identified interest in equity financing. Their answers make it clear that there is a need for new forms of technical and financial assistance that address the needs, particularly, of start-ups and expanding businesses.

Debt Financing

The farms most likely to apply for operating or capital financing were those with managers or operators with more than four years of farming experience, higher gross farm incomes, and more mature businesses. This profile was strongest for operators with gross farm incomes of $117,000 or more who applied for operating and capital financing at 60 percent and 46 percent respectively (Table 1). This is at least double the application rate for all respondents. Yet, according to the 2002 Agricultural Census, New York and New England farms grossing more than $100,000 per year make up 15% of the farm population. Farms operating less than 10 years were most likely to apply for financing for farm real estate (Table 2).

Table 1: Applied for financing by type of farm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Financing</th>
<th>In Operation</th>
<th>Startups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opsi</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohpi</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capi</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sapi</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uapi</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Applied for financing by years in business.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years in Business</th>
<th>Applied for Financing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-10</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21+</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasons for Denial

Not surprisingly, the survey indicated that securing financing is difficult for farmers with limited capital, lack of credit history, and insufficient cash flow. When measures of start-up operations were the most likely businesses in our survey to be denied financing, but they applied at lower rates than expanding or mature businesses. Farms with the highest gross farm income were the least likely to be denied financing.

Table 3: Rates of denial by stage of business.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Financing</th>
<th>Start-Ups</th>
<th>Opsi</th>
<th>Ohpi</th>
<th>Capi</th>
<th>Sapi</th>
<th>Uapi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rate of Denial</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Farms needing security to obtain financing by gross farm income.

In The Carrot Project survey, start-up farms were the most likely to be denied financing. However, because of their relatively low loan application rate, the number of start-ups denied financing is comparable to the number of expanding businesses (See Table 5). Expanding businesses are different from start-ups in that they share more characteristics of the average respondent. Expanding farm businesses had income levels that were similar to the average, but were slightly more likely to be in the highest income categories. Thirty-four percent of expanding businesses were operating between 5 to 20 years versus 42 percent in the general survey population.

Table 5: The percent of farms denied financing by stage of business.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of Business</th>
<th>Denied Opsi</th>
<th>Denied Ohpi</th>
<th>Denied Capi</th>
<th>Denied Sapi</th>
<th>Denied Uapi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rate of Denial</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Equity Financing

Equity financing is a strategy in which an investor gives capital (cash) to a farmer in exchange for partial ownership of the farm or for an agreed upon share of the farm’s future profits. There might be an agreement for the farmer to buy back the share of the farm that was sold to the investor. The responses to our survey provide an important initial step toward more agricultural equity financing if there were an option to share profits or buy back shares. When including farmers who said they were ‘somewhat interested,’ the number increased to 30 percent. Start-ups and expanding businesses expressed the greatest interest in equity financing.

Table 6: Interest in equity financing by stage of business.

At a time where established farmers in the Northeast are rapidly aging, and young, entry-level farmers are needed to replace them, it is not a good sign that between 20 and 25 percent of the farmers we surveyed who had requested financing were denied. And while The Carrot Project concedes that not every request for farm financing could or should be granted, our research indicates that farm start-ups and expanding businesses are particularly vulnerable. It is our intent to begin meeting the financing needs of this important but vulnerable population. Currently we are talking with different farm organizations and lenders about building upon or starting targeted financing and technical assistance programs in New York and New England.

If you would like to read the complete report on which this article is based or learn more about the work of The Carrot Project, please visit our website at www.thecarrotproject.org. If you would like a copy of the report mailed to you, please contact Dorothy Suput at 617-666-9637.
Organic Agriculture, World Hunger and Global Warming

Report from the IFOAM Organic World Congress & General Assembly
Modena, Italy, June 17 – 24, 2008

by Elizabeth Henderson

“Organic Agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic Agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved.” (New IFOAM definition of Organic Agriculture)

Most of our attention and energy as NOFA members goes to acting locally. But occasionally it is exciting to think globally and travel to meet other people from around the world who are practicing, organizing, researching and lobbying for organic agriculture in their own local places. From June 17 through 24, 2008, I had the honor and pleasure of representing NOFA at “Cultivate the Future,” the 16th Organic World Congress and General Assembly of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) in Modena and Vigoleno, Italy. The organizers of the conference did not shy away from the big issues. The official welcome announcements: “We will be looking for ways on how Organic Agriculture contributes solutions to the major problems in this troubled world: from climate change to food insecurity, from gender imbalances to biodiversity loss, from rural depopulation to global injustice.”

The Modena gathering was the largest and most diverse IFOAM congress ever held with over 1200 participants from 100 countries. The IFOAM General Assembly was also the best attended yet: sixty percent of the IFOAM members were present or represented by proxies. There were 248 voting members from 69 countries with about 90 proxies. I got to vote with NOFA’s blue card at the three days of intense discussions and debates on the top priorities for organic agriculture.

The Organic World Congress

The setting for the congress was Modena, a small city in the industrial heartland of Italy, in the Emilia-Romagna region, home of Parmesan cheese, balsamic vinegar, prosciutto ham, Lambrusco wines, and Mazzarotti and Ferrari automobiles. In the evening, the center of the city with its cobblestone streets and beautiful old buildings is closed to motorized vehicles. Tourists can pick up a free key to bicycles parked conveniently around the city. The local, municipal and regional governments supported the conference and cooperated with the Italian Organic Agriculture Association (AIAB) in organizing special organic street markets, tours and dinners with local food. There were also pre-congress conferences on organic fruit, fiber and wine production.

With sixteen tracks of workshops running simultaneously, there was no way to encompass them all. The choices were maddening – Organic Agriculture and Climate Change or Women in Agriculture or Climate Change or Women in Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), or represented by proxies. There were 248 voting members from 69 countries with about 90 proxies. I got to vote with NOFA’s blue card at the three days of intense discussions and debates on the top priorities for organic agriculture.

The Organic World Congress

The setting for the congress was Modena, a small city in the industrial heartland of Italy, in the Emilia-Romagna region, home of Parmesan cheese, balsamic vinegar, prosciutto ham, Lambrusco wines, and Mazzarotti and Ferrari automobiles. In the evening, the center of the city with its cobblestone streets and beautiful old buildings is closed to motorized vehicles. Tourists can pick up a free key to bicycles parked conveniently around the city. The local, municipal and regional governments supported the conference and cooperated with the Italian Organic Agriculture Association (AIAB) in organizing special organic street markets, tours and dinners with local food. There were also pre-congress conferences on organic fruit, fiber and wine production.

With sixteen tracks of workshops running simultaneously, there was no way to encompass them all. The choices were maddening – Organic Agriculture and Climate Change or Women in Agriculture or Organic Agriculture’s Relationship with Nature Conservation and Biodiversity. The International Society for Organic Agriculture Research (ISOFAR) accounted for six of the tracks devoted to reports on the impressive amount of organic research from universities around the globe. The compilation of abstracts for the entire congress runs over 500 pages. So I will share my impressions and urge you to consult the Book of Abstracts, available from the IFOAM website: www.ifoam.org.

The first two days of the Congress opened in a huge tent with plenary sessions devoted to IFOAM’s four principles of organic agriculture: ecology, care, fairness and health. Jorgen E. Olesen and Vandana Shiva spoke on ecology. After reviewing the mounting evidence that organic agriculture uses less energy than conventional agriculture, Olesen, a Danish professor of agro-meteorology, challenged IFOAM to reduce international trade. Support for organic business is fine and a source of revenue, Olesen said, but in conflict with the principle of ecology. In her usual fiery and brilliant style, Vandana proposed changing the pyramid of growth and replacing the current crisis in the price of food. According to the value of organic agriculture, coordinated the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for many years to bring attention to the current crisis in the price of food. According to the FAO’s report, 20 million hectares to organic production by 2010, and their success in providing the low-income citizens of La Paz with 80 percent of their food from small-scale organic farms.

Nadia El-Hage Scialabba, who has worked within the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for many years to bring attention to the value of organic agriculture, coordinated the session on Organic Agriculture and Climate Change. In her opening remarks, Scialabba spoke about the current crisis in the price of food. According to the FAO’s report, 20 million hectares to organic production by 2010, and their success in providing the low-income citizens of La Paz with 80 percent of their food from small-scale organic farms.
to FAO statistics, food prices rose 24% in 2007 and 53% in 2008. Increases in the price of food are especially threatening to the food security of developing countries where people spend 70 to 80% of their budgets on food. The main factors underlying the increase, according to Scialabba, are the decline in food stocks due to increasing numbers of climate disasters, the privatization of control of food stocks, the rise in energy costs, the use of crops for biofuels (47% of the vegetable oil in European Union countries goes for biodiesel), the decline of the dollard speculation on crop markets. Scialabba concluded that the implications for organic agriculture are the urgency of promoting local food systems and fair trade and improving the use of energy.

Claude Aubert, a pioneer in organic agriculture in France, reported on the International Scientific Dialogue on Organic Agriculture and Climate Change held in April 2008. He stated that agriculture is responsible for 30% of CO2 emissions, half of which comes from fertilizer production. Aubert cited studies that show that organic agriculture uses less energy (26% less per ton of output), and emits significantly lower levels of nitrous oxide, especially where legumes are used. He advocated a change in eating habits to local, organic food, with less meat and less packaging.

In addition to her contributions to the congress, Vandana Shiva introduced a Manifesto on Climate Change and Food Security. The manifesto stresses that the problems of our world are largely political – the lack of will to make change. Vandana denounced the Kyoto Protocol as a non-solution that does not even touch on agriculture; an emissions trading system allows polluters to get paid for continuing to pollute. Together with the other presenters at this session, Vandana believes that organic agriculture has a major role in mitigating the food and climate crisis. Every step that mitigates the effects of climate change also helps us adapt to those changes. When we add organic matter to the soil, we raise its water holding capacity and reduce the need for irrigation. In conclusion, Vandana called for a transition in knowledge to local and indigenous.

The Social Justice module took up a full day of presentations at the Congress, which also included many relevant papers in other sessions, as well as a full day on Women in organic agriculture, and a half day on Food Sovereignty, featuring a major address by Miquel Altiere. There were so many simultaneous sessions in different buildings that it was impossible to attend them all or to get to all the people concerned with the social agenda for organic agriculture together. Jacqueline Haessig Alleje, a member of the World Board, helped organize and moderated the SJ module. Swiss by birth, Jacqueline lives in the Philippines where she and her Philippine husband and their 5 children run a dairy farm, the first to be certified organic in the Manila region.

In her introduction to the module, Jacqueline set the tone, stating that Social Justice is as integral to organic agriculture as soil health.

Unlike the 2 and 3-day social justice sessions the Agricultural Justice Project has organized at previous IFOAM conferences, the Social Justice module allowed very little time for discussion. The day was packed with paper after paper, each speaker limited to 7 ½ or 10 minutes so that all could fit in the allotted time. Only the absence of a few presenters left a little time for questions and interactions. The program included presentations on an Ethiopian honey project, a Brazilian cooperative selling fair trade coffee, and a presentation on the Agricultural Justice Project. Michael Sligh on the broader issues of organic guarantee systems, Richard Mandelbaum speaking on migrant workers, an organizing project in Colombia, another in Palestine, two survey projects, one from Austria and one from Great Britain evaluating communication of social values, a paper arguing the need for equivalence among the fair trade organic projects, Mr. Mesh of Quality Certification Services (QCS) and Manfred Fuerst of Naturland on implementing social standards in organic certification, and a group of papers on “social farming,” defined as projects involving either prisoners or socially disadvantaged people in organic farms. In the final 20 minutes open for discussion, all we could do was agree to develop a recommendation to IFOAM at the Saturday session, and Richard and I distributed draft papers on “social farming,” defined as projects involving either prisoners or socially disadvantaged people in organic farms. In the final 20 minutes open for discussion, all we could do was agree to develop a recommendation to IFOAM at the Saturday session, and Richard and I distributed draft language and language from a recommendation that passed at the 2005 congress. I later learned from Thomas Cierpka that IFOAM had followed up on the 2005 recommendation by producing a Guide to Implementing Social Standards, available for download from the IFOAM website (to find it, go to Search, then click on “Social Justice”).

The half-day social justice discussion did not have a large attendance due mainly to scheduling complexities – the GALCI (Latin American) and Asia-Oceania Congresses have a large attendance due mainly to scheduling complexities. The Organic Agriculture Institute presented the case for “Slow Trade,” a critique of the dominant neo-liberal system of “free trade.” Sachs called for five propositions: 1. give countries the right to govern their own imports, 2. invest in domestic solutions that help the common good while not harming foreigners, 3. set standards for quality, 4. democratize the food chain, and 5. redress the current asymmetry in global markets by placing priority on national food security, with fair and organic trade for the entire food system.

Establish a definition of Social Justice in Organic Agriculture, based on the declaration of human rights of the UN. The IFOAM revisions and taking into account the regional socio-economic conditions and the different cultural contexts. The definition of Social Justice in Organic Agriculture will focus on the rights and perspectives of women, children, farmers and workers.

IFOAM will support the Social Justice Forum to host a conference on Social Justice in Organic Agriculture

Unfortunately, the General Assembly had too long an agenda and did not get to the recommendations, which will be circulated to and voted on by the membership electronically.

I also attended a session devoted to Organic Markets. The plenary included speakers from the US who were advocating the certification of marketing cooperatives as a way to get certified organic produce to one of the largest food corporations on the globe. Helga Willer from the Swiss Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) presented the latest statistics on organic farmland, crops and percent of organic through more emphasis on values formation.

The next four speakers contrasted stunningly with one another. Wolfgang Sachs from the Wuppertal Institute presented the case for “Slow Trade,” a critique of the dominant neo-liberal system of “free trade.” Sachs called for five propositions: 1. give countries the right to govern their own imports, 2. invest in domestic solutions that help the common good while not harming foreigners, 3. set standards for quality, 4. democratize the food chain, and 5. redress the current asymmetry in global markets by placing priority on national food security, with fair and organic trade for the entire food system.
Following up on Sach, Jan Kees Vis from Unilever put the audience in its place by declaring that the volume of trade controlled by Unilever surpasses the entire world trade in organic products. Unilever, according to Vis, is investing in sustainability and works with geographical indicators and working with groups of small farmers in Africa. However, Unilever requires a large volume of sustainably produced raw materials. He concluded by saying that organic is a business best, with farmers.

The final two speakers, Daniele Giovannucci and Farmer John Peterson proved that Vis is right, telling their stories with far more authenticity than the corporate story they delivered. Giovannucci talked about the value to small holders of geographical indicators, a new way of defining local that fulfills the need of consumers. Peterson gave a brief but moving version of his personal story, “The Real Dirt on Farmer John.” If you have not seen his film, check it out soon!

Next I attended two closely related modules on “short supply chain and local markets” and participatory guarantee systems (PGS). The short supply chain sessions included presentations on Community Supported Agriculture in the US, Japan, France, Canada and England, Slow Food, and several organic and marketing initiatives. In the discussion, passionate words were exchanged about the urgency of including low-income, landless and people who live outside the money economy in organic agriculture. The PGS session clarified the meaning of a PGS – local organizing of small-scale farms selling direct with education, empowerment of farmers, and democratic participation.

I also attended a meeting between most of the members of the Urgenci board (an international network of organic projects, represented in Modena by Samuel Thirion, acting president, Shinya Hashimoto and Murayama from Japan, Daniel Vuillon, the first of 1000 farmers to adopt AMAP (Association pour le maintien des exploitations paysannes) in France, and a farmer from Mali, whose name, unfortunately, I did not catch) and IFOAM representatives (Angela Caudle, and World Board members Ong Kung Wai, Mette Melgard, Vice President, and Brendan Hoare). The conclusion was that partnering in some way was possible and that Urgenci should begin talking with the PGS Forum of IFOAM. Urgenci would like joint sponsorship of a conference in France to persuade authorities that CSAs and PGS are legitimate ways to offer an organic guarantee. The Urgenci group then rushed off to Rome to a meeting with FAO to talk about organic standards, to open the certification system to easier access for developing countries, the WB has been working on a scheme to decouple the IFOAM standads from non IFOAM recognition. Although the WB chart for the new concept refers to “best management practices,” and a code of ethics for certifiers, these pieces have yet to be developed.

Since 2005, the World Board has been struggling with a revision of the OGS. Taking as their rationale the need to open the certification system to easier access for developing countries, the WB has been working on a scheme to decouple the IFOAM standards from non IFOAM recognition. Although the WB chart for the new concept refers to “best management practices,” and a code of ethics for certifiers, these pieces have yet to be developed.

The WB directed their attention first at replacing the IFOAM Basic Standards (IBS) with “benchmark” standards that were meant to serve as a baseline for organic certification programs, the lowest common denominator. IFOAM members, including yours truly, responded with such emphatic criticism that, after 3 revisions, the WB realized that approach would not work. A week or so before the GA, they came up with a new concept – IFOAM Requirements for Organic Standards (IROS): a set of standards for standards that would be used to set types of standards that would then be helpful to specific communities. The WB chart for the new concept refers to “best management practices,” and a code of ethics for certifiers, these pieces have yet to be developed.

To prepare for the WB elections, Michael Sligh and I decided that members needed to know where the candidates stand on the major issues facing IFOAM. While the GA agenda provides for introductions of the candidates, with only 4 minutes each, there was no possibility of learning very much. So we developed a questionnaire and sent it out to the candidates. 15 of the 26 (after reduced to 22) responded. I compiled their answers into a 24-page document and was able to send it to the IFOAM membership email list before the GA. We also made 100 copies and had them printed. Many members told me that this was very helpful. Based on these responses and our familiarity with some of the candidates, Gerben Tienstra and I determined that a short list of candidates who could be trusted to put the development of local markets and smallholder empowerment as the top priority for IFOAM rather than emphasizing international trade. While the candidates were counted, all 5 of those elected in the first round were on our list. Existing president Gerald Hermann announced his withdrawal from further balloting, saying he did not feel he could put aside his duties to the members to continue as president. In the second round, two more from our list were elected. Only Jim Riddle failed to be elected to the WB.

When the WB was convened to elect officers, they selected Katherine diMattio as President, since neither Roberto Ugás nor Urs Niggli, who had received close to 100 more votes each, were available at the time for that job, although they agreed to serve as vice-presidents. So we have a “coalition” government for IFOAM, a definite improvement on the previous Executive Board.

In his 4-minute speech, Roberto Ugás summed up the feeling of the members present. Roberto declared that poverty is the worst threat to sustainable agriculture and organic agriculture is the answer, and IFOAM must keep organic standards high since the problems for developing countries are with the procedures and price of certification, not with standards.

As a side circus to all this serious business, three countries - South Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines competed to host the 2011 congress in 2011 congress to native concerns and tell the prospective assembly of food, and even little presents. Korea was clearly the best prepared and financed and won the competition. They promise to make it a big event for small-scale farmers from developing countries to the next GA and to offer tours of agriculture in China, and North and South Korea.

The abundance of motions and the energy with which each was discussed prevented the GA from coming to any conclusion for a lack of time. The motions that passed that clarified the membership of IFOAM chose a World Board that could be trusted to put the development of organic agriculture is the answer, and IFOAM must keep organic standards high since the problems for developing countries are with the procedures and price of certification, not with standards.

As a side circus to all this serious business, three countries - South Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines competed to host the 2011 congress in 2011 congress to native concerns and tell the prospective assembly of food, and even little presents. Korea was clearly the best prepared and financed and won the competition. They promise to make it a big event for small-scale farmers from developing countries to the next GA and to offer tours of agriculture in China, and North and South Korea.

The abundance of motions and the energy with which each was discussed prevented the GA from coming to any conclusion for a lack of time. The motions that passed that clarified the membership of IFOAM chose a World Board that could be trusted to put the development of organic agriculture is the answer, and IFOAM must keep organic standards high since the problems for developing countries are with the procedures and price of certification, not with standards.

As a side circus to all this serious business, three countries - South Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines competed to host the 2011 congress in 2011 congress to native concerns and tell the prospective assembly of food, and even little presents. Korea was clearly the best prepared and financed and won the competition. They promise to make it a big event for small-scale farmers from developing countries to the next GA and to offer tours of agriculture in China, and North and South Korea.

The abundance of motions and the energy with which each was discussed prevented the GA from coming to any conclusion for a lack of time. The motions that passed that clarified the membership of IFOAM chose a World Board that could be trusted to put the development of organic agriculture is the answer, and IFOAM must keep organic standards high since the problems for developing countries are with the procedures and price of certification, not with standards.

As a side circus to all this serious business, three countries - South Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines competed to host the 2011 congress in 2011 congress to native concerns and tell the prospective assembly of food, and even little presents. Korea was clearly the best prepared and financed and won the competition. They promise to make it a big event for small-scale farmers from developing countries to the next GA and to offer tours of agriculture in China, and North and South Korea.

The abundance of motions and the energy with which each was discussed prevented the GA from coming to any conclusion for a lack of time. The motions that passed that clarified the membership of IFOAM chose a World Board that could be trusted to put the development of organic agriculture is the answer, and IFOAM must keep organic standards high since the problems for developing countries are with the procedures and price of certification, not with standards.

As a side circus to all this serious business, three countries - South Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines competed to host the 2011 congress in 2011 congress to native concerns and tell the prospective assembly of food, and even little presents. Korea was clearly the best prepared and financed and won the competition. They promise to make it a big event for small-scale farmers from developing countries to the next GA and to offer tours of agriculture in China, and North and South Korea.

The abundance of motions and the energy with which each was discussed prevented the GA from coming to any conclusion for a lack of time. The motions that passed that clarified the membership of IFOAM chose a World Board that could be trusted to put the development of organic agriculture is the answer, and IFOAM must keep organic standards high since the problems for developing countries are with the procedures and price of certification, not with standards.

As a side circus to all this serious business, three countries - South Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines competed to host the 2011 congress in 2011 congress to native concerns and tell the prospective assembly of food, and even little presents. Korea was clearly the best prepared and financed and won the competition. They promise to make it a big event for small-scale farmers from developing countries to the next GA and to offer tours of agriculture in China, and North and South Korea.
New from the 2008 NOFA Summer Conference:

0801 Maple Sugaring
0802 Overwinter of Bees in NE Mark Robar
0803 Keynote: Healthy Food & Soil Arden Anderson
0805 Winter Squash Bryan Connolly, Diane Dorfer
0806 Organic Sweet Corn Ruth Hazzard, Abay Seaman
0807 Keynote: Value of Raw Milk Mark Mcalefe
0808 Overwintering Greens Bryan O’Hara, Kim Stoner
0809 Potatoes! Rob Durgan, Bryan O’Hara
0810 Sidehill Dairy Tour A. Klippenstein, P. Laciński

For a full list of the 146 videos available, visit
www.nofa.org/conference/video/index.php

$15 each

Please send me the circled VHS videos. I enclose $15 for each in the form of a check to “NOFA Video Project” NOFA Video Project, 411 Sheldon Rd., Barre, MA 01005
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 membership in one of the most active grassroots organizations in the state.

**NOFA Membership**

**Connecticut**: Individual $35, Family $50, Business/Institution $100, Supporting $150, Student/Secondary $25, Working $20

Contact: CT NOFA, Box 164, Stevenson, CT 06491, (203) 888-5146, or email: ctinfo@ctnofa.org or join on the web at www.ctnofa.org

**Massachusetts**: Low-Income $20, Individual $35, Family/Farm/Organization $45, Business $75, Supporting $150

Contact: Kathleen Geary, 411 Sheldon Road, Barre, MA 01005, (978) 355-2853, or email: info@nofamass.org

**Vermont**: Individual $30, Student $23, Family $40, Sponsor $100, Business $20*

Contact: Elizabeth Obelenus, 478 Salvas Rd., Huntington, VT 05452, (802) 434-4435, enid@nofa.org

**New Hampshire**: 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**: Individual $30, Student/Secondary $25, Family $40, Sponsor $100, Business $20*

Contact: Elizabeth Obelenus, 478 Salvas Rd., Huntington, VT 05452, (802) 434-4435, enid@nofa.org

**Rhode Island**: Individual $35, Family/Farm $40, Business $50, Sponsor $100, Steward $250, Basic plus $15*2

Contact: NOFA-RI, c/o Abbie Barber POB 86 Shannock, R I 02875 (401) 364-7557, shannockorganicfarm@hotmail.com

**Vermont**: Individual $30, Farm/Family $40, Business $50, Sponsor $100, Steward $250, Basic plus $15*2

Contact: NOFA-VT, PO Box 697, Richmond, VT 05477, (802) 434-4212, info@nofavt.org

*does not include a subscription to The Natural Farmer
High tunnels, hoop houses, and greenhouses are popping up all over the Northeast as farmers attempt to meet growing demand for local produce in the wintertime.

This issue contains news, features, and articles about organic growing in the Northeast, plus a special supplement on Winter Production and Sales.