NOFA Does it Again:
One More Fabulous Summer Conference

by Mindy Harris, Summer Conference Publicity Coordinator and
Amy Scheuerman, Public Relations Intern

By all accounts, the 36th Annual Summer Conference at UMass Amherst was a smashing success. This year rivaled past years, with approximately 1400 attendees, over 200 workshops, 100 exhibitors, and loads of fun and immeasurable good will. The keynote speakers packed their respective presentations each night and brought very different contributions and perspectives to their talks.

Sally Fallon Morell, Weston A. Price Foundation president, is a nutrition expert who advocates raw milk, fermented foods, animal fats, cod liver oil and salt as essential foundations of a healthy diet. She spoke as Friday keynoter. Catherine Murphy, a documentary filmmaker, Cuban studies expert, and Food First Fellow, stepped in for Dr. Fernando Funes, the originally scheduled Saturday keynoter, who could not make it to the states from Havana, Cuba. The conference was preceded by the Northeast Raw Milk Symposium, which hosted about 80 participants from around the region. Guest speakers included Sally Fallon Morell, Pete Kennedy, from the Farm to Consumer Legal Defense Fund, and a number of raw milk farmers from across the Northeast.

The Friday keynote address was focused on a relatively new topic - salt. In deference to her well-versed audience, Morell breezed past her conventional plug for raw milk. Instead, after a brief reminder to bolt butter and gorge on goose fat, she moved onto the new enemy: low sodium diets. In her keynote, Fallon Morell outlined the ways that salt has affected the rise and fall of civilizations, how it aids our bodies, and how using more salt can actually help Americans increase their vegetable consumption. She urged attendees to continue to salt their foods and make sure that their organically grown veggies were delectably marketed with recipes including a healthy dose of animal fats and a dash of sodium chloride. To end her address Fallon Morell left us with the following message, “We are all worthy of participating in bounty and diversity and deliciousness. We must nourish ourselves and take care of ourselves. Corporations think the future is in their hands, but it is in our hands.

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Much of the conference focused on the tent housing registration and exhibits, and the pond lawn where the fair took place.

Some workshops were held outdoors to enjoy the lovely weather.
For many of us small organic farmers in the Northeast, the financial return we get for our work is quite modest. Some of us earn less per hour than our workers, some make less than minimum wage, some even lose money despite their free labor. But there are some who are doing well, too - paying themselves a living wage and having enough left over to put something away for retirement and reinvest in improvements to the farm. Whichever side of the profit picture we are on, most of us don’t want to talk about our bottom line publicly. But economic sustainability is necessary for farm sustainability, so we need to shed some light on this area.

In this issue we attempt just that. We look at some of the issues framing why people enter this profession, as well as some of the numbers economists study. Organic farming is a relatively new phenomenon for our national statisticians. The recent 2007 Census of Agriculture and 2008 Organic Survey have begun to track organic farms and markets. We present some of the more relevant numbers from that exhaustive data. Those interested in the full report and the accompanying charts and tables can find them at www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Online_Highlights/Organics/

But for most of us, our experiences are personal and unique. National or regional or even statewide data does not seem anywhere near as important as our own individual bottom lines. For these folks we have some specific case studies of organic farms and their bottom lines. A detailed study of 19 midwestern organic farms presents a wealth of dollars and cents numbers which readers will find quite helpful. For those interested in organic dairying, a recent look at 35 farms in Vermont and Maine gives detailed figures about the costs, herd sizes, and income generated in this sector of our industry.

Richard Wiswall, a Vermont organic farmer who has written a well-received book on tracking farm finances (reviewed in the book review section of this issue) had written a thoughtful plea to pay attention to your farm numbers if you plan to stay in business. A simple look at your profit centers and where you are spending more than you make will help your operation adjust to these realities and stay around for the long haul. Liz Henderson has laid out some helpful numbers, from her experience, that farmers should know about realistic expenses, while making sure that the larger vision and values of what we are doing are not ignored.

Lastly, we have two features on farmers -- in New Hampshire and Connecticut. One has done exceptionally well, financially, and one has not. Both have been willing to share their numbers, their Schedule Fs and answer probing questions about their decisions and methods.

We hope all this can help you run a more thoughtful, joyous and sustainable farming operation.
Please help us thank these Friends of Organic Farming for their generous support!

Blow Your Own Horn!

OFRF (Organic Farming Research Foundation) is seeking an executive director who will bring authenticity, financial savvy, and integrity to the work. Full-time position based in Santa Cruz, California with access to farmers markets, fine art and music venues, quality restaurants, the Pacific Ocean and redwood forests. Start date: First quarter of 2011. Deadline for applications: September 13, 2010 or until position is filled. Compensation: Competitive salary and benefits, Confidential Application Process. Inquiries from candidates are welcomed and should be directed to Margaret Donohoe, leadership transition consultant at (408) 979-0572. For more info, please visit our web site at http://www.OFRF.org

Successors sought for thriving, 38 acre, lowbush blueberry farm. Land has been permanently preserved and walking access assured. Strong retail customer community, beautiful vistas, annual farm festival, and value added products. Asking $275,000. Gradual transition preferred.

Dave Gott & Ted Watt in Heath, MA. 413-337-5340

www.bensonplace.org

Farm For Sale. Savoy MA. 3 br, 1 ba. very well kept ranch house (built in 1986) with oversize newer attached 2 car garage. Immaculate property with small barn, chicken coop, one stall horse barn, shed, blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, hundreds of Christmas trees, large market garden with water in field in two spots. Has been organically farmed since 1997. 3.3 acres mostly open. $219,900 For details contact Joe Bettis at jbettisjr@verizon.net or 413-743-8132.

Woodstock, CT family seeks tenants for apartment on former organic CSA site. Bright, 2 bedroom, 1000 sq. ft. apt. utilities included, on-site laundry, solar hot water, PV, private back deck, excellent drinking water, big sky, breezy hilltop, bird life. Established 80x100 deer-proof vegetable garden, plus 3 more available acres for flora or fauna. Supportive community. References required. contact glswearnam@att.net

Little Falls, NY. 80 acres for sale. This property is a geographically and ecologically varied land form consisting of excellent soils, rolling topography, sheltered ravines, maturing forest with frontage on West Canada Creek and paved town road. Land meets standards for organic certification. Asking $165,000. For details see www.bowne.info or contact Doug Bowne at doug@bowne.info, 315-866-1403.

FOR SALE: MOFGA-certified organic seed garlic. Bogatyr, Georgian Crystal, German X-Hardy, German White, Metechi, Music, Phillips, Rosewood, Russian Red, Siberian Red. One to 50 lbs @ $16 per lb, 51-100 lbs @ $14/lb, more than 100 lbs @ $12/lb; plus shipping. Five per cent discount on orders received by Sept 1. David McDaniel or Heather Selin, Earth Dharma Farm, 207 722 3386, heather@earthdharmafarm.com, www.earthdharmafarm.com.

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News Notes
compiled by Jack Kittredge

Family Organic Purchases Up Despite Economy
An Organic Trade Association (OTA) study of 2009 purchases finds that 31 percent of American families are actually buying more organic food than a year ago. Researchers gathered data from 1200 families across the country for the study. source: Organic Processing, July/August, 2009

US Organic Product Sales Reach $26.6 Billion
According to a 2010 OTA study, organic product sales grew by 5.3% last year to reach $26.6 billion. Total US food sales grew by only 1.6%, in comparison. Organic fruit and vegetable sales were $9.5 billion, representing 11.4% of total US fruit and vegetable sales. source: The Organic and Non-GMO Report

Supreme Court Alfalfa Decision a Defeat for Monsanto’s Ambitions
The 7-1 decision issued June 21 by the Supreme Court reversed an injunction banning sales of GMO alfalfa, but, more importantly, left that ban intact, and the planting and sale of GMO alfalfa illegal. Monsanto immediately hit the press with the claim that it had “won” because the injunction was overturned. But the ruling isn’t close to the victory they were hoping for.

The Supreme Court ruled that an injunction against planting was unnecessary since, under lower courts’ rulings, Roundup Ready Alfalfa became a regulated item and illegal to plant. In other words, the injunction was “overkill” because the USDA had violated the National Environmental Policy Act and other environmental laws when it approved Roundup Ready alfalfa. The court felt that voiding the USDA’s decision to make the crop legally available for sale was enough. A different ruling could have had far-reaching ramifications and impacted the fastest growing sector of the US agriculture market — organic. But the court clearly saw that and opted, instead, to rule very narrowly.

In addition, the High Court did not rule on several arguments presented by Monsanto about the application of federal environmental law. As a result, the Court did not make any ruling that could have been hurtful to the National Environmental Policy Act or any other environmental laws. In addition, the Court opinion supported the argument that gene flow is a serious environmental and economic threat. This means that genetic contamination from GMOs can still be considered harmful under the law, both from an environmental and economic perspective.

This Court opinion is in many ways a victory for the environment, for farmers, and for consumers and a defeat for Monsanto’s hopes of a green light. To represent this opinion in any other way is just spin. source: the Huffington Post, June 21, 2010

Vermicomposted Manure Said to Suppress Late Blight Better than Vermicomposted Biosolids.
In composting, how important a role does the starting material play in disease suppression? Polish scientist, Magdalena Szczech, and colleagues found that vermicompost made from cow, sheep and horse manure suppressed disease caused by Phytophthora infestans in tomato, while vermicomposted biosolids did not. There is a large body of scientific literature on disease suppressive thermophilic composts that deals with a range of feedstocks. However, it’s difficult to compare between studies because experimental methods can differ widely.


Mark Lipson Moves to NOP
ORF’s Senior Policy Analyst Mark Lipson has accepted a position at the USDA as Program Specialist for Organic Farming. We wish him luck! source: The Organic Broadcaster, July/August 2010

European Union Allows Member States ‘Home Rule’ on GMO Plantings
The founding principle of the European Union – the common market – has been broken by the European Commission’s decision in July to allow each member state to do its own thing regarding the cultivation of genetically modified (GM) crops. As EU health and consumer affairs commissioner John Dalli put it, “we are basically giving much more flexibility to member states to restrict the cultivation of GMOs in their countries”. Or, instead, to promote them. Thus, for the first time, the single European market is proposed to be set aside, although this radically retrograde step will require the approval of the European Parliament and a qualified majority of the European Council, representing the member states.

The commission’s decision is a clear recognition of, and even response to, deep-seated divisions among member states over the cultivation and use. Despite years of lobbying by Monsanto and other biotech companies, Ireland, Austria, Bulgaria, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg and Poland remain opposed, while the Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden are in favor.

New Law Prohibits Chemical Pesticides on all School Grounds in New York
New York Governor Patterson has signed the Child Safe Playing Fields Act, which bans the use of chemical pesticides on all school grounds at both public and private schools. “We’ll never have 100% evidence that a particular chemical exposure has caused a toxic injury,” says Dr. Leo Trasande, pediatrician and Co-Director of the Children’s Environmental Health Center at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, “but we have a responsibility to our children to prevent toxic exposures so that they don’t carry the burden of disease in the future.” A recent report on the comparative costs of natural vs. chemical turf management showed that natural turf management could cost significantly less. The report was widely credited with helping to convince legislators to support the measure.
source: Grassroots Environmental Education press release, May 18, 2010

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source: Grassroots Environmental Education press release, May 18, 2010
Rats Fatten More on High-Fructose Corn Syrup
A Princeton University research team has found that rats with access to high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS) gain significantly more weight than those with access to table sugar, even though overall caloric intake was the same. All rats drinking HFCS, even at levels well below those in soda pop, became obese, without exception. Scientists suspect that the chemical composition of the HFCS—the fructose being unbound and available for immediate absorption—makes it more easily utilized by the body than that of cane or beet sugar, where the fructose is bound to glucose and requires an extra metabolic step before utilization.

source: Maine Organic Farmer and Gardener, June-August 2010

US Needs 13 Million More Acres of Fruits and Vegetables to Meet the RDA
The American Farmland Trust has estimated that we need another 13 million acres of farmland growing fruits and vegetables just for Americans to meet the minimum daily requirement of fruits and vegetables set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) 2005 dietary guidelines. “With the majority of these fruits and vegetables grown in the path of development, and the need for 13 million more acres, we must ask, how can we afford to lose another acre of farmland and still expect to improve the health of our nation?” asks AFT president Jon Scholl.

source: AFT press release, July 7, 2010

CoolBot – A Poor Man’s Walk-in Cooler
Ron Khosla, New York organic farmer and activist in the Certified Naturally Grown movement, will perhaps endear himself most to organic farming history by his invention of the ingenious “CoolBot.” About the size of a paperback book, it is an electronic device that fools a normal room air conditioner into continuing to lower the temperature down to almost 32˚F. (It does this by holding a tiny heating element against the temperature sensor of the AC unit. Yes, it does have a system to prevent the AC from icing up as it goes into this uncharted territory.) That way someone unable to afford a walk-in cooler for the normal $3000 to $8000 price of a small good used unit can throw together some studs, insulation and plywood, make an insulated box with a door, cut a hole, install a used room air conditioner, attach a $300 CoolBot, plug it all in and voila—a home made walk-in cooler for less than $1000! I talked with my refrigeration guy about it (I see a lot of him as we have a 50-year old cork-insulated 7x7 foot walk-in with a belt drive we got as an ancient hand-me-down in 1982, and he keeps shaking his head about how much longer it may or may not work.) He was enthusiastic about CoolBots, even though you would think they would be cutting into his business. Apparently the simplicity of the idea sparked his admiration more than it did his jealousy. He said the only problem is that a CoolBot/AC combo will not work well when it is cold out. If you use it for spring and fall cooling, at under 50˚F outside temperature, say, the efficiency goes way down and at even colder temperatures, it may not work at all. (Khosla says that depends on the brand of air conditioner you have. He recommends LG.) But with those daytime temperatures, if you are not going in and out a lot, you can just bring in nighttime air and shut out daytime air with fans and vents and run it like a root cellar. Check the CoolBot out at http://www.storeitcold.com/index.php. As you would expect, Ron has a lot of good info up there.

GMO Crops Widespread in US
USDA data about insect & herbicide tolerant genetically engineered crops show the staggering extent of the acceptance of biotech crops in the US. According to their figures, in 2010, herbicide tolerant soybeans composed 93% of soy acres planted, herbicide tolerant corn was planted to 70% of corn acres, and herbicide tolerant cotton was planted on 78% of cotton acres.

source: http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/BiotechCrops/

Bob Scowcroft Retires as OFRF (Organic Farming Research Foundation) Executive Director
Bob Scowcroft, founder and executive director of OFRF, will retire in March, 2011. He will be much missed by the organic community. During Bob’s twenty-year tenure, OFRF has played a central role in gaining organic research support at the federal level and OFRF itself has awarded more than $2.5 million in grants to organic research and education projects. OFRF has also worked in Washington, D.C. to get organic farming policies and programs that benefit organic farmers.

source: OFRF press release, July 9, 2010
A federal appeals court ruled in early August, overturning a lower court decision, that a group of California almond farmers have the right to challenge a USDA regulation requiring the treatment of their raw almonds with a toxic fumigant or steam heat prior to sale to consumers. For the past three years, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has denied American consumers the right to buy raw almonds, grown in the USA, when they shop in grocery and natural food stores.

A group of almond growers sued the government to challenge USDA’s rule, but the federal district court ruled that courtroom doors were closed to the growers’ claims. The USDA and the Almond Board of California imposed the treatment scheme to minimize the risk of salmonella contamination outbreaks like those that had occurred with almonds in 2001 and 2004. USDA investigators were never able to determine how salmonella bacteria somehow contaminated the raw almonds that caused the food illnesses but they were able to trace back one of the outbreaks, in part, to the country’s largest “factory farm,” growing almonds and pistachios on over 9,000 acres. Family-scale growers have argued that the onerous and expensive mandated treatment regime is only needed by the giant industrial producers, who have less control over the quality of their nuts, and has hurt their market because of consumer resistance. source: http://www.cornucopia.org/almond/Koretoff_DCCir_Opinion.pdf.

Organic Valley/CROPP Disallows Raw Milk Sales by Members

By a 5 to 4 vote, in mid-May, the board of the CROPP dairy cooperative, owner of the Organic Valley brand, voted to not allow farmer-owners to sell raw milk. They cited challenges in managing milk quality, with less control over the quality of their nuts, and has hurt their market because of consumer resistance. source: http://www.cornucopia.org/almond/Koretoff_DCCir_Opinion.pdf.

Budget Shortfalls Hit Illinois Prison Diet


Russian Seed Bank Threatened

A Russian court has ruled that the world’s first seed bank, outside of St. Petersburg, Russia, may be destroyed in order to make way for a housing development. Called “A Living Library”, 90% of the Pavlovsk Experimental Station collection’s varieties are not found anywhere else on the planet. Founded in 1926 by Russian agricultural scientist Nikolai Vavilov, the station became an icon of human perseverance when 12 Soviet scientists made a stand, choosing to starve to death rather than eat the precious seed and plant collection during the grueling 900-day siege of Leningrad between 1941 and 1943. Supporters of the seed bank are calling for appeals to Russia’s President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin to stop this destruction.


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EPA Fines Monsanto $2.5 Million for Distributing Misbranded GMO

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has announced that Monsanto has agreed to pay a $2.5 million penalty for misbranding violations related to the sale and distribution of cotton seed products containing genetically engineered pesticides. This is the largest civil administrative penalty ever recovered under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA).

Monsanto Bollgard and Bollgard II cotton seed is genetically engineered to contain Bacillus thuringiensis which acts as a pesticide. EPA restricted planting of the cotton seed product in 10 Texas counties to protect against pests becoming resistant to Bt and other microbial products used in sprays and dusts. Monsanto was required to control the sale and distribution of the cotton seed, but in 2007 disclosed to EPA that it had distributed misbranded Bollgard and Bollgard II cotton seed to customers in the Texas counties. EPA’s subsequent investigation confirmed that between 2002 and 2007, the company distributed or sold the cotton products more than 1,700 times nationwide without the planting restrictions in its grower guides.

source: EPA press release, July 8, 2010

New Guide Urges Organic Food Choices to Protect the Environment and Farmworkers

A new guide, Eating with a Conscience, explains how foods grown with hazardous chemicals contaminate water and air, hurt biodiversity, harm farmworkers, and kill bees, birds, fish and other wildlife, even if a large number of residues do not remain on the finished food product. The guide asks consumers to, when possible, buy organic food.

source: http://www.beyondpesticides.org/organic-food/conscience/chart.html

San Francisco Markets Sewage Sludge as “Organic”

Sludge from the city and seven other counties’ industrial, hospital, commercial and residential sewers is being marketed by the San Francisco Public Works as “Organic” San Francisco Markets Sewage Sludge as “Organic”

source: http://www.beyondpesticides.org/organic-food/conscience/chart.html

Two Years in Prison for Organic Violation

A Texas Department of Agriculture inspection has resulted in a 24-month prison term for a man found to be falsely portraying his company’s produce as organic. He also must pay over $500,000 in restitution and is prohibited from participating in the USDA organic program for five years.

source: The Germinator, Summer 2010

Organic Milk Higher in Key Nutrients

Cornell scientists have published a study comparing concentrations of heart-healthy fatty acids in samples of conventional rbST and organic whole milk. Conjugated linoleic acid levels were 23% higher in the organic sample, and omega 3 levels were 63% higher.

source: OEFFA News, Late Spring 2010

Court Rescinds USDA Approval of GMO Beets

Federal Judge Jeffrey White has rescinded the USDA’s approval of genetically engineered “Roundup Ready” sugar beets. In September 2009, the Court had found that the USDA violated the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) by approving the Monsanto-engineered biotech crop without first preparing an Environmental Impact Statement. The new ruling officially “vacated” the USDA “de-regulation” of Monsanto’s biotech sugar beets and prohibited any further planting and sale pending the agency’s compliance with NEPA and all other relevant laws. USDA has estimated that an EIS may be ready by 2012.


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Bats have long been among the creatures most maligned by myths and folktales. Flitting in and out of sight at dusk or hanging silently in the warmth of a quiet attic, they are somewhat otherworldly in both appearance and behavior. They have mammalian bodies and papery wings—a bizarre complement, their erratic, nocturnal flight and communal roosting habits equally unfamiliar. They seem to be part of a dimension we are unable or unwilling to access, and though we share habitat, often in closer proximity than we may realize, most people are reluctant to relinquish the idea of bats as dangerous, disease-ridden, or otherwise undesirable company. We should recognize, though, as we watch them swooping above ponds or streams in the waning hours of a summer evening, that their presence does us far more good than harm.

Organic farmers and gardeners know better than almost anyone just how many insects can fill a summer sky, but may be less aware that bats are a key partner in controlling insect populations. As voracious insectivores, individual bats may consume up to a thousand insects an hour, reducing pest populations that would otherwise destroy agricultural crops or threaten public health. In turn, organic farms and gardens foster an abundance and diversity of insects that conventional growers destroy through the use of pesticides. This prey base means that organic farms consistently host a higher abundance and diversity of bat species than their conventional counterparts. In this respect, as in so many others, organic agriculture comes closer to maintaining a natural, sustainable ecological equilibrium. Unfortunately, this partnership between humans and bats is being severely disrupted as Northeastern bat populations are decimated by an emerging fungal pathogen.

White-nose syndrome (WNS) first discovered in upstate New York in the winter of 2006-2007. Named for the characteristic white fungus found encircling the muzzles of infected individuals, the disease has rapidly spread to fourteen states and two Canadian provinces. It is estimated that in four winters, WNS has killed well over a million bats in caves or abandoned mines (termed hibernacula) as they congregate to spend the coldest months of the year in caves or abandoned mines (termed hibernacula). Among individual bats as they gather to hibernate colonially, though it may also be acquired from fungal spores present in hibernacula. Several lines of evidence suggest that human activity is a primary cause of widespread WNS outbreaks. Despite the geographic pattern of spread has been described as “leapfrogging” because sequentially infected colonies have been located great distances apart (farther than infected bats are likely to disperse), the sole vector of introduction is still not well understood, the fungus has been identified as a new species and named Geomyces destructans for its devastating effect on hibernating bat populations. While the fungus is the most visible symptom of the disease, it seems not to be the primary cause of death. Affected bats are essentially dying of starvation—something about the syndrome causes the fat reserves accumulated before entering hibernation to be depleted long before the winter is over. Since their insect prey is not available in the cold months, they simply run out of energy and perish.

Mortality rates between 70 and 90 percent are typical in WNS-affected hibernacula, though many colonies have been entirely annihilated. Caves that once hosted hundreds or thousands of bats are now empty. Nine species are currently known to be affected—the little brown bat, big brown bat, northern long-eared bat, tricolored bat (formerly known as the eastern pipistrelle), eastern small-footed bat, the newly-affected cave myotis and southeastern myotis, and two federally endangered species—the Indiana bat and the gray bat.

The origins of the disease are still unclear. Currently, the leading hypothesis asserts that cavers with infected gear introduced the fungus to North America—a genetically identical fungus has been confirmed on bats in several European countries—though this has yet to be confirmed as the sole vector of introduction. Scientists believe that white-nose syndrome is primarily transmitted among individual bats as they gather to hibernate colonially, though it may also be acquired from fungal spores present in hibernacula. Several lines of evidence suggest that humans are also partially responsible for the spread of the disease—the geographic pattern of spread has been described as “leapfrogging” because sequentially infected hibernacula have been located great distances apart (farther than infected bats are likely to disperse), many of the first caves to be infected were popular recreational caves, and caves inaccessible to humans are, as yet, less likely to be infected. This year, WNS has been newly confirmed in Maryland, Tennessee, Delaware, Missouri, Oklahoma, Ontario, and Quebec, and has continued to leave a wake of empty caves littered with tiny bodies in states already affected, including Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Perhaps most tragically, we, as land managers, farmers, gardeners, or general bat appreciators, remain largely helpless in the face of this epidemic. The most substantive efforts to stem the WNS catastrophe have been administrative cave closures—several state and federal agencies have closed their caves to recreational use so as to minimize human-mediated spread. However, a major lack of funding has hobbled cohesive research and management efforts—to date, Congress has appropriated only a small fraction of the amount deemed necessary by biologists and wildlife managers. Because the scale of the WNS epidemic necessitates that it be addressed on a national level, in May of this year NOFA chapters in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont, as well as from MOFGA in Maine, co-signed a plea authored by several national conservation groups for increased federal funding for efforts aimed at understanding and mitigating this crisis. As concerned citizens, our most useful role is to pressure our political representatives to give this issue the resources and attention it merits. Take action the old-fashioned way—call or write your Congressional representatives to voice your concern.

The Northeast is now facing the loss of the vast majority of its bats, and other regions may soon confront a similar plight. We are engaged in the proverbial race against time, and scrambling more desperately by the week to keep sight of the possibility that bat populations can be sustained, and in time recover, so the summer twilight may be punctuated by the flight of these unassuming allies for years to come.

For more information about WNS, visit: http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/campaigns/bat_crisis_white-nose_syndrome/index.html
Organic Farming – It Is Partly About Money

by Elizabeth Henderson

The mantra of corporate business is you are either growing or you are dying, or as Cornell and the other land grant schools have advised farmers. “Get bigger, or get out!” Family-scale organic farms have a different set of values. We want our farms businesses to be sustainable for our generation and for generations to come. To achieve this, our methods for growing food must be ecologically sound, putting back into the soil the nutrients that our crops take out, and improving or at least not damaging the natural systems upon which the farm depends. Like a living organism, the farm must reach the size that balances resources of land and people. Resilience is the key concept. To remain viable, the economics of our farm business dealings have to be fair for us as farmers, for the people who work for us, and for the people to whom we sell our food.

The pleasures of farming do compensate for the small financial returns. The great variety of physical and mental tasks makes running a family-scale organic farm both challenging and attractive. You can be your own boss, part time laborer and part-time practical scientist. A sort of farming fever lures people to this work where one of the main benefits is “ag,” the aesthetic gluttony of working with nature.

Northeast farmers spend our winters planning, doing financial management, marketing, and research on pest control, crop varieties, nutrient management, and equipment. During the growing season, farmers with more than 5 acres in production operate, maintain and repair machines. And then there are many hours of routine physical labor, growing crops, caring for livestock and manipulating the farmstead landscape and buildings. On a livestock farm, there are daily chores feeding animals, hauling buckets of water, sacks of feed, repairing fences. Vegetable growers spend hours in greenhouses seeding and transplanting, then planting, hoeing, weeding, harvesting, washing and packing produce in all kinds of weather.

Self-employed farmers have higher social status than farm workers, but not much more cash income: most carry a lot of debt. The hourly wage is often less than the minimum wages we pay our workers and many of our areas’ organic farms are among the 84% of all US farms that depend on a family member’s off-farm labor, especially for benefits like health insurance. Among NOFA farmers, a cash income after all expenses are paid of $30,000 a year from the farm would be considered successful.

Getting Started

If new farms are needed, what does it take to start an organic vegetable farm? The basics are land, with a good supply of clean water for irrigation and washing produce, training for the farmer, equipment (for tillage, weed control, tracking) and a minimum of infrastructure (barn, greenhouse, cooler).

I asked some young farmers what they had to invest to get started. Before farming on their own, each young farmer devoted 4 to 6 years in some combination of college study in horticulture and business management or internships on organic farms. They gained experience through jobs in landscaping, food coops or restaurants. Then began the search for land. One young man purchased 25 acres with a “fixer-upper” house, taking on a sizable mortgage. A young woman found an older farmer who agreed to lease 3 – 4 acres to her for just $1, land that could be sold for at least $8000 an acre as a big parcel or broken into house lots for $20,000 to $50,000 an acre.

His first year of production, the young man grew an acre of vegetables and sold them at a farmers market while supporting himself doing carpentry, landscaping and pruning. The second year, he spent $13,000 for the materials to build a 20’ by 40’ packing shed, and $3000 for materials for a 27’ by 48’ greenhouse doing all the labor himself. For equipment, he bought a late 80’s 25-horsepower tractor, a set of disks, a seeder, two mowers, and traded carpentry work for a rototiller, spending over $10,000 in all. His gross sales on 4 acres were $25,000, but he also paid $8000 for labor, 3 part time helpers at $7.50 an hour plus workers comp. Add on $3000 in expenses for seed, potting soil, fuel and parts. Do the math – the farmer’s salary – 50. By living with family and getting the land almost for free, the young woman hopes to net $6000 for herself.

There are never too many hands to do all the work on a farm and rarely enough dollars to pay for all that needs to be done. On the smallest farms, when asked about farm workers, the farmer might say, “Meet my farmhands – my right hand and my left hand.” Often, the farm work is shared among members of the immediate family. Unpaid family labor is essential to the whole economy of a small, integrated farm where one of the “products” is the people.

Our society as a whole looks down on jobs that get people dirty. Vocational studies are for youngsters who do poorly at academic courses. We call picking vegetables “stoop labor,” and the majority of the people who do this work are undocumented migrant farm workers whose average annual wages amount to less than $13,000 a year, according to the United Farm Workers. We let large farms pay hired helpers minimum wage, soon to rise to $7.65 an hour, and federal law requires paying legal H2A “guest workers” $9.60 an hour, but there is no requirement for time and a half for work over 40 hours a week.

And there is no protection for farm workers who want to organize. The National Labor Relations Act excludes two groups of workers – farm workers and domestics. Since 911, the Department of Homeland Security has increased its operatives along the NY northern border from 341 to 2000, and farms complain bitterly about raids and arrests. There is a critical need for immigration reform and passage of the AgJobs bill.

Marketing

There is a lot of demand for local food these days. Going local provides many benefits at the same time:

* Your money circulates in your own community: family-scale farms are independent businesses that tend to support other local businesses. A multinational corporation is not siphoning your dollars off to line its coffers or pay its stockholders.
* If ever there were “green” jobs, employment in local sustainable agriculture meets the definition.
* Economically viable farms preserve open space and beautiful working landscapes.

and eating local food saves energy, David Pimentel, Professor of Insect Ecology at Cornell University, has calculated that modern industrial agriculture expends 10 calories for each food-calorie produced. Many of those excess calories are burned up in transportation, packaging, marketing, and manufacturing synthetic nitrogen fertilizer.

But it turns out that buying from local organic farmers is complicated. While farms producing meat, milk and eggs can and do supply regional food coops and other stores that prioritize local purchasing 12 months a year, organic vegetable farmers only produce during the months from May through December. Few farms have winter storage facilities or year-round greenhouses. There are a few hydroponic greenhouses that run all year long, usually fertilizing with synthetic chemicals to provide nutrients for the plants grown in a water medium, and aquaponic greenhouses that cycle water from fish production through beds for vegetables, adding worm castings, an approach that could be certified organic.

Even in the growing season, every scrap of produce in our region’s food coops is not local. One obstacle is the lack of distribution channels for local farms. A small order for the store may not be worth a farmer’s special trip to town for delivery. The flow of product from California is better organized, fully
capitalized and subsidized through government support for the highway system and fossil fuel supply. Another obstacle lies with the farmers themselves – on a small farm, the farmer can get so caught up in daily farm work that s/he forgets to call the store at the right time. Meanwhile the produce manager has ordered from Albert’s or Four Seasons, distributors that deliver on a reliable schedule. The organization of FLORA (Finger Lakes Organics, a farmers’ marketing coop, plus Regional Access, a trucking company) has made more regional produce available in New York State as Deep Root does in New England. There is a crying need for more marketing, processing and distribution coops.

**Pricing**

The final piece of the complex balancing act is price. The government’s cheap food policy dominates the macro scene. All too often, farmers don’t get to price their products - the market dictates the price they receive. Farmers are price takers. Distant forces – the big producers and brokers in California or Florida – set the price based on their assessment of how to corner as much of the market as possible. Sometimes, the “organic premium” makes the price farmers can get for organic food a little higher.

In a truly fair market, the buyer negotiates with the farmer and pays a price that covers the full cost of producing the product, plus a fair surplus for savings, investment in the future of the farm and retirement. The production costs include: a living wage for the farmer’s labor in seedling, growing, harvesting, washing, packing, marketing, delivering and keeping track of all these expenses a living wage for farm employees, including required taxes and insurance for livestock, there is fencing, shelter, feed, medical care, slaughter and processing charges a share of the farm’s overhead: land costs, taxes, insurance, depreciation on buildings and equipment, utilities, repairs, maintenance, communications seed, soil amendments, production aids such as row covers or hoop houses equipment costs: fuel, maintenance, repairs, implement costs for preparing soil, cultivating out weeds, mowing or diskin residues, seeding cover crops Irrigation: annual share of purchase cost, setup take down and maintenance time.

**Cash Flow**

In the best of conditions, crop farming in the Northeast is a seasonal business. The winter months are a quiet time when the fields are covered with snow – and the farm has nothing to sell. Cash sales lag behind production. With the exception of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) projects where members pay for their shares in advance or farmers markets where customers pay immediately, most markets pay farmers after 14 to 30 days. It may take all December for farmers to collect all payments for that growing season. No money comes in during the winter months. But start up in the spring requires a big cash outlay for the season ahead.

To grow ten acres of vegetables, an organic farm easily spends over $3000 for seed, including cover crops, from $2000 – $5000 on fertilizer, depending on whether the farm has livestock to make its own compost, and $3000 - $5000 on assorted supplies (boxes, bags, pest control materials, row cover, hoop house plastic, irrigation tape, etc.). If the farm has a greenhouse, heating is a major expense from March half way through a May like the one this year. Whether the farm has money coming in or not, the farm must pay any people it employs. Organic certification fees are due in February; the rate is based on gross sales from the previous year. As probably the only government payment most organic farms receive, federal cost share covers 75% of those fees up to $750. Many farms get stuck on a treadmill of borrowing money for operations in the spring and then paying the loan back in the fall. Once in that pattern, it is hard to escape and one year of bad weather or low crop prices can drive a farm out of business.

These are the intractable realities. Of course, by dint of outstanding talents or exceptional market conditions, some farms are doing much better economically than others. I am sure you can each think of one or two. But if we are to have a local food system that reliably provides most of the food needs for the population of our region, we must shift our spending priorities. The people who grow our food, farmers and farm workers, must get a fair share so that they can go on producing and lead decent lives. They do not need or even want to live like corporate CEOs. Many of the organic farmers and homesteaders I know would be happy to serve as models for a living economy based on the principle of ENOUGH. The Nearings, Helen and Scott, projected an ideal of four hours a day for bread labor, four hours for creative and artistic activities and four hours for conviviality. Because of economic pressures, these days, people trying to make a living farming are so far from that ideal it is not funny. But if we at least begin demanding that farmers and farm workers should make a living wage with full benefits, (health care, compensation for injuries and unemployment, and retirement) over a 40 hour week, we may start moving towards an agriculture that will sustain us into a future worth living.

For more information, please contact:

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Tracie’s Community Farm

Tracie nets over $30,000 on her farm’s gross income of just under $105,000.

by Jack Kittredge

Fall, 2010

The Natural Farmer

Only a mile or so outside the center of Fitzwilliam, NH, on the Massachusetts border, sits Tracie’s Community Farm. Started just in 2007, the farm nets owner Tracie Smith a return of more than $30,000 per year. I interviewed her in mid July.

Tracie is, as you might expect, a very high energy person. When 19 years old and a student at the University of New Hampshire studying environmental horticulture, she decided she wanted to farm during the summer. So she asked her stepfather if she could plow up some of this land in Holden, NH.

“I started off really small,” she says, “with half or three quarters of an acre. But I got bigger every year.”

She sold to farmers markets in the rural surroundings, and didn’t do that too well. The year she graduated, 1999, she heard about CSAs. Tracie decided to try that and found 12 families willing to become members that first year. The next year she went to 40, then 70, then 80, then 90 then over 100. She bought bigger and bigger equipment, graduating from her hand rototiller to a tractor. The members came from all over: Keene, Hancock, Peterboro, Nelson, Harrisville. Her stepfather didn’t want people coming onto his land, so Smith delivered the shares to her customers.

In 2006 her stepfather got tired of hosting Tracie’s farm and told her it was time for her to leave.

“He told me that was it,” she sighs. “I had been looking for land but not found anything. You know about farmland – it is very expensive. I had been looking and looking and you just can’t find farm-land, period. Maybe you can find something with a big house that you don’t want.”

It was in October of 2007,” she continues, “and I had actually told all the members that the CSA was over. I said I hoped they could come back when I did find land. So I get an Email at the end of October from a friend of a member. He knew someone who had bought a large piece of land and wanted to develop parts, but leave the best farmland to be farmed. I met the new owner and showed him the good farmland. He worked with Monadnock Conservation to put a conservation easement on the land. That way I could afford it.”

The total parcel was 33 acres, priced at $130,000. Ten acres were in fields, and twenty acres in woods — but some of those could be opened up into fields. They land is on prime agricultural soils. Besides the farming easement, there was a 2 acre building lot. When Tracie was small, her grandfather had put $1000 in the stock market for her. That had grown and by 2007 she was able to put down $30,000 toward the purchase, financing the rest through Yankee Farm Credit, a Vermont farm cooperative bank.

“Over the years I was able to build up good credit,” Tracie states. “That was the big thing. Even so, I did try to get a mortgage from other banks, but they gave me a harder time.”

During her nine years farming in Sullivan County, Smith had learned what she wanted. Now that she had her own land, she moved quickly.

“I signed a purchase and sale, but wouldn’t technically own the land until the conservation easement went through, which wouldn’t be until June. But I didn’t wait for that. I was here with my tiller within a week, taking greenhouses down and moving them, moving perennials.

“The building lot was covered with pine trees,” she continues. “They were perfect for building the barn.

My mom’s boyfriend and my partner, Keith, cut this all down and pulled up the stumps, because they had equipment. We had a guy mill the wood onsite. We moved in a trailer to live in for now. It cost us $7000.”

At one point Tracie thought she wouldn’t be farming the following year and told her members the CSA was ending. The next, she had her own farm.

“It all came together,” she insists, “once I let go of the dream! We were going to take a break and go to the Southwest. I was going to landscape with Keith – that’s what he does. I’m a hard worker. I know I can do something else. Of course I didn’t totally let go of it. I just let go for the meantime. I thought maybe it would work out later. I’d save up money and that would make it easier. But when I let go, no kidding, within a week I got that Email about the land.”

Of the ten acres of fields, Tracie is using five right now for crops. She has had to expand her operation to make enough to pay for all the infrastructure expenses – the well, septic, barn, hydrant, walk-in cooler. But those are now installed and functioning, and things work well. The barn is a beautiful timber-framed structure, onto which Smith designed a washing and packing area on the west side so it would be cool all morning. The 500-foot deep well gives them ample water storage capacity.

Everything is not perfect, of course. Tracie always thought she would end up with a partner who loved farming. Keith, however, who she met over 6 years ago, is into nature but not farming. He has been very helpful with his equipment – a backhoe, mini excavator, trailer, Kubota with a fork. But he likes his privacy, Smith says, and is not happy with CSA members circling the trailer and knocking on the door with questions. So eventually they want to build a house on the lot where they can have a little separate and private space.

Smith is pleased that the new farm is not too far from her old one – about 40 minutes away. That way she has been able to keep many of her old CSA members. In addition, the new location is far easier for people to get to so about half the members now pick-up rather than having the share delivered. The CSA starts in mid June and goes 19 weeks.

“We have a large family share, a family share, and a single share,” explains Tracie. “We harvest 3 days a week – Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Our pick-up area includes with a farm store where members can buy cheese, bread, honey, things I buy in. A large family share is $600 a family share is $450, and a single share is $350. We don’t include mesclun, herbs, kale, chard or lettuce mix. All of
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Tracie shows some of the rows of vegetables on her farm. In this field the rows are 250 feet long. Note the attention she has paid to aggressively addressing weeds!

the natural farmer
doesn’t work well for her. It works for spinach, but not for a lot of other vegetables.

“With the one wheeled seeder,” she says, “you do each row by itself, so it’s a little intense. It’s hard to get it straight. I wouldn’t grow carrots if I weren’t doing a CSA. I bought a root washer finally, which I’m glad I did, but I don’t really want to grow carrots at all. It’s good for beets and other roots that you’re going to take the tops off of. But you can’t really wash anything with tops because they get torn and tangled in it.”

Tracie has four full time employees working on the farm. I met Derrick and Sarah, who both live on the farm and are recently out of college. Because they get their housing and a free share of vegetables, Smith pays them $7.25 an hour. The other two get $8.00 an hour. In addition to the employees, the farm has work shares, where customers come on harvest days and exchange labor for their shares.

“Some are great,” Tracie says, “some not so. Some are mothers with kids and if their kids are good I’ll let them bring them. They can even drive the golf cart if they’re good. They love that!”

Smith readily admits she likes having men do some of the work: “They are better at lifting, mechanics, things I’m not great at. The women are better at details. It’s all so true! My mom was a doer. She didn’t think there was anything wrong with women driving tractor or running things. Many women are amazed that I can do this, do the tractor work, but I let Derrick do most of it because he likes it so much.”

Tracie makes sure there is a big farm lunch on harvest days. Everyone eats in an outdoor pavilion, with cooking done by a working shareholder or Shannon, one of the employees who is a good cook. Smith is worried about losing her staff. They’re young and they’re whole future is ahead of them, she realizes. But she depends on their help and knows if and when they leave they will be hard to replace. Of course she can’t employ them year-round, and that is a problem. Derrick likes to go to Florida in the winter, so maybe it can work with him. But she is thinking of doing fall and possible spring shares to be able to afford to keep the staff working more months.

Because she has adjusted a lot to giving people smaller shares, Tracie has a lot of extras to sell (zucchini and squash when I was there) and markets them to restaurants and a hospital. She doesn’t like the extra work involved in calling around for orders, but does it because she has the produce and needs to sell it. She can usually get a delivery worked into someone’s CSA route.

One of the reasons I was attracted to Tracie as a source for this interview is that she keeps such amazing records.

“People wouldn’t know it, but I’m a control freak,” she admits. “They think I’m laid back. I’m open and free, it is true. But for me, it looks like more work in the long run, I want to deal with the problem now. I’m really hyper. We’re working at least 10 hour days. And then I have to do things later, when the farm work is done.”

One of those things is keep careful and detailed records of her finances, crops, hours worked, etc.

“I do Quickbooks,” she says, “and have all the numbers for income and expenses. I track the crops for what each takes. At the end of the day we’re all in the barn and I talk to the workers about what all they did and how much time it took. Then I have overhead things that I can’t attribute to a particular crop. I track what we harvest, what we give people each day, and what it is worth. All winter I’m putting this stuff into the computer and making plans. I don’t do payroll. I have a company to do all that. Everything else I can’t let go of.”

Tracie has a Planting, Maintenance and Harvest Schedule going from March 1 to December 6 by task running to some 955 lines on an Excel spreadsheet. Across the top are such things as date, plant, variety, number of rows, timing with respect to frost free dates, estimated Tracie hours, actual Tracie hours, estimated crew hours, actual crew hours, and comments. Another set of records is a Crop Journal for each of about 30 crops listing, by both greenhouse and outdoors, the dates of each planting, weeding, and harvest, who did it, how long it took, what quantity was involved of seed or product, and how many rows were done.

Although Tracie’s Community Farm is not certified organic, it wouldn’t be hard to qualify. She uses organic practices and has all the records needed. She just never felt the need to be certified to sell shares, and figures that is one less thing to deal with.

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Tracie in her washing and packing area. It is on the west side of the barn, so it stays cool all morning.
Smith has some specific financial goals: "I want to make enough money to build a house. I want to have kids and have a house for them. I’m 32, starting to get gray (she laughs). I pay for major medical insurance. It costs me $1500 a year, but I have to pay the first $5000 of anything that happens. Once I cut my finger really bad, but I had gone before one time and they charged me $500. So this time I decided not to go. I just got a tetanus shot."

To meet these goals she keeps careful track of her farm income and expenses, and has been able to make more money almost each year. In 2002 she netted $6,000, in 2003 she made $15,500, in 2004 only $8,400 (she had some significant capital expenses for equipment), in 2005 she netted $13,000, in 2006 it was $11,500, in 2007 she gained $27,800, in 2008 she made $32,500 and in 2009 (year of the wet summer) it was only $30,800.

Her gross income was about $105,000, mostly from the CSA but about $3200 from transplant sales and about $3,600 net profit from sales of things she bought for resale from local producers: eggs, granola, honey, maple syrup, etc. She had no significant other sales because it was such a poor year that the CSA got everything.

Her major expenses were labor - $27,000, supplies - $15,400 (among the big ones are harvest supplies - $2,300, mulch - $2,500, office supplies - $1,600, and transplant production supplies - $1,600), depreciation of equipment - $8,100, fertilizer and lime - $4,800, insurance - $3,900 (that was $2,600 for worker’s comp and $1,300 for other), mortgage interest - $3,200, seeds and plants - $3,900, taxes - $2,300 and repairs and maintenance - $1,600.

Tracie expects that in 2010 she will have significantly more labor costs than in 2009, but of course she is selling more, too. From the point of view of most small farms in the Northeast, even though the numbers aren’t huge Tracie is doing well to be able to net 30% of her gross. But perhaps the most important measure is not so much her financial state as her state of happiness: “I’m a CEO, a worker, a secretary, the advertiser, the motivator, so many things! It’s a lot of work, but I love it. I tell people, ‘I’m rich!’ I just don’t think I want to know what I’m making per hour!”

The Schedule F Tracie filed for 2009 shows her net profit for the year as $30,830.85.

Thanks USDA!

Horizon Organic® and our farmer partners thank USDA for strengthening the organic regulations with clear grazing requirements.

The Pasture Rule will assure organic milk drinkers that organic dairy farms are pasture based.

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Farming structure has changed dramatically since the 1990s. The number of U.S. farms remained stable at around 2 million between 1978, when the current farm definition was adopted, and 2002. Remarkably, the 2007 Agricultural Census showed an increase in the number of farms in the U.S., albeit at the very lowest and highest ends of the size distribution. The only two size classes to increase in numbers between 2002 and 2007 were those with less than $2,500 in sales and those with more than $50,000 in sales. The large sales group had a significantly larger percentage increase (64.6% compared to 8.9%). The increase in the number of farms less than $2,500 is due to an increase in “point” farms. Those are farms that had ZERO sales but had a few cows or chickens, etc., to have the “potential” for sales.

The structure of U.S. agriculture has long been of interest and concern to policymakers, who 25 years ago commissioned the US Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) to examine the issue in detail (US Congress, 1986). Authored by leading experts in the field, the report predicted the loss of about 500,000 small farms by the year of 2000, or about one-quarter of all farms today. The report also predicted that the 50,000 largest farms in 2000 would produce 75% of all farm products. In fact, in 1997, about 180,000 farms produced 75% of all products and, even in 2007 that number had dropped only to 125,000 farms rather than the predicted 50,000. We maintain that the predictions were off in part because OTA failed to consider new developments of farm operations such as organic practices, direct sales, and increasing demand of local food. These innovative farm practices enabled linkages that would evolve between farms, farm families, and local communities, as well as the general public’s interests in more healthy food.

Overview of Selected Organic Prices in 2008, Boston Wholesale Markets

An analysis of selected organic produce prices in 2008 based on the Boston wholesale markets shows that organic produce prices were at least 1/3 higher than conventional produce, and in a few cases reached three times as much.

Net Household Income and Sales for Organic Production

In 2008, the National Agriculture Statistics Services of USDA conducted one of the most comprehensive surveys with organic producers in the U.S. Totally 3,637 organic producers in the U.S. responded to the survey. Among all respondents, 91.6% had less than 25% of net household income from organic sales; 3.9% had between 25% and 49% of net household income from organic sales; and 1.6% had 100% of net household income from organic sales. One hundred percent of the organic producers in Rhode Island who responded to this surveys had less than 25% of net household income from organic sales. Only a few organic producers in Maine and Massachusetts (2.3% and 1.2%) had 100% of net household income from organic sales.

We can take a broader view of a number of organic farms in different sales categories using the Census of Agriculture data. A majority of the organic farms in the U.S. and in New England earned less than $20,000 in sales in 2008.

So What?

Organic farming continues to grow as farming structures evolve over time. Policy makers had not predicted the dramatic changes in market situations especially regarding consumers’ preferences, dietary concerns, and willingness to support local farms. While the total number of farms seems to start to climb in recent years, there are still critical issues for organic producers to consider. When more farms enter the production cycle, it might generate more competition among producers when there exists limited access to local or regional markets. Seeking financial support and capital investment will become more restricted when each farm has different needs and endowments.

There are many ways farmers can work together to create more collaborative efforts, instead of competing against each other. Consumer cooperatives, producer cooperatives, direct sale cooperatives, and producer cooperatives, direct sale cooperatives, and shared resources are just a few good examples that some farmers have been involved in in the New England region. Five general rules could be developed for organic farmers to be more entrepreneurial and be more competitive:

- Many hands make light work. (improve on networking)
- Can’t see the wood for the trees. (look at the broader picture)
- The bigger they are, the harder they fall. (pay attention to the scale of operation and management)
- Don’t put all your eggs in one basket. (diversity)
- Waste not, want not. (conserve food and resources)

References


Chyi-lyi (Kathleen) Liang is at University of Vermont, Department of Community Development and Applied Economics, 103 C Morrill Hall, Burlington, Vermont 05403-0160, (802) 656-0754, CLiang@uvm.edu

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Over the past 5 years a joint project between NOFA-VT and UVM Extension has examined the economics of organic dairy production in Vermont and Maine, with the study looking only at Vermont for the last 2 years. What we have found is an agricultural sector that experienced a surge in profitability and prices in 2006 only to see those profits erode by 2009. The study involved developing balance sheets and accrual income statements from participating farms that were paid for their assistance.

For 2008, the 35 farms in the study averaged 67 cows, producing 13,438 lbs of milk per cow at an average price of $30.90 per cwt. There is quite a contrast of farms in the study, ranging from 257 cows to a low of 20 cows. However several of the smaller herds were the most profitable. There is also a contrast in milk per cow, ranging from 7789 lbs to 19,132 lbs of milk per cow showing a range of management practices and amount of grain being fed. Two herds in the study did not feed any grain, and these farms were not the lowest producing herds in the study.

Some organic dairy farms have been able to earn extra income from the sale of extra dairy animals. One thing that a number of farmers are telling us is that their culling rates have declined by being organic, allowing them to raise fewer heifers for their own use and sell off extra animals. Sixteen of the farms in the study sold extra cows or heifers for dairy production in 2008.

The farms’ average gross income averaged $4,555 per cow. Farms that sold extra dairy animals had a higher income than the other farms. Obviously, farms with a higher milk production per cow also

---

### Organic Dairy Study Results for the 2008 Production Year

#### 2008 Vermont Organic Dairy Farms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Per Farm</th>
<th>Per Cow</th>
<th>Per Cwt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average # of cows</td>
<td>67.1</td>
<td>67.1</td>
<td>67.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lbs shipped total</td>
<td>910,174</td>
<td>910,174</td>
<td>910,174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lbs shipped/cow</td>
<td>13,438</td>
<td>13,438</td>
<td>13,438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk price</td>
<td>$30.90</td>
<td>$30.90</td>
<td>$30.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Receipts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Per Farm</th>
<th>Cows</th>
<th>Per Cows</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milk sales (a)</td>
<td>281,229</td>
<td>4,155</td>
<td>30.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy cattle sales</td>
<td>7,079</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cull cow sales</td>
<td>4,443</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob/Neal calf sales</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crop sales</td>
<td>1,169</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government payments</td>
<td>3,829</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patronage divendends</td>
<td>1,365</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custom work</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syrup</td>
<td>871</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timber</td>
<td>879</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3,549</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total Cash Receipts (b) | $305,165 | $4,555 | $34.01 |

#### Accrual Revenue Adjustments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Per Farm</th>
<th>Per Cows</th>
<th>Per Cows</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Livestock inventory</td>
<td>5,029</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breeding livestock purchases</td>
<td>(877)</td>
<td>(19)</td>
<td>(0.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounts receivable (c)</td>
<td>1,668</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hay</td>
<td>4,732</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grain</td>
<td>3,154</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total Accrual Revenue (d) | $14,458 | $124 | $0.88 |
| Total Farm Revenue (e)    | $319,623 | $4,679 | $34.89 |
had a higher gross income, but higher production does not always translate into profit.

The expense side of the ledger is where the difference is made for farm profitability. Cash expenses per cow averaged $3271 and ranged from $4810 to a low of $1710 per cow. The lowest cost per cow was attained by one of the herds that fed no grain. Only 2 other herds were able to keep total costs under $2000. In contrast, the herd with $4810 expense per cow was the highest producing herd in the study.

The highest cost for all but two of the farms in the study in 2008 was purchased grain. On average, the farms spent $1218 on grain and supplement feeds (no forage). By removing the farms that fed no purchased feed or the 2 farms that raised all their own feed, average purchased grain costs came to $1363 per cow. On average, 42% of total cash expenses were spent on purchased grain.

Other top expenses per cow were $476 for parts and supplies, $304 for labor, $180 for interest and $159 for gas, diesel, and oil. Managing expenses is very crucial and when looking at the expenses of 2 of the most profitable farms, these farms were below average in every expense category! And they were not the top production herds either!

One expense that has been going up in recent years has been depreciation. Frankly, organic farms have been making a profit so they have been able to replace equipment and make reinvestments in the farm operation. Depreciation per cow for the study farms averaged $472 per cow and ranged from a low of $66 to a high of $1017. Younger farmers were more likely to have higher depreciation as would be expected. Older farmers without a clear designated successor are much less likely to reinvest in buildings although they will keep their equipment modernized.

The bottom line is what counts and for 2008 the 35 farms averaged $917 per cow (before paying the owner for labor and management). Again we see a bit of variability with two farms showing a loss per cow after accounting for depreciation. With these farms taken out of the picture, the average net revenue jumps to $1010 per cow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenses</th>
<th>Per Farm</th>
<th>Per Cow</th>
<th>Per Cwt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auto and truck expenses</td>
<td>1,661</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedding</td>
<td>5,235</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breeding</td>
<td>3,198</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemicals/pesticides</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custom hire:</td>
<td>11,577</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DHIA</td>
<td>1,074</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertilizers &amp; lime</td>
<td>1,920</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feed - purchased grain &amp; other</td>
<td>77,731</td>
<td>1,219</td>
<td>8.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feed - purchased forage</td>
<td>5,471</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel and Oil</td>
<td>11,018</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>4,801</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>12,713</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>25,560</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk Marketing</td>
<td>4,038</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real estate taxes (farm portion)</td>
<td>2,955</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent</td>
<td>5,628</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repairs</td>
<td>16,781</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seed and plants</td>
<td>1,299</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplies</td>
<td>16,240</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>9,091</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vet</td>
<td>2,649</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>2,846</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Cash Expenses (f)</strong></td>
<td>$223,853</td>
<td>$3,271</td>
<td>$24.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Accrual Expense Adjustments**

- **Depreciation**: 33,388 / 472 = 3.57
- **Accounts payable**: 4,845 / 50 = 0.04
- **Pre-paid expenses**: (864) / (17) = (0.13)
- **Supplies**: (898) / (15) = (0.11)

**Total Accrual Expenses (g)**

$36,111 / $491 = $3.72

**Total Farm Expenses (h)**

$259,963 / $3,762 = $28.11

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While looking at figures on a per cow basis is useful, we need to keep in mind that the entire farm operation has to meet family living needs. In this respect, net farm revenue per farm was $59,660. With dropping the two farms that had negative income for the year, average net farm revenue for the top 33 farms was $66,092. Of the 35 farms in the study, 2 farms had negative net revenue, and 9 other farms did not earn enough to support a $35,000 family cost of living. On the other hand, 24 of the 35 farms in the study earned more than $35,000 to support a $35,000 cost of living. We concede that some families draw considerably more and some less than $35,000 for family living but this is the figure we have used during the study based on comparable returns from the Northeast Dairy Farm Summary.

In comparison to small conventional dairy farms as reported in the Northeast Dairy Summary, organic dairy was 80% more profitable. Despite contrasting milk prices and milk per cow, organic dairy farms generated just $162 per cow more revenue than conventional dairy farms. However, expenses for organic farms was $248 less than conventional dairy farms, leading to a higher net farm revenue of $917 per cow vs. $507 for the conventional dairy farms. Feed per cow was a bit higher for organic dairy while conventional dairy farms spent more on vet, breeding, and medicine.

We know that 2008 is history and we are all concerned about now and the future. For anyone familiar with 2009, we all know that conventional dairy farms incurred substantial losses while organic farms appear to have remained more viable. Average conventional milk price dropped more than $5 per cwt while feed prices were at higher levels, hitting profits from both sides. Preliminary estimates from the Northeast Dairy Farm Summary for 2009 indicate that the average farm lost more then $250 per cow. This is preliminary with official numbers likely available in early June.

Where are we headed for this coming year? Compared to conventional, organic looks very appealing. But organic farmers are getting hit...
from several directions. First, base prices have been cut and some seasonal premiums and Market Adjustment Premiums (MAP) have been eliminated, although the milk companies are still paying a premium for winter milk of $3 per cwt. On top of that CROPP has imposed a quota and Horizon has limited some farmers through changes in contracts requiring farmers to reduce milk production or, in the case of quotas, take major price cuts for over quota milk. These have hurt some farmers more than others but have hurt all organic dairy farms. On the expense side, some organic dairy farmers are paying more for hauling and stop charges. Although feed prices have declined a bit, other costs like repairs, parts, supplies, real estate taxes, and family living expenses continue to increase. Dairy farmers are also finding it difficult to find credit either through their lenders or their suppliers.

Combine the revenue and expense changes, and nearly every organic dairy farm will be facing lower income in 2009 and 2010. For a number of the farms, it’s going to be difficult, if not impossible, to pull a reasonable family living after paying production expenses. There is a need for greater income, either through a higher base price or leniency to produce more milk for farms to have longterm survival. What will the market bear in 2010 is a challenge for processors, cooperatives and farmers. I can almost guarantee there are no organic dairy farms planning to go back to conventional milk production unless forced to through losing their contract. Conventional dairy prices may, at best, approach break even this year. Under this prospectus, there are likely plenty of dairy farms willing to switch to organic if they could.

So the future remains clouded. Will we see a resurgence in organic dairy sales? Is the American consumer feeling more confident to spend more on organic milk and dairy products? Will we see a strengthening or stabilization of organic milk prices? There is a lot that remains unknown for the coming year and it will be a challenge for organic farms to survive in this unknown environment.

This article was first published in NODPA News, May, 2010 and is reprinted with permission.
Summer and Fall harvest can be an incredibly satisfying time of year. Picking the fruits of your labor, packing boxes full of product, and loading trucks headed to Farmers’ Market or a delivery run—just watching your goods roll down the driveway to meet their customers is inherently rewarding. I love stacking boxes and bags on a pallet and sending it off to market. Maybe the feeling is archetypal: growing plants and animals, caring for them, and then seeing customers appreciate your efforts in the wholesome, nutritious food you provide. Farmers everywhere find meaning in this chain of events.

But is that ‘feel good’ sight of a truck full of freshly packed product just a well-deserved end to months of hard work? Or could it be the anticipation of receiving the sales money for the product? Rewards for your toils are the spoils. Is the satisfaction of seeing your farm product meeting its customer addressing your needs of economic security?

As we go about our farming workweek, often multiple tasks are tackled in a single day. Most farms grow and sell many different products such as numerous types of vegetables, flowers, fruits and/or animals. Even a dairy farm with one main sales product—milk—needs to put up hay, grow and store silage, rotate pastures, utilize manure, and raise replacement stock, just to name a few farm components. Most all farmers perform a myriad of tasks to produce a single item for sale.

So what does this have to do with that great feeling of seeing a truck full of product leave the farm? That truck represents sales money, and ultimately, financial security. But does it really?

In the harried and varied workday, farmers seldom connect the costs of the product with the sales that they bring in. Is the sales revenue from the product on the truck more than enough to cover all production expenses like seed, fertility, and employee paychecks? And enough to cover the farmer’s hours that she or he worked? And to pay for overhead ex-
Son Flint Wiswall, in straw hat, and employee Kate Freeman, making change, staff the Cate Farm stand at the Montpelier Farmers' Market.

While a farm may be profitable overall, it doesn’t show which components that make up the whole farm were profitable. Nor does it show how many hours the farmer logged to achieve that annual profit. The penultimate business equation, Profit = Income – Expense, is often calculated only once a year at tax time. In reality, that single equation is just an average of many smaller Profit = Income – Expense equations of all the different enterprises that comprise the farm. The farm may sell blueberries, eggs, salad greens, maple syrup and Christmas trees. How does each farm enterprise rate individually in terms of profit? Unless thought is given to the profitability of each product, all products will get averaged into the year end Profit = Income – Expense equation. Highly profitable individual components of the farm may see their earnings pulled down by less profitable products.

A diversified vegetable farm may grow 40 or more different crops. The chances of them all being equally profitable is incredibly small. Some are money makers, some are so-so, and some are not pulling their weight. Until they are rated side-by-side, their contribution to the farm’s bottom line—the average year end profit (and the farmer’s reward)—will be hit or miss.

A goal of mine is to see more happy and prosperous farmers. To that end, I talk at farming conferences, help individual farms through consulting work, and recently wrote a book, called The Organic Farmers’ Business Handbook, published by Chelsea Green. The Organic Farmers’ Business Handbook is not about how to produce organic crops; rather it is how to manage a successful, profitable business that produces organic crops. I don’t want to repeat here in this article what is already in the book, but I want to walk through some of the basic concepts.

Though I desire to see more happy and prosperous farmers, I don’t want farmers stressed out about record-keeping and taking copious notes of everything that happens on the farm. Being a profitable farm is not a hard nut to crack, nor does it have to be unpleasant. As in the old shell-and-bean game, the key is to keep your eye on the correct moving object. Focus on what data you need to increase your farm profit. And don’t overdo it at first. In the excitement of taking control of your financial destiny, it is easy to become overzealous and try to do too much.

As a starting point, I recommend you take your top selling items (1 - 5 products) and make a product (or enterprise) budget for each of them. Your top sales items will have the biggest effect on your bottom line because they constitute the bulk of your current revenue. Take a piece of paper and make the budget equations of all the different enterprises that comprise the farm stand at the Montpelier Farmers’ Market. 

Son Flint Wiswall, in straw hat, and employee Kate Freeman, making change, staff the Cate Farm stand at the Montpelier Farmers’ Market.

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Though I desire to see more happy and prosperous farmers, I don’t want farmers stressed out about record-keeping and taking copious notes of everything that happens on the farm. Being a profitable farm is not a hard nut to crack, nor does it have to be unpleasant. As in the old shell-and-bean game, the key is to keep your eye on the correct moving object. Focus on what data you need to increase your farm profit. And don’t overdo it at first. In the excitement of taking control of your financial destiny, it is easy to become overzealous and try to do too much.

As a starting point, I recommend you take your top selling items (1 - 5 products) and make a product (or enterprise) budget for each of them. Your top sales items will have the biggest effect on your bottom line because they constitute the bulk of your current revenue. Take a piece of paper and make the budget equations of all the different enterprises that comprise the farm stand at the Montpelier Farmers’ Market. 

Son Flint Wiswall, in straw hat, and employee Kate Freeman, making change, staff the Cate Farm stand at the Montpelier Farmers’ Market. 

While a farm may be profitable overall, it doesn’t show which components that make up the whole farm were profitable. Nor does it show how many hours the farmer logged to achieve that annual profit. The penultimate business equation, Profit = Income – Expense, is often calculated only once a year at tax time. In reality, that single equation is just an average of many smaller Profit = Income – Expense equations of all the different enterprises that comprise the farm. The farm may sell blueberries, eggs, salad greens, maple syrup and Christmas trees. How does each farm enterprise rate individually in terms of profit? Unless thought is given to the profitability of each product, all products will get averaged into the year end Profit = Income – Expense equation. Highly profitable individual components of the farm may see their earnings pulled down by less profitable products. 

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right now without any previous records. You will be able to rough out a budget surprisingly well, and the numbers you are not sure of will be the target of your future data gathering (like how long does it take to weed a 300 foot bed, or harvest a bushel of carrots?) Some numbers may be easier to recall, like sales prices, and some are documented with invoices and check stubs. The tougher numbers to figure are usually ones that involve labor: how long does it take to perform a certain task? Use your best estimates. For instance, try harvesting 20 bed feet of imaginary lettuce on your living room floor, going through the motions with an eye on the clock, and use that rate as a gauge for labor on longer beds.

In creating a budget now from memory, you will be able to target specific data you need and keep a razor sharp focus on the prize—your profitability. And keep it simple, don’t get bogged down for now with exact costs of things like tractor time, guessimate for now, but be consistent. The exercise is to get a feel for which numbers in the budget stand out, and how they compare with other budget items.

Let’s do a simple budget for eggs from 50 laying hens. I usually think in chronological order when creating a budget, starting with the first step performed in the season and ending with sales. Then I set some basic parameters like scale (50 hens, or say, 300 bed feet for crops) and the average cost of labor. I’ll set the labor rate at $15/hour, which includes employer taxes and Workers’ Comp. If the farmer does all the work, she or he will, in essence, earn those wages in the end as net profit. But if the farmer has a hernia operation and has to hire someone to do all the work, the employee will get the wages, and the farmer will only see any net profit from the enterprise.

Here goes: On Sept 1st, I buy 50 pullets (at $8 each = $400) that just started to lay eggs. I put them in a corner of my barn, go buy some fencing ($50) and a feeder and waterer ($50 for both). I make a pen in two hours. I go buy some organic feed at $20 per 50 lb bag and some bedding for the coop area ($12). I’ll pack eggs in used cartons and sell them from my front porch, with an honor system cashbox. I’ll keep the hens for 1 year, and then sell them for $2 each. For simplicity, I have zero mortality in the flock. During the winter, I add a light to the coop for 6 hours each day, and supply bedding as needed. Morning chores takes me 45 minutes with egg cleaning and boxing, and evening chores just 15 minutes on average (includes periodic bedding work), each day for 365 days.

The hens each eat 90 pounds of feed/year, and each produce 22 dozen eggs/year.
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just part of farm life. But we all only have 24 hours
it can be looked at as a chore like laundry or dishes,

“why include the whopping $5481 for labor?” Sure,
But the burning question in most people’s mind is,
ability of the enterprise in your favor.

$6/dozen? Those possibilities will all tilt the profit
day old bread)? Can you raise the price of eggs to
the hens feed with other free food sources (forage,
feed in bulk for less money? Can you supplement
change the effect of the big numbers). Can you buy
numbers for now, (saving some money on less win

First off, don’t shoot the messenger. And you with
the hatchet, move away from the hens. These num-
bers are just numbers, but numbers with some very
valuable lessons. Notice the big numbers: feed, labor, and egg sales. And don’t sweat the smaller
numbers for now, (saving some money on less win-
ter lighting or a used waterer will not do a lot to
change the effect of the big numbers). Can you buy
feed in bulk for less money? Can you supplement
the hens feed with other free food sources (forage, day old bread)? Can you raise the price of eggs to
$6/dozen? Those possibilities will all tilt the profit-
ability of the enterprise in your favor.

But the burning question in most people’s mind is, “why include the whopping $5481 for labor?” Sure, it can be looked at as a chore like laundry or dishes, just part of farm life. But we all only have 24 hours
in a day, and some is needed for sleep and family. The hours remaining for work should hopefully pay some of the bills of life. And what if circumstances dictate that you have to hire someone to do chores? Farmers are famous for being guilty of self-exploita-
tion. Not valuing your own time is not a sound farm
business model.

You’ll notice that without labor accounted for, the
hens are a profitable enterprise: Sales of $5800 mi-

Sales
Eggs: 22 dozen x 50 hens $5500 1100 dozen eggs at $5/dozen
Bedded manure value $ 300
Year old hens sold at $2 each $ 100
Total sales $5800

Net Profit (or loss) $-2032

In my book I detail some net profits per acre for dif-
ferent vegetable crops. I talk in terms of net profits of $10,000 or more per acre. To a commodity farm-
er, some of these numbers may seem like some sort
of parallel universe. A hay crop with 200 bales per acre yields only $800 GROSS sales per acre (at $4/
bale). Corn silage at 25 tons/acre (at $25/ton) yields GROSS sales of $625. Those are gross sales, not net
profits. The difference of what I cite in my book and these commodity crops is almost incomprehensible.

Yet, I have fun in my alternate universe. I like to
point out the profit differences of two similar crops, broccoli and kale. Both are in the same family, have
very similar planting and growing requirements, yet
differs dramatically in net profits per acre. The
difference is in the market. Kale is a specialty crop, market-
leading flower seed from the world’s finest suppliers and
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A well-managed diversified vegetable/flower/herb operation can readily gross $20,000 per acre on a small to medium scale. (Larger farms may achieve this, but may need to sell volume at lower prices). Some smaller start up farms realize this higher potential; I know of one 4 acre farm netting $51,000 after only five years in business, and another netting $65,000 after 8 years farming. Granted, these are smart farmers that seized market opportunities. But it is possible. All farms are unique, We all need to carve our own niche in the marketplace. And we all need to pay attention to our profitability.

I have had the benefit of working with numerous farmers in New England, and I’d like to share some hard to find numbers for farmers to gauge their own businesses. Keeping in mind that there is no typical model farm, some common numbers I’ve found for diversified organic vegetable farms are:

- Gross sales per acre: $20,000 to $30,000 per acre
- Net profits per acre: $0 to $20,000
- Hired labor as a percentage of gross sales: 25% to 35%
- Farmer hourly wage: a 40 hour work week times 50 weeks/year is 2000 hours. A vegetable farmer in New England may work 20 hours/week January-March, 40 hours/week April-June, 60 hours/week July-October, and 30 hours/week November-December, for a total of 2160 hours, not that much different from a 40 hour/week year round worker. Take your net profit and divide it by 2160 hours, or by the number of hours you figure you work. For example, for a hypothetical 5 acre diversified organic vegetable farm grossing $20,000 per acre, here’s how the $100,000 gross sales may be spent:

- Seeds: $2000
- Plants and supplies: $4000
- Insurance: $2000
- Fertility and pest control: $4000
- Fuel, utilities: $2000
- Repairs/maintenance: $3000
- Supplies: $7000
- Capital improvements, machinery: $6000
- Rent, interest, miscellaneous: $10,000
- Paid labor: $30,000
- Owner’s profit: $30,000

Again, there is no model farm, but these expense categories paint the picture in broad strokes to get an idea of where the money flows.

Tips for beginning Farmers

Starting up a farm from scratch is a lot of work. That said, many have done it successfully. I’d like to share two thoughts that may speed the process along in a good direction.

One of the first and biggest tasks is getting access to good farmland. If you don’t already have land, I recommend leasing land at first to develop your business without the pressure of a large mortgage. Leasing land for 5 years (or longer) allows you to control your resource base without a lot of upfront cost. Good land can get leased for $50-100 per acre, or sometimes for free. Some land may need more work than other parcels (e.g. building fertility, clearing rocks or shrubs) and some may or may not need infrastructure like water, shelter, or electricity. With a five-year or longer lease, your investment in the land is spread out and allows your business to be lean and flexible. You are free from the yoke of large mortgage payments each and every month. Indeed, you can deduct lease payments as a business expense, but not land payments (only the interest portion of the mortgage payment). You can live on the land, or live nearby, depending on the situation.

I’m not against owning land, but it is not a necessity. If you do decide to eventually purchase property, it is far easier to get financing if you already have a successful farm business to support the mortgage.

The second recommendation as you begin your farm venture is to make time to manage the business. Good farm managers are behind every successful farm. Be as efficient as possible in every aspect of your farm. For example, plan your marketing efforts before planting a single seed. Where, how, and in what quantities will you sell the farm product? Planting an acre of lettuce without a potential buyer can be a recipe for disaster: you may end up selling the crop at fire sale prices or worse, tilling it in altogether. Granted, you may sell every last head of lettuce, but it sure is easier if you have an inkling of where you hope to sell it.

When breaking into a new marketplace, I usually start knocking on the door of stores and restaurants and ask if they would be interested in say, some lettuce next June. Do they already have a local supplier? I avoid stepping on other local growers toes. We all need to cooperate as much as we can. If there isn’t a local supplier, I ask questions like, “How much do you use each week? What kind...
do you like? What is the customary price?” Start developing a relationship with your possible customers. Try to get a handshake agreement for the upcoming season. Then, in season, before the crop is ready, touch base with the customers, letting them know the crop will be ready soon. Set up an agreeable ordering schedule, and then deliver your finest product.

The above scenario outlines a possible wholesale account relationship. CSAs, Farmers’ Markets and farm stands are other marketing options, but may be harder to pull off profitably as a start up farm. Vegetable farmers by nature tend to like diversity. Experimenting and trying new varieties are part of the attraction. Many seasoned vegetable farmers started by outgrowing their diverse garden plot. But with diversity comes complexity, and possibly less efficiency.

Growing 2 acres of winter squash for one wholesale account is much simpler than growing 2 acres of 40 crops, with multiple plantings and harvests sold through a CSA or Farmers’ Market. The payout is probably less on the winter squash, but as a way to get the ball rolling, it will be far easier. And it is not like I’m against Farmers’ Markets or CSAs: I’ve been going to Farmers Market for the last 29 years and had a CSA for 6 years. I know firsthand their complexity and costs. The tendency for beginning farmers is to try to do too much all at once. Start small, farm smart and build your farm business.

A note on the word “Profit”

Some farmers have a knee-jerk reaction to the word Profit, like it was some four-letter word. I was raised in a household that confused “Profit” with “Greed” and felt the same thing. Farmers are drawn to their farm’s workforce more? Everybody wins. As the organic movement continues to mature, should we promote the poor farmer paradigm and the USA’s cheap food policies? I’m all for a cheap food policy as long as we also have a cheap health care policy, cheap education policy and cheap & clean energy system. Should the survival of organic farms depend on cheap labor? Can we pride ourselves on a product that pays workers poorly to produce it? Farmers and employees that make a living wage needs to be a priority, and not viewed as some unattainable goal. Farmers often respond to low profits by working longer and longer hours -- how sustainable is that?

Increased profit margins on farms provide increased “wiggle room” to weather bad growing seasons, market fluctuations and unforeseen events. More profits can be invested in farm infrastructure, enable experimentation, pay employees well, and meet retirement needs. I’m happy to say that we pay our employees well above the going rate. Profit isn’t a bad word; it is all in how you use it.
Growing produce is not the biggest hurdle facing most fresh market vegetable growers; earning a reasonable living poses the greatest challenge. One way for farmers to analyze their operations in order to better meet their financial goals is to share information through farmer networks, conferences and coffee shop talk. Farmers may feel reluctant to share sensitive financial information, however.

From 2002-2004, the Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems worked with a group of 19 growers on a participatory, farmer-led case study. The growers collected data on their sales, labor and other aspects of their businesses. They then created financial ratios that allowed them to compare small, medium and large operations in a way that respected their confidentiality. Their goal was not to provide a complete economic analysis of their operations, but to provide a basis for comparisons between farms and discussions of how to forge a quality livelihood from farming. Growers wanting a standard economic analysis of their farms can use traditional balance sheets, financial statements, and cash flow statements.

The information contained in this case study can help guide growers as they set financial and quality of life goals for their farms and structure their operations to realize those goals. There is no ideal size for a fresh market vegetable farm; growers need to use their management skills and economic analysis tools to figure out the scale and level of mechanization that makes the most sense for them.

This case study involved a small number of farms that were not randomly selected. The results, therefore, may not be readily generalized to other operations.

Table 1. Overview of participating farms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm scale</th>
<th>Number in study</th>
<th>Acres in active production</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 3 acre Market Garden</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.5 to 2.7</td>
<td>3 to 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-12 acre Market Farm</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3 to 11</td>
<td>6 to 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 12 acre Vegetable Farm</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15 to 60</td>
<td>9 to 30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Typical facility size per acre of production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm scale</th>
<th>Greenhouse (for transplant production)</th>
<th>Washing and packing area</th>
<th>Refrigeration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-6 acres</td>
<td>60-400 sfta 300 sfta</td>
<td>80-250 sfta 150 sfta</td>
<td>30-250 cfta 125 cfta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-80 acres</td>
<td>30-300 sfta 130 sfta</td>
<td>30-130 sfta 70 sfta</td>
<td>50-250 cfta 120 cfta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Labor hours per acre for three farm sizes over three years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm scale</th>
<th>Average labor hours/acre</th>
<th>Labor performed by farm owner</th>
<th>Payroll expenses as a % of gross income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 3 acre</td>
<td>1.957</td>
<td>33-98%</td>
<td>0-42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to 6</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>52-97%</td>
<td>1-29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 12</td>
<td>707</td>
<td>40-67%</td>
<td>12-34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 12 acres</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>17-45%</td>
<td>19-41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Farm finances for three farm sizes, per acre and per farm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm scale</th>
<th>Labor hours per acre</th>
<th>Gross sales per acre</th>
<th>Net cash income per acre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;3 acres</td>
<td>933.2-994</td>
<td>$8,888-$25,605</td>
<td>$5,123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-12 acres</td>
<td>402.1-443</td>
<td>$6,267-$15,276</td>
<td>$11,121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;12 acres</td>
<td>462.6-613</td>
<td>$6,750-$14,466</td>
<td>$10,810</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm scale</th>
<th>Total farm labor hours</th>
<th>Total farm gross sales</th>
<th>Total farm net cash income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;3 acres</td>
<td>1,229-2,937</td>
<td>$11,316-$36,029</td>
<td>$18,947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-12 acres</td>
<td>3,004-6,646</td>
<td>$32,040-$166,759</td>
<td>$71,203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;12 acres</td>
<td>9,697-17,797</td>
<td>$228,567-783,979</td>
<td>$337,093</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Call 518-846-7300 for more details.

Table 5. Comparing net cash income to gross sales for three farm sizes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm scale</th>
<th>Net cash to gross</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;3 acres</td>
<td>9%-57%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to 12 acres</td>
<td>16%-57%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;12 acres</td>
<td>16%-51%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Hourly wage of owner for three farm sizes over three years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm scale</th>
<th>Hourly wage</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;3 acres</td>
<td>$3.32-$6.57</td>
<td>$4.96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to 12 acres</td>
<td>$2.26-$16.92</td>
<td>$7.45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;12 acres</td>
<td>$3.46-$14.90</td>
<td>$11.36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most of the farms in this project were located in Wisconsin, although a few were in neighboring states. All but one used organic production practices. They ranged from less than one acre to over 70 acres, and were divided into three scale categories:

**Market gardens** had fewer than three acres in active production, not including fallow or cover cropped areas. There were six market gardens in this project, with 0.5 to 2.7 acres in active production.

**Market farms** had between 3 and 12 acres in active production, not including fallow or cover cropped areas. There were eight market farms in this project. Some of these farms were struggling with issues of mechanization versus hand labor, while others were among the most successful and stable in the study.

**Vegetable farms** produced crops on more than 12 acres, not including fallow or cover cropped areas. There were five vegetable farms in this project. Four were diversified operations. An additional nonorganic farm that followed low-input, integrated pest management (IPM) practices participated. Its numbers are not included in the stated averages or ranges. Acres in production ranged from 15 to 80 acres.

These farming scales are both similar and different in terms of marketing, equipment, crops, and labor.

**Marketing:** Selling produce directly to customers was the cornerstone of most growers’ marketing plans. Most sold product through farmers’ markets, restaurants and retail outlets and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA); pick-your-own and on-farm sales were less common. Many growers used one dominant marketing outlet along with a variety of secondary outlets.

**Equipment:** Equipment value was defined as the growers’ estimate of current (resale) value of all farming equipment of lasting or enduring quality, excluding farmers’ personal dwellings and land. This is an imprecise measure that should be treated as a rough guide. Investment in equipment per acre ranged from $2,011 to $26,784; the smallest farms with no tractors had the lowest investment. Three-year average net cash income for the farms in this study ranged from under $2,000 to over $8,000 per acre. Market gardens experienced more year-to-year variation in net cash income per acre than the two larger farm types.

**Crops:** All of the organic farms in this study grew a wide variety of crops, although some were more specialized than others. Diversification prevented pest buildup and provided some insurance against crop failure. But learning to grow crops of the proper mix was a challenge. Diversification prevented pest buildup and provided some insurance against crop failure. But learning to grow crops of the proper mix was a challenge. Diversification prevented pest buildup and provided some insurance against crop failure. But learning to grow crops of the proper mix was a challenge.

**Labor:** Labor hours on the market gardens with fewer than three acres ranged from 933 to 2,094 hours per acre, and averaged just under 2,000. Payroll amounted to between 0% and 42% of gross sales. Labor on the 3 to 12 acre market farms ranged from 402 to 1,443 hours per acre and averaged just under 850. Payroll expenses consumed as much as 34% of gross sales on these farms. Labor on the four large-scale organic vegetable farms ranged from 462 to 613 total hours per acre and averaged 554. Payroll expenses consumed between 19% and 41% of gross farm sales.

**Farm finances**

The growers participating in this case study tracked their expenses, sales and labor hours over the three years of this project. They helped choose what data to collect and how to analyze it. They opted to compare the annual net cash income they earned from their farms without including factors such as prescribed machinery use and land costs, depreciation and opportunity costs. In other words, they wanted to know “how much cash they had at the end of the season to provide for themselves and their households—and perhaps take a vacation.”

The averages and ranges for some measures are shown below. Although this study was not designed to produce statistically significant quantitative data, average values instead of ranges are reviewed as a means to simplify the discussion and help respect grower confidentiality. The growers used additional ratios that are described in the full report.

**Gross sales per acre:** Small plantings of organic, fresh market vegetables, herbs, flowers and berries can garner large gross sales. The farms in this study realized three year average annual gross sales between $6,267 and $25,605 per acre. The most impressive gross sales per acre were seen at the smallest scale of production. These gross sales per acre figures are based only on the land being used for cash crops in a given year. If land in cover crops or fallow land were included, these figures would be lower for most farms. Some farms had additional farm income from enterprises such as eggs, chicken or beef, which were not included here.

**Net cash income per acre:** Expenses, especially labor costs, can quickly eat into gross sales on a vegetable farm of any size. Net income matters most in terms of financial sustainability. The term net cash income is used in this report to describe a farm’s gross sales minus all current year cash expenses. Factors such as prescribed machinery use and land costs, depreciation and opportunity costs were not included. Three-year average net cash income for the farms in this study ranged from under $2,000 to over $8,000 per acre. Market gardens experienced more year-to-year variation in net cash income per acre than the two larger farm types.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) appeared to help stabilize income. CSA farms are assured relatively steady sales because members pay for their share of the harvest at the beginning of the year. Other marketing strategies are subject to the vagaries of the marketplace and weather.

**Comparing net cash income to gross sales:** Dividing net cash income by gross sales results in a net cash to gross ratio. Higher net cash to gross ratios were strongly associated with farms that concentrated on CSA. The smaller farms with higher net cash to gross ratios had lower payroll expenses, with the farmer doing the bulk of the work and keeping more money. Some larger farms maintained high net cash to gross ratios through careful training and management of labor crews.

**Hourly wage:** Hourly wages were calculated by dividing the growers’ reported net cash income by hours worked. Average hourly wages were as low as $3.32 on a small farm and as high as $14.90 on a large farm, averaging $7.45 for all farms.

---

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Livelihood and quality of life

Most of the small market gardens provided part-time livelihoods for the growers. For most of the market farmers with 3 to 12 acres in production, farming represented a primary or full-time livelihood. Farming was a full-time livelihood for all of the vegetable farmers with over 12 acres in production.

All of the growers in this study reported that they were generally, but not overwhelmingly, pleased with their quality of life. They would like more personal time, health insurance and retirement security. The mid- and large-scale growers also felt that dedicated, skilled employees would improve their quality of life.

There is no universal recipe for success as a vegetable grower. Farmers who excel have a passion for growing and often have business and marketing savvy. Employee management skills are also important. Keys to financial success included increasing work efficiency and utilizing techniques and tools to keep expenses low. Four of the five farms that focused on CSA as their sole or primary marketing outlet were among those with the highest net cash income per acre in the study.

If you would like to learn more about the financial information and ratios described here, please see Appendix A and B of the full report (http://www.cias.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2008/07/grwr.pdf) or contact John Hendrickson at the Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems: telephone: 608-265-3704, e-mail: jhendric@wisc.edu

Observations

The most significant expense on a vegetable farm is hired labor. The percentage of gross sales that went to payroll expenses for hired labor on the under three acre market gardens ranged from 0% to 42%. The average was 22%. On 3 to 12 acre market farms, payroll expenses ranged from 1% to 34%, and the average was 16%.

Vegetable farms over 12 acres spent 32% on average, and the range was 19% to 40%.

Restaurants and other labor-intensive businesses can average around 30 percent.

The percentage of gross sales going to payroll expenses plus the farm’s net cash income used to pay the farmers themselves was remarkably consistent, averaging around 60% for the less than three acre market gardens and 3 to 12 acre market farms. After adding in 10% of gross sales reinvested into equipment of lasting value, this leaves around 30% for general overhead (annual operating supplies and expenses).

Please note that, in this analysis, net cash income is used in lieu of farmers’ wages and farmers therefore are not contributing any unpaid labor to the farm.

For the vegetable farms over 12 acres, the percentage of gross sales going to payroll expenses plus the farm’s net cash income used to pay the farmers themselves averaged around 66% to 70%. After adding in 10% to 13% of gross sales reinvested into equipment of enduring value (purchases or major repairs), this leaves around 20% for general overhead (annual operating supplies and expenses.)

The project also collected data on seed costs. The market gardeners growing on less than three acres spent, on average, $700 per acre on seed. The three to 12 acre market farms spent about $600 per acre, on average. The over 12 acre vegetable farms spent an average of $327 per acre on seed. This is considerably lower than that reported by the National Agricultural Statistics Service, which averaged around $250 per acre.

Appendix C: Equipment options at different scales

The first two sample equipment lists below are based on information from two individual farms in this case study, one at the under three acre scale and one at the 3 to 12 acre scale. The list of equipment options for the large scale farm is adapted from a textbook rather than a farm participating in this project. Equipment needs and usage can vary considerably across farms depending on crops grown, available labor, and grower preferences. Some growers like and are more comfortable with machinery than others.

In this study, equipment value was defined as the estimated current (resale) value of all farming equipment of lasting or enduring quality such as tractors, implements, tools, buildings, etc. This was admittedly an imprecise measure, and readers are cautioned to treat these figures as rough guides. We did not include the farmer’s personal dwelling and land in this figure. See Appendix A on page 26 for more information.

Sample equipment list for a 1.5-acre market garden*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Purchase price</th>
<th>Current value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hoophouse and related supplies</td>
<td>$1,700</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used walk-behind tractor w/ rotavator</td>
<td>$2,700</td>
<td>$1,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used mower</td>
<td>$250</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used Walk-in cooler (6x6x4)</td>
<td>$900</td>
<td>$700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden cart</td>
<td>$350</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous garden tools, harvest crates, and irrigation lines</td>
<td>$750</td>
<td>$300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>$6,650</strong></td>
<td><strong>$3,850</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This data comes from a participating market garden.
Appendix D: Annual sales, expenses and net cash income on three project farms

The following cash expense summaries were provided by three individual farms, one at each scale, in the Profit by Planning Project. They are included here as examples and do not represent recommended budget categories or expense ranges. Some general observations about budgets are included at the end.

Sales and expenses over one year on a 1.-acre market garden*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gross sales</th>
<th>$14,415</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSA (45 members)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct wholesale</td>
<td>$9,869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total sales</td>
<td>$24,284</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Annual cash expenses

| Bank service charges | $48     |
| Hired labor          | $4,400  |
| CSA crops purchased  | $300    |
| Fuel-for equipment   | $200    |
| LP for greenhouse     | $320    |
| Greenhouse supplies  | $590    |
| Insurance             | $310    |
| Memberships/dues     | $130    |
| Miscellaneous         | $30i    |
| Organic certification | $520    |
| Postage, printing, and reproduction | $160 |
| Repairs               | $580    |
| Seed                  | $820    |
| Soil amendments       | $520    |
| Supplies              | $1,490  |
| Taxes                 | $400    |
| Telephone and utilities | $940 |
| Total expenses        | $17,029 |
| Net cash income       | $12,255 |

*This data comes from a participating market garden during one year of the project.

All but one of the farms in this study were using organic farming methods and were likely paying more for organic seed. These farms often grew specialty crops with pricey seed. The non-organic grower who grew a far more limited array of crops spent only $165 per acre on seed.

--------


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Sales and expenses over one year on a 4.5-acre market farm*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gross sales</th>
<th>$46,460</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash expenses</td>
<td>$5,068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hired labor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeds</td>
<td>$3,361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property taxes</td>
<td>$2,558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertilizer</td>
<td>$2,206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>$2,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel</td>
<td>$1,983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm and vehicle insurance</td>
<td>$1,716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenhouse supplies</td>
<td>$1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>$1,285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>$630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>$630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small tools and misc. supplies</td>
<td>$590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications (printing, copying)</td>
<td>$311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSA supplies</td>
<td>$435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment taxes</td>
<td>$250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bags</td>
<td>$222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office supplies</td>
<td>$122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total cash expenses</td>
<td>$28,917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net cash income</td>
<td>$21,543</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This data is from a participating market farm during one year of the project.

Sales and expenses on a 16-acre vegetable farm*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total gross sales</th>
<th>$250,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash expenses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automobile expenses</td>
<td>$3,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemicals</td>
<td>$800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custom hire</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment purchases</td>
<td>$43,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee benefits</td>
<td>$7,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertilizer</td>
<td>$2,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trucking</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel</td>
<td>$2,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>$2,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortgage</td>
<td>$7,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other interest</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hired labor</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment rental</td>
<td>$1,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land rent</td>
<td>$1,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repairs</td>
<td>$2,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeds</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc supplies</td>
<td>$16,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>$1,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>$2,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office supplies</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>$3,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscriptions</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>$900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional services</td>
<td>$1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total cash expenses</td>
<td>$150,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net cash income</td>
<td>$99,850</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This data comes from a participating vegetable farm during one year of the project.

---

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Bale Wrap - White or Green

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20”</td>
<td>$60.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30”</td>
<td>$73.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Silage Bags

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8x150</td>
<td>$255.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9x150</td>
<td>279.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lastic Tubes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7x250</td>
<td>$121.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7x220</td>
<td>149.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bunker Covers - Black/White

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40x100</td>
<td>$134.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50x150</td>
<td>249.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60x200</td>
<td>384.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

End Caps - 25 Per Case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9x572</td>
<td>$99.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bale Bags - 20 Per Case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9x320</td>
<td>$115.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I have other sizes of above items as well as Hay Tarps, Bale Tubes and End Caps. Call me for pricing.

Alex Arau

207-236-3283
alexcarau@gmail.com
Wayne’s Organic Garden
by Jack Kittredge

I’ve been running into Wayne Hansen for years, mostly at NOFA conferences in Massachusetts and Connecticut. He is always a vendor (often accompanied by his wife, Marilyn) with interesting vegetables, quite knowledgeable — even learned — about his varieties and their culture, gregarious and talkative, but with never a positive word to say about his financial prospects. Rambunctious weeds, uncooperative weather, the inability to find adequate help, and a series of unprofitable agricultural ventures seem to hound his efforts to make any money as a farmer.

What better time to delve into his story than an issue devoted to analyzing the bottom line? Can he really lose money every year? How is this sustainable? Why does he keep it up? In these pages, gentle reader, all shall be revealed!

Onoco is a village in the town of Sterling, CT. It is located on the far east end of the state, right on the Rhode Island border. After Wayne worked as a contractor for a time, in 1987 Wayne and Marilyn bought a rundown house there intending to fix it up. But Wayne also took advantage of the land to start a garden. He had done some small farming in Kansas in the early 1970s and had enjoyed it. As it happened, the garden kept beckoning for more of his time, and the house never got fixed up!

Now eastern Connecticut is not known for its great farmland, with stony and heavily sandy soil. Wayne recites the time, about ten years after he moved there and having suffered many poor seasons of growing, when he finally sought out a copy of the Windham County soils map and assessment. It described the soil in Onoco as only: “suitable for agriculture with irrigation.”

“That was a moment of insight for me,” he laughs. “I started irrigating and have been a much more productive grower since then! I use drip irrigation everywhere.”

At this point Wayne farms on an acre of his land and another three-tenths of an acre he rents across the busy route 14A from his house. He has also put in a few hoop houses, the largest 26 by 96 feet, and the other 22 by 72 feet. These he uses primarily for starting plants and drying onions, but with double layers of plastic and heat in both, he has been experimenting with early greenhouse tomatoes and a few other crops.

Trying to bring in the heat and moisture and ventilation required for good growing conditions, when it is not there naturally, is of course expensive. Fuel oil for the greenhouses in the winter and electricity for the well pump and ventilation fans in the spring and summer are among the bills that keep Wayne’s operations from turning a profit.

“I just got the electric bill for last month,” he says. “Four hundred and eighteen dollars for fans, water, cooling. This is extremely sandy soil. It’s like a beach. It drained out better than most people’s last year. But then we had problems with the blight and lost most of our tomatoes anyway.”

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- Improved visibility of seed in soil
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Bejo: a name that stands for quality
This Zephyr squash, Wayne asserts, is the best tasting squash in the world and is the most popular one in Italy. The one he is holding is about the size they are when best picked.

“Plants are a labor-intensive problem,” he sighs. “We have never been able to get rid of the fusarium we brought in when we got some infected garlic from Canada one year. We’ve been saving our own seed, but now I’m going to have to buy all new, I’m afraid. Marilyn is braiding our biggest bulbs. They’re stiff necked, so they’re not really braided, more like bound together.

"This is my first crop of carrots," he continues. “It’ll probably be lost to weeds. I haven’t got a good way of growing carrots yet. I use palletized seed and I have a one row precision seeder. But the ground is so soft that when I tried to use it, it didn’t work very well. So I went back to my Earthway seeder. Which also didn’t work well because the pellets clog in half of the holes. Carrots are not an easy crop for me in any event because of all the weeds we have.

Wayne tried planting leeks ‘Elliot Coleman style’ in groups for easy harvesting. But they didn’t ever get good sized. He grows sweet potatoes without aid of plastic or artificial heat. He is particularly proud of a summer squash he grows. It is called “zephyr” and he says it, picked at about 6 inches in length, is unquestionably the best tasting squash in the family.

He starts about 500 lettuce per week, usually selling most of it before it bolts. But this year he anticipates a problem -- with all the heat it is bolting very quickly. Strawberries grow well in his soil, but he doesn’t do too many because they’re labor-intensive and need to be harvested at the same time one is setting out tomatoes, peppers and eggplant.

“I grow a lot of onion,” he adds. “Onions are usually a pretty lucrative crop. With all the weeds this year we may have trouble with them. May was a critical period and we had other things that got in the way of weeding. I had to re-cover one of the hoop houses.”

Wayne is a big fan of soil blocks. He plants beans and peas directly, of course, and cucumbers in peat pots, but most other crops he starts in soil blocks. He has a transplant tool he has adapted to place them in furrows made with his garden tractor. He has a transplanter tool he has adapted to place them in furrows made with his garden tool. He has a few seeds in small bags of soil and then plants them in soil blocks.

Weed control is a major problem. They’re stiff necked, so they’re not really braided, more like bound together.

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Wayne is a big fan of soil blocks. He plants beans and peas directly, of course, and cucumbers in peat pots, but most other crops he starts in soil blocks. He has a transplant tool he has adapted to place the blocks into the rows.

“We do soil blocks,” he explains, “because we get more uniform plantings. If you put down stuff in a seeder then you have to go back and thin it. We use the drip tape for measuring. There is a hole every foot. We do the lettuce in rows a foot apart, and each lettuce is a foot apart in the row. The plants are offset from one row to the next. When they get big they’re right up against each other with no room for weeds. We have a nice setup in the spring before the weeds have taken over. It looks pretty!

“I got that transplanter from Johnny’s,” he continues. “It takes two people to operate. Other than that, it’s great. You put it in the soil, open up the handles and it makes a square hole the size of the soil block, which then drops into it. You can plant once every five seconds with two people. You have to have a different transplanter for each size of block, though. It was about $90 when I first bought it. Now they’re $120, I think. It’s well made – sturdy.”

Labor is the limiting factor in how well Wayne’s work pays off. Without enough help, his early plant-
ings end up in weeds. May is a tough time for him, because so much needs to be done but he doesn’t have any money coming in yet. By the time I visited with him and Marilyn, in mid July, he had been to some markets and had some cash.

“If I can afford enough people,” Wayne explains, “I can get some stuff done. In Spring, which is when you really need all the cultivating, who has any money? I don’t! I had to pay a thousand dollars for April’s oil bill.”

In the last couple of weeks I have had some volunteers and a few day laborers and we have been able to go after the weeds.

“But I’m the big manager,” he continues. “I have to do everything from feed the cats to take the garbage to the dump to decide where all the plants go and pick the peas. So I don’t get everything done I would like.”

Dustin is Wayne’s primary worker – full time during the season and tapering off at both ends. He lives across the street. He’s been out of high school ten years and still works for Wayne.

“He knows as much,” Hansen confides, “if not more, about how to get things done here than I do. (He laughs.) He comes on part time early in the season, goes to full time in the summer, and goes back to part time in the fall. He works more than he can afford. He’s my big expense because he is actually on the books. I have to make all the extra payments for FICA and worker’s comp. Minimum wage here is $8.25 and that’s what I pay him. He’s a good kid – quite smart. I’m lucky to have him. He’s worth more than the minimum wage, but that is all I can do.

“Another of the guys working here today,” Wayne continues, “is a volunteer. Roger is a student at UCConn, lives on his grandfather’s farm and makes all his hay. He was saying this morning that he hopes it doesn’t rain today because his $6.50 a bale second cutting hay is all out in the field. He likes to do something different, so he comes out every Friday at 7 am and works all day. I give him a few vegetables or something. Also, some school teacher called up and she wants to do stuff. So she comes out two days a week for a couple of hours in the morning and works a hoe. I guess I’m lucky. It isn’t everything I want to do, but it would never be everything I would want.”

Hansen is very conscious of all he is not getting done in terms of weeding or immediately replanting areas that have been harvested. But he goes to four markets a week and tries to spend his remaining time as wisely as possible.

“Employees,” he sums up, “as I’m sure you know, when you get to be old are the most necessary and most expensive part of a farming operation. Basically, Dustin makes money and I don’t.”

One of the ways Wayne markets is a small CSA. It is only 12 shares, and goes 14 weeks – from the last Tuesday in June to the last Tuesday in September. A share costs $280 ($265 if they pay in January), which gives shareholders $20 worth of food each week. Unlike many CSAs, however, Hansen runs it. “That is really my main purpose running it. Unlike many CSAs, however, Hansen says. “It gives me some good contacts.”

“We made less than $400 last night at Putnam,” he sighs. “It goes from 3:30 to 6:00. We’ve made $500 there in the past. We were the only organic tomatoes there, so we could get $5 while everybody else got $8.”

Wayne has other ways to get early money. He sells transplants and take preorders for them – if they pay for them in January he gives the customer 10% off what they would pay in May.

But Wayne has spent the last 20 years trying to figure out how to make money marketing vegetables in eastern Connecticut. It is not near any population centers, people are not as well educated as elsewhere, and it is sort of economically depressed. The median income is maybe $30,000, there are empty houses, and the farmland isn’t good. He calls it “our Appalachia.” What he has finally realized, after many years, is that he needs to go where the money is.

So he is trying out more affluent markets. For years he has been going to farmers markets in Danielson and Putnam. They are nearby, just off route 395. But they suffer from the problems of eastern Connecticut.

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Wayne’s helpers plant lettuce in soil blocks using a transplanting tool Wayne ordered from Johnny’s. One person operates the tool, one places transplants into it, and a third follows behind and pats the block in and then waters the seedlings.

“We were surprised by the results. We maintain our tank SCC down at 80-100,000 by spraying every fresh udder for 4 to 5 days.”

— Alan Mesman

“It worked. It softens the udder, and irritation when they come fresh,” says Alan Mesman. He and his wife Vickie and son Ben and daughter Samantha, run Mesman Farms, a grazing-based certified organic dairy near Mt. Vernon, Washington. Mesman Farm, Mt. Vernon, Washington.

Alan and Vickie Mesman and son Ben and daughter Samantha.

By the summer time rolls around, however, he is a little tired of the CSA: “This week we picked for Wednesday’s Old Brockway market on Tuesday morning. We have to leave before 7 in the morning, so we can’t pick then. But we had to make sure the CSA got its produce first, and what was left we could take to the market. Things become very stressful trying to balance one thing against another.”

“Another of the guys working here today,” Wayne continues, “is a volunteer. Roger is a student at UCConn, lives on his grandfather’s farm and makes all his hay. He was saying this morning that he hopes it doesn’t rain today because his $6.50 a bale second cutting hay is all out in the field. He likes to do something different, so he comes out every Friday at 7 am and works all day. I give him a few vegetables or something. Also, some school teacher called up and she wants to do stuff. So she comes out two days a week for a couple of hours in the morning and works a hoe. I guess I’m lucky. It isn’t everything I want to do, but it would never be everything I would want.”

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One of the ways Wayne markets is a small CSA. It is only 12 shares, and goes 14 weeks – from the last Tuesday in June to the last Tuesday in September. A share costs $280 ($265 if they pay in January), which gives shareholders $20 worth of food each week. So, despite the share price not rising, the prices of vegetables do and $20 buys less now than it did 10 years ago.

“It provides me with a few thousand dollars in January,” Hansen says. “That is really my main purpose – to have some income in January, so maybe you can pay the credit card minimums that month! I could try to do a huge CSA, but I don’t want to. Those things all feel each other. We wouldn’t have met Roger, our volunteer, if we hadn’t been going to the markets. I sell to the Willimantic Food Coop and that gives me some good contacts.”

By the summer time rolls around, however, he is a little tired of the CSA: “This week we picked for Wednesday’s Old Brockway market on Tuesday morning. We have to leave before 7 in the morning, so we can’t pick then. But we had to make sure the CSA got its produce first, and what was left we could take to the market. Things become very stressful trying to balance one thing against another.”
Our future depends upon our choice between death forces and life forces; upon whether or not we will return in humility to the soil.

— Ehrenfried Pfeiffer

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"So I called up the guy who runs the markets for the Department of Agriculture," he continues. "I asked him if we couldn’t get a spot in one of the better markets. He said, ‘Sure. You want to do Wednesday or Saturday?’ I already had a good market in Dan- ielson on Saturday, so I went for Wednesday. I got a spot at Old Saybrook. The first year wasn’t great, but you spend that time getting to know people and planning out what crops work for them. Last year it was my best market.”

This last winter, since Hansen had the winter green- house, he decided to try a winter market in New London. It wasn’t that well attended, but the public- ity person for Coventry asked him if he would like to come up and sell his winter greenhouse produce there. He’d give them a try, and came away impressed.

“They sell from November to the end of February,” Wayne relates. “It’s inside the Coventry high school on Sunday, 11 to 2 and they have an Email list of 2500 people! So I started going there as a guest vendor every couple of weeks. Then somebody had the misfortune of having their greenhouse heater shut down and they lost everything. But that did open some tables for us. We did very well for what we had. I’d take these tiny onions that I thought no one would want, put them in a bag with a high price on it, and people would snap them up. I mostly did chard, kale, cabbage and bok choy. Bok choy actually grows in the winter, even when spinach won’t. And it was very popular. So we did extremely well and at some point the two women who run the market asked if I wanted to sell at the summer market. I said I would sure! So we have this great market for $220 for 22 weeks. I’m the only certified organic vendor there! There is one Certified Natu- rally Grown guy who used to be organic, and some people who have signed the Farmer’s Pledge, but nobody else certified organic.

“We just went to the Coventry regional market last week,” he continues. “It’s probably one of the two or three destination markets in Connecticut where people go just because it is entertaining. Opening day they had 3500 visitors! It’s not Danielson or Putnam. You can make some money there. Coventry is not a population center, but people come there from West Hartford, which is a well-off suburb. It was done well and publicized well. A few people spent a year figuring out how to run a good farmers market. They’re not farmers. One makes soap. It’s a big community activity. We have a spot there this year. You have to continue to show up to get invited back next year. Last week we had all the tomatoes from the Coventry market, which was the second weekend in July. We had the best farmers market we’ve ever had. We did $1000.65! We were almost the only people there. Everyone else has tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, maybe potatoes and onions. But I was growing radicchio, kohlrabi, things people weren’t familiar with. They’ll come to see what you have, and maybe they’ll buy one.”

People have gotten to like local food and Wayne figures that if we are going to have it, people are going to have to pay more. That’s just reality. The idea of cheap food and Earl Butz is long gone. He’s not planning on leaving any of his older markets. But he is going to charge the same in them as he does in Coventry.

“I can’t really have two prices,” he says, “I wouldn’t feel good about that. You know: ‘How much are these onions?’ ‘I don’t know. What town is this?’ But that is what you run into,” he continues, “when you have a farmer-run market as opposed to a committee-run one, who know what they are doing. They would either talk to her and get her to raise her prices, or not invite her back. I tell people like that: ‘Grow in your backyard and put up a sign that says ‘Free vegetables.’ Don’t compete with farmers who need to make a living.’

Wayne’s wife Marilyn retired this year. She was a residential staff worker at a group home for cogni- tively impaired women. When she was hired it was a union job and they put her on the state pension program as well as an excellent health insurance plan for both Marilyn and Wayne which has fol- lowed them into retirement. She has worked there 18 years and sometimes still goes back as a substit- ute. All these years she was the primary breadwin- ner in the family and could only help Wayne on weekends and evenings. But she is able to help more now. An old on-the-job back injury, however, means she isn’t physically able of doing a lot of things. And Hansen says she needs training in many of his systems and practices. Hansen doesn’t have any other job during the winter and his difficult farm financial picture is in part due to seasonal cash flow problems.

“Sometimes drag in a lot of money,” he asserts, “but when it comes to April and we have to pay the $700 workman’s comp bill, I still have to put it on a credit card! That’s just the way things are. I finance almost everything on credit cards. Back after the crash the Bank of America offered me $21,500 at 0% for a year. I got that, which was how I was able to pay for our big hoop house. It was about $15,000. I got the hardware for next to nothing. But clearing the land, putting in new topsoil, driving the stakes, putting it up was what was expensive.”

As a result of these cash flow problems last year the farm, which grossed slightly more than $39,000, paid out $2500 in interest. Other major expenses were labor - $11,900, car and truck expense - $7700 (that includes Wayne doing about 10,000 miles in the van for markets and picking up supplies, and Marilyn miles to markets and doing errands in her car, all at 55c a mile), supplies - $4500, seeds and..."
The Natural Farmer

Fall, 2010

Weyn Hansen

A Province of the widly quoted principal guy or alrady for the current year.

Vegetables

G   Accounting (cost): (1) Cash (2) Accrual

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost (Value)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sales of livestock and other items bought for resale</td>
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<td>4. Cost of livestock, produce, grains, and other products you raised</td>
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<td>5. Co-op cooperative distributions (Farmers 1069-PARI)</td>
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<td>6a. Agricultural program payments (see instructions)</td>
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<td>6b. Taxable amount</td>
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<td>7. Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) loans (see instructions)</td>
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</tr>
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<td>8a. CCC loans reported under election</td>
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<tr>
<td>8b. CCC loans forfeited</td>
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<td>8c. Crop insurance proceeds and federal crop disaster payments (see instructions)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8d. Amount received in 2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>9a. Election to defer in 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>9b. Amount deferred from 2009</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Other income, including federal and state gasoline or fuel tax credit or refund (see instructions)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Gross income. Add amounts in the right column for lines 9 through 10. You can use the accelerated method to have your income, enter the amount from Part I, line 13a</td>
<td>39,064.00</td>
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B1A For Paperwork Reduction Act Notice, see instructions.

The Schedule F Wayne filed in 2009 for his farm income and expenses.

Balen Twine - Polyprop

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<thead>
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<td>20000 double</td>
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Balen Twine - Sisal

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<td>16000*</td>
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*Available in untreated for organic production.

Net Wrap - White or Green

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<td>$209.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5in x 4640</td>
<td>219.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1006 Red Fire Farm Tour Ryan Volland
1007 Keynote Catherine Murphy
1008 Biodynamics: What's it All About? Mac Macel
1009 Backyard Winter Vegetables Danielle Andrews
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Catherine Murphy, the Saturday evening keynote presenter, shared her experience as a researcher and filmmaker in Latin America. Roughly 20 years

Saturday keynoter Catherine Murphy spoke from her experience of living over ten years in Havana.

Friday keynoter Sally Fallon Morell spoke about the value of salt in human diets, as well as the presence of adequate animal fats. ago, Murphy originally headed to Cuba after working with Catherine Sneed of the Garden Project, in San Francisco. After having worked with incarcerated

continued from page 1

continued on page 44

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by Richard Wiswall

published by Chelsea Green, 2009, www.chelseagreen.com

$34.95, 184 pages, includes a CD with spreadsheets, budgets, and templates for many useful management documents

review by Jack Kittredge

You can add my praise to that of Vern Grabinger of UVM extension, Lynn Byczynski of Gardening for Market and Enid Wonnacott of NOFA-VT. This is an exceedingly useful book. The first 150 pages discuss the basics of a farm business by focusing on 11 aspects of the whole experience.

True Sustainability – This chapter provides tools for you to discover and become clear about your personal goals. Not the new 4WD pick-up, but the big ones: health, family, security, enjoyment, freedom, etc. Richard tells of his own experiences doing the work of farming and how it can look like drudgery when you are too close, but looks far more satisfying if you put it in perspective and find it is helping you to your true goals.

Farm for Profit, not Production – This chapter steps you through the beginning stages of planning for profit. Wiswall helps the reader establish an annual profit goal, in numbers, and then work out the production and marketing plan which will accomplish that goal. This involves thinking through each crop, how much will be produced, to whom and at what price it will be sold, and what resources in land and other inputs are necessary to produce and sell it.

Discovering Profit Centers – Here we talk about actually recording the quantity and price of items sold, and the expenses involved in production. Richard gives lots of tips about how to minimize the time involved in this work, while making clear that if you neglect it you will have trouble achieving your profit goals. He introduces the crop journal, a running form for each crop on which you enter the daily work for that crop – hours spreading fertility, planting, weeding, irrigating, harvesting and packing for sale, and cover cropping the space. Besides the labor and equipment hours, this journal allows the later filling in of the costs of seed, fertility, packaging, etc. for an overall look at the costs of that crop. This journal, your bills, and the income records you also take enable you to establish a budget for each crop. Once you know the profitability of a bed of carrots, you can compare that to the profitability of beets or lettuce. At that point you can create an index of profitability and find which crops give you the highest profit, letting you see if there are ways you can expand production and sales of them. Wiswall says a few extra days of this recordkeeping over the year resulted in about a $10,000 increase in his profitability the first year he did it!

Profit Time: Crop Enterprise Budgets – This chapter shows how to include fixed expenses in crop budgets – things like greenhouse, tractor, implement, and irrigation costs, as well as taxes, insurance, marketing, etc. These overhead costs end up allocated to crops in roughly the percentage the crop takes in the growing area. One interesting fact that Wiswall comes up with is that it costs a fixed $246 for two people to load, travel to and from, set up, and staff one farm market. Unless you are grossing considerably more than that, perhaps you would be better off finding a different market for those crops.

Marketing Strategies – Here Wiswall talks about the importance of sales work, branding, and working out a satisfactory relationship with the customers. Whether they be produce buyers for stores, chefs, CSA members, farmers market attendees or whom-ever. He cautions about pricing needing to be related to the sale – obviously large wholesale amounts being priced lower per unit than individual sales because of the savings in marketing costs. He also caution when giving CSA customers too much when there is a bumper crop (say tomatoes). He says that diminishes the per unit return on each tomato and CSA customers usually can’t consume that many more tomatoes anyway. It is better to find a separate market for those tomatoes, keeping the return per tomato where it should be. The exception to this, he says, is where a CSA is totally devoted to the members and the members have funded the whole farm budget. Then all the produce should go to the members as they have paid for it all.

Effective Management – This covers such basic management as filing paperwork, scheduling time, changing old decisions that aren’t working for you, managing employees (all the way from job descriptions to retirement benefits) to farming with your spouse (define who is in charge of what, schedule regular meetings, express your needs clearly but be willing to compromise, and talk about what, if any, parts of the house are “off limits” to farm work and workers.)

Office Paper Flows and Leaky Finances – In this longish chapter Richard goes into some detail about the number of ways inadequate record-keeping and math errors can cut into your profits. Lost invoices, loaned and unreturned books and tools, not recording deductible expenses, paying with cash, not reconciling bank statements, not checking unpaid invoices regularly, using hanging scales and rounding down for simplicity instead of digital scales and getting exact weight and pricing, and not using calculators to catch math errors can all diminish your net profit.

How to Retire on Your Farm: Retirement 101 and Business Spending Tactics – Here Wiswall deals with the fact that farmers have no pensions or retirement benefits and need to have a plan for old age. He touts the benefits of minimizing expenses, saving income, maximizing tax savings via IRA contributions, and investing as much as possible for the future. He makes a simple but thought-provoking distinction about “investing” in the farm itself. To the extent that you think buying farm machinery is an investment, he says, you are fooling yourself. While it may increase productivity and thus profitability for a while, it ultimately will lose all value.
Fall, 2010  The Natural Farmer 43
Investments are things that continually increase in value, so buying a tractor is not that but is instead an expense.

Production Efficiencies – In this, the longest chapter in the book, Wiswall proves that yes, it really is a farmer and not an accountant. Reminding the reader that Profit = Income – Expenses, he suggests that the easiest way to increase your profit is not to raise income but to trim expenses. On organic farms, that usually means cutting the biggest expense – labor. The easiest way to cut labor is to mechanize and use tractor-based equipment, especially for tillage. Wiswall’s concern about the financial impact weeds can have is evident as he waxes eloquent on adopting a strategy of crop-to-crop wide uniform raised beds so that tillage can be standardized and efficient. (Julie and I have just adopted this system this year on our own farm and I was so encouraged that we will see more of those predicted but hard-to-find profits in 2010.) Like most farmers, Richard likes to talk about his equipment. He describes (and shows pictures of) his disk harrow, 5-tine harrow, chain harrow, mini chisels, bed former, rototiller, tine weeder, basket cultivator, sweeps, flame weeders, various seeders, bedformer, rotary mower, root crop chain digger, and barrel washer. For a guy who wants to reduce expenses, and understands that equipment is not an investment but an expense, that is quite a lot of information to be packed into that chapter! He then points out that even when you save money in the long run compared to paying for hand weeding or accepting the losses in production that result from weedy fields.

Write Your Own Planning Plan – Wiswall may be biting off more than he can chew by trying to convince farmers to write business plans. But for those who need one, no time like the present. They are trying to borrow money or interest investors or partners in the farm and need to clearly examine its potential as a money-making venture – creating a business plan can be an exciting and worthwhile achievement. It involves a farm description of location, size, owner- ship, improvements, products, markets, analyses of SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats), of management (who manages what?), of markets (current ones and trends), and of enterprises (the major products you raise), farm financial forms (Profit and Loss, Balance Sheet, and Cash Flow Pro- jection), and planning ideas and timetables. Most of us have this information in our heads somewhere, but putting it down in an organized form on paper is something new. Wiswall helps with some examples and clear statements of what you need to show and why.

Planning for the Inevitable: The Ultimate Conclu- sion – Of course no book on the business of organic farming is complete without a discussion of the im- pact of disease and the inherent risks on the operation. This short chapter is more to urge the reader to make a will, appoint a health care decision-maker should you become disabled, and give someone the power of attorney to deal with your financial affairs on your behalf if you become incompetent.

The last 40 pages of appendices give detailed ex- amples of forms, workbooks, enterprise budgets for various crops, and an index. The workbook is small and well designed. It is available for purchase or can be available to the reader on CD which accompanies the book. This nice touch saves you many hours of re-inventing (or at least re-keyboarding) the wheel and is just one more example of the care and thoughtful- ness Wiswall shows for the reader.

Simply in Season A CSA Cookbook
Written by Mary Beth Lind and Cathleen Hockman- Wert
Published by Herald Press, Scottsdale, PA, 2009
Spiral bound hard cover, 368 pages, $13.99
review by Nina Marcinowski

This brightly colored cookbook was put together in order to help consumers cook local fresh vegetables in season. The recipes encourage you to buy local and eat food that is at its freshest and most nutri- tious. As a CSA member or farmer’s market shop- per you will be able to find a recipe for the fresh produce that you buy.

The book is set up in five color coded sections, one for each season, and one for all seasons. The reci- pes are a combination of healthy, delicious vegetables, which are availablelocally at that time of year. Each sec- tion has recipes for breads, breakfast, soups, salads, main dishes, dessert and extras. The summer sec- tion also has some basic canning information and recipes.

Recipes were collected from all over the country and the world. Since this cookbook is for everyone not all of the recipes apply to the Northeast. I have already used several recipes from Simply in Season for the newsletter of the CSA I belong to. They are not complicated, the format makes them easy to fol- low, and there are many vegetarian options. This cookbook was commissioned by the “Memontone Central Committee to promote the understanding of the lives of those who produce the food”. With this in mind there are short paragraphs about each vegetable, accompanying some of the recipes on aspects of sustainable agriculture.

As a cook I like the way the hard cover with the coated spiral binding allows the book to stay open flat at any page. There are colorful illustrations of fruits and vegetables but not of the individual foods prepared. You will find many tasty, easy to prep- are recipes for your year round bounty.

Crop Rotation on Organic Farms: A Plan- ning Manual
Edited by Charles L. Mohler & Sue Ellen Johnson 2009, Natural Resource, Agriculture & Engineering Service (NRAES), Ithaca NY.
154 pages, $24, trade paperback. ISBN 978-1-933951-21-0
review by Sue Smith-Heavenrich

The purpose of this book is to help growers under- stand how to manage crop rotations, build better soils, control weeds and pests, and develop profit- able farms. To do that, Mohler and Johnson go directly to the folks who know best – research- extension educators and organic growers. Somehow they manage to cram a vast amount of information, check-lists and worksheets into this relatively thin (3/8-inches) volume.

The book begins with basics: the hows and whys of managing crops, and the practical lecture on soil and nutrition. Then Mohler and Johnson offer more than a dozen farm-tested crop sequences from the field, along with a step-by-step rotation plan- ning guide. Even so, it’s not a fill-in-the-blank and you’re ready to plant type guide. The editors don’t tell growers which crops should follow what. In- stead, they challenge growers to become intimately acquainted with their land, topography, crops and markets and guide them to develop a crop rotation program suited to their particular farm and cultural style.

Crop rotation Mohler-style begins with questions: what are your goals? Do you want to maintain healthy soil? Control a particular disease? Add nu- trients?

Then you list the crops you plan to grow and the amount of land given over to each. One thing Mohler and Johnson emphasize is crop diversity; if you have a lot of acreage invested in a particular market crop it will be harder to develop a rotation.

Saranac Valley Farms
Seed Potatoes – NYSCertified Certified Organic –
by NYS Certified Organic, LLC
3499 State Rte 3 POBox 183, Saranac, NY 12981
www.saranacvalleyfarms.com 518-293-8298

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Warm Castings Steamer
Offering homemade and winemaking composting workshops

Divide your farm into small management units, they suggest. It doesn’t matter whether a management unit is a 5′ x 100′ bed or a half-acre field – what does matter is that you map them. A hint: making units of the same size simplifies planning and record-keeping. Another hint: make multiple copies of your maps because you’ll be collecting lots of data as you walk your land and work out potential rotations.

One of the things Mohler cautions growers to do is to develop contingency plans for alternate rotations should there be weather disasters, flooding, or a drought in the marketplace.

Mohler includes a chapter on crop rotations during the transition from conventional to organic agri- culture, with advice for turning an old hayfield into vegetable production. Perennial weeds, he notes, pose a substantial problem on newly plowed land. He offers the newly plowed land into a season of cover crops and fallow. If you can’t, then at least have the first crops be something you transplant. And, whatever you do, avoid planting viny crops like pumpkins and squash the first year; they are hard to weed.

For those who place a high value on diversity, there’s a separate chapter offering guidelines for intercropping. Use tall crops to reduce the effects of drought and heat stress on shorter crops, suggests Mohler. Intercropping crop plantings with rows of something else that will make it harder for insect pests to find the crop and plants that will pro- vide habitat for beneficial insects. If you can, plant crop plantings to reduce pressure on your market crops. However, understand that intercrop- ping makes it more difficult to develop rotations, as you will have to take into account the needs of two crop families.

The last third of the book is given over to appendi- ces, with a table detailing crop sequence problems and a particularly useful list of disease pathogens hosted by agricultural weeds. There’s even a de- tailed explanation on how to create management Excel spreadsheets, along with a link to examples.

Up Tunket Road: the education of a modern homesteader By Philip Ackerman-Leist Chelsea Green Publishing, 2010 Softcover, 278 pages $17.95
Black and white line drawings by Erin Ackerman- Leist review by Erica Myers-Russos

I’ll begin with a disclaimer: a couple of years ago while attending a residency at Green Mountain Col- lege, I had the opportunity of visiting the Ackerman- Leist homestead. I met Erin and enjoyed a hike led by Philip. I admired the cozy house, envied the gorgeous old russet apple trees, and sampled—at the resistance-is-futile urging of their young son—the sweetest, fleshiest rose hips I’ve ever seen. I even used the compost toilet.

Now, reading Up Tunket Road, I realize that visit was a bit like reading the last page of a novel first— I began the book with an image already firmly in my mind: the idyllic demeanor, the little homestead brimming with sustainability and good cheer, nary a conflict or compromise in sight.

One of the book’s many virtues is that it reveals the work—both physical and intellectual—that went into the creation of the homestead I saw that day, the work which, I’m willing to bet, Ackerman-Leist would argue is on-going. What makes the tale charming rather than didactic is Ackerman-Leist’s combination of perspective and humor. (The waste management discussion, most of which is set

continued on page 45
Individuals who were finding their way and dealing with personal crisis through community gardening, Murphy felt drawn to the Cuban food crisis—another kind of collective crisis. She wanted to understand how the country of Cuba was responding to the withdrawal of the Soviet Union. Catherine Murphy drew a picture of a pre-crisis Cuba largely reliant upon Soviet industrial farming models, which utilized monoculture planting, machinery, chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and petroleum. With the fall of the communist empire, Cuba was faced with a transformative moment. Murphy quoted Dr. Fernando Funes, her mentor and researcher with the Cuban Association of Agronomists and Foresters, who said about that time in Cuban history—“Cuba had two choices—to lay down and die, or to stand up and fight.” Cuba chose the latter. Devoid of ag imports after the Soviet withdrawal, Cuba redeveloped its agricultural system in a sustainable, organic way. Part of the reason the sustainable transformation was possible in Cuba, according to Murphy, was related to structural aspects of the governmental agencies, small farms, research institutions, and a general Cuban commitment to education and learning. The government made land available to anyone who wanted to cultivate food, research centers came together to provide insights and leadership on new agricultural models, and “campesinos” (small farmers) were poised to fit into cooperatives and adapt practices like crop rotation, diversification, and other sustainable farming methods. One of the most powerful lessons of the Cuban sustainable agriculture transformation, Murphy concluded, was that it is possible to develop a decentralized, country-wide system of food production, based on small family farms. With the U.S. losing family farms every year, the Cuban story seems pressing, according to Catherine Murphy taught us “We can do with less, live with less. We lead happier more fulfilling lives when we do with less and especially when we share what we have. Thinking less in terms of ‘I’ and more in terms of ‘We’, Cuba shows us possibilities in Cuba, according to Murphy, was related to structural aspects of the governmental agencies, small farms, research institutions, and a general Cuban commitment to education and learning. The government made land available to anyone who wanted to cultivate food, research centers came together to provide insights and leadership on new agricultural models, and “campesinos” (small farmers) were poised to fit into cooperatives and adapted practices like crop rotation, diversification, and other sustainable farming methods. One of the most powerful lessons of the Cuban sustainable agriculture transformation, Murphy concluded, was that it is possible to develop a decentralized, country-wide system of food production, based on small family farms. With the U.S. losing family farms every year, the Cuban story seems pressing, according to Catherine Murphy.
complete the circle of exhibitors on campus all weekend. Livestock demonstrations, including llamas, draft horses and yoked oxen put smiles on kids and adults alike. This year the conference introduced a new aspect to their client and what raised much-needed funds for NOFA. Participants bid on whale watching tours, weekend getaways to Vermont, books and artisan products.

Keithray Geary, one of the Summer Conference Registration Coordinators shared how deeply she connects with NOFA members. Participants were always courteous, caring, loving, and helpful — she reflected. “Despite all the work we put in, ultimately the NOFA Summer Conference is about the people. These are the people we celebrate.” Their generosity of spirit, communal outlook, helpful nature, and general appreciativeness is what sets NOFA folk apart. Kathleen even received a beautiful scarf from some Peruvian attendees, when they arrived at the registration table. As the Public Relations Coordinator, I too received a small token of gratitude from one of my press attendees — the editor of the Standard Times stopped by my table and took a large heirloom tomato out of his bag for me. This, the 36th annual NOFA Summer Conference is the last one for Julie Rawson and Jack Kittredge, who were co-coordinators for more than twenty years. In reflecting about this year’s summer conference, Julie said:

“I feel very peaceful that the conference is in good hands into the future. There will always be a million details to stay on top of, and attention to detail make for the smoothness of the experience. But the heart and soul of the conference is well imbedded in the next generation of organizers. Good luck. We will be around. The past month I have been flabbergasted with 24 years of memories — a real kaleidoscope. Jack and I were stopped and congratulated by Grace Gershuny on Saturday night, a conference organizer from Vermont. We were both moved by this encounter reminded me that in NOFA we have successfully developed an inheritance strategy and passing of the torch to the next generation. Thus the movement continues.”

Jack said: “I plan to be picking peaches and laying in the hammock making up silly songs for my grandkids next summer, instead of worrying about the conference! I’ll be there — to see friends and learn — but it will be wonderful to not be in charge!”

The Natural Farmer
Fall, 2010
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The Town That Food Saved — How One Community Found Vitality in Local Food by Ben Hewitt
review by: Jean Hamilton
From the title and jacket description, you might assume that Ben Hewitt’s book of the same name is the book version of the media feeding frenzy that has descended on Hardwick, VT in recent years. In fact, this book is a thoughtful and reader-friendly look at some of the most pertinent and complicated challenges confronting local food advocates.

In seventeen chapters, Hewitt paints a detailed portrait of Hardwick, VT, with particularly fine strokes granted to those residents who have been central to the local food system. The book provides an introduction to the unique characteristics of Hardwick’s history and geography. From that foundation, readers are introduced to the Hardwick buzz, in which several local, state, and national media outlets pounce on Hardwick’s story of redemption by local food and agriculture. Hewitt was one of these journalists in 2008 when he wrote an article for Gourmet magazine about Hardwick’s food revolution.

Many towns and many movements vie for such media attention, but being a neighbor to Hardwick, Hewitt sees that it is not about the community potlucks, the smells and sensations of evening milking, a masterful hog slaughter, pints at the local pub, and membershour spent marking miso soup at the local bread coop. The attraction of the community is an excellent foil for the difficult questions that Hewitt encounters:

How can local food systems “offer economic viability to small-scale food producers’ feed the locals?” In creating fair, ecological, decentralized, and community-based food systems is it better to redistribute resources, successful developed an inheritance strategy and passing of the torch to the next generation. Good luck. We will be around. The past month I have been flabbergasted with 24 years of memories — a real kaleidoscope. Jack and I were stopped and congratulated by Grace Gershuny on Saturday night, a conference organizer from Vermont. We were both moved by this encounter reminded me that in NOFA we have successfully developed an inheritance strategy and passing of the torch to the next generation. Thus the movement continues.”

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The other 100 or so books in the series, it offers a comprehensive and creative treatment of the topic. What may come as a surprise, given the title, is how informative it is for readers across the country.

Written by Peter Asmus, a seasoned journalist specializing in energy, the book might more accurately be described as an introduction to energy issues, focused through the lens of California—the nation’s leader in both the consumption and development of energy resources.

The book is well-organized into logical categories. It begins with an overview of the history of energy usage in the state (the chapter title, “From Indigenon to Industrial Crude,” sets a brief tone). Asmus then describes the “Mainstays” of the state’s energy usage, fossil fuels, before turning to the second chapter to a comprehensive review of alternative, solar, geothermal, wind, biomass, biofuels, nuclear, hydrogen, and hydropower.

Next, he addresses the challenges associated with both the status quo and with various alternative energy sources. The “Challenges” chapter is the most sobering, with charts showing increasing greenhouse gas emissions, maps projecting a growing wildlife risk, and images of places as far-flung as the oil fields of Iraq and a mountain top removal mine in West Virginia. Over the years Asmus sources authors and exempt, as Asmus addresses the problems associated with transmission, habitat impact, and cost. On a more optimistic note, the chapter titled “Innovations and Foreseeable Alternatives” provides a detailed examination of the (ideally) complementary roles of government and private industry, and the final chapter, “Seven Ongoing Experiments,” looks at case studies of alternative energy programs across California. It is this last chapter that might be of particular interest to readers throughout the country, because it offers concrete examples of potential energy solutions— from cool roofs to smart grids, from large-scale humanure projects that capture and utilize methane to biodiesel.

Perhaps the most impressive feature of Introduction to Energy in California is that it makes a potent and dry and thoroughly interesting and accessible. The language is clear and engaging, and the generous use of graphics helps the reader visualize concepts which might otherwise seem like vague memories of physics class past. At the same time, as is typical of the California Natural History Series, accuracy is never sacrificed, and an extensive glossary and reference appendix make this work equally useful for the casual or academic reader—regardless of where they live.

The Town That Food Saved — How One Community Found Vitality in Local Food by Ben Hewitt

Published by Rodale, 2009, www.rodalestore.com $24.99, 234 pages, includes index

Review by: Jean Hamilton

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**NOFA Membership**

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

**Give a NOFA Membership** Send dues for a friend or relative to his or her state chapter and give a NOFA Membership! Send dues for a friend or relative to his or her state chapter.


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**Massachusetts**: Low-Income $25, Individual $35, Family/Farm/Organization $45, Business $75, Supporting $150

Contact: NOFA/Mass, 411 Sheldon Road, Barre, MA 01005, (978) 352-2853, Fax: (978) 352-2853, certiforganic@nofamass.org

**New Jersey**: Student/Intern $20*, Individual $40*, Family/Farm $70*, Business/Organization $150*, $10 additional per year for subscription to The Natural Farmer

Contact: Barbara Sullivan, 4 Park St., Suite 208, Concord, NH 03301, (603) 224-5022, barbara@nofatnj.org

**New York**: Limited Membership $20*, Individual $40, Family/Farm/Nonprofit Organization $50, Business $115

Contact: NOFA-NY, 249 Highland Ave., Rochester, NY 14620, Voice (585) 271-1979, Fax: (585) 271-7166, email: info@nofa.org, www.nofan.org

**Rhode Island**: Student/Student $20, Individual $40*, Family/Farm $70*, Business/Organization $150*, $10 additional per year for subscription to The Natural Farmer

Contact: Barbara Sullivan, 4 Park St., Suite 208, Concord, NH 03301, (603) 224-5022, barbara@nofatnj.org

**Vermont**: Individual $30, Farm/Family $40, Business $50, Sponsor $100, Sustainer $250, Basic $15-25*

Contact: NOFA-VT, PO Box 697, Richmond, VT 05477, (802) 434-4122, info@nofavt.org

*does not include a subscription to The Natural Farmer

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**Calendar**

**Friday, Sept. 10**: Deadline for NOFA-NH Herbal Bulk Order, for more info: www.nofanh.org/HERBS

**Starts Saturday, Sept. 11**: One-year Part-time Practical Training in Biodynamics, runs September to June, Chestnut Ridge, NY, for more info: 845-352-2020 x20 / info@pfjeffercenter.org / www.pfjeffercenter.org

**Saturday, Sept. 11 - Sunday, Sept 12**: Massachusetts Raw Milk Weekend, Raw milk dairies around the state, for more info: www.nofamilk.org for details, or, winton@nofamass.org

**Tuesday, Sept. 14 – Saturday, Sept. 18**: Mass/CT Fall Bulk Order pick-up, various locations, for more info: Bulkorder@nofamass.org

**Friday, September 17**: Class on Mozzarella, Farmer’s Cheese, & Camembert with Lea Calderon-Guthie, Burlington, VT, for more info: http://www.ruralvermont.org

**Sunday, September 19**: 3rd Annual Bicycle Tour de Farms, starts on Shoreham, VT Green, for more info: http://www.ruralvermont.org/tdf.html

**Wednesday, September 22**: Class on Swiss Style Cheese (washed rind, semi-hard “recedette”) with Karen Bixler, South Randolph, VT, for more info: http://www.ruralvermont.org


**Friday, Oct. 15 – Sunday, Oct. 17**: 4th Annual Northeast Animal Power Field Days, Tunbridge, VT Fairgrounds, for more info: www.animalpowerfielddays.org OR 802-234-5524 OR info@animalpowerfielddays.org

**Friday, Nov. 12 – Saturday, Nov. 13**: Conference to Build a Northeast Food System, Albany, NY, for more info: www.ittakesaregion.org or nesawg@nesawg.org

**Saturday, Nov. 13**: Introduction to Organic Beekeeping, Chestnut Ridge, NY, for more info: 845-352-5020 x20 / info@pfjeffercenter.org / www.pfjeffercenter.org

**Saturday, Jan. 15, 2011**: NOFA/Mass Winter Conference, Worcester, MA, for more info: WC@nofamass.org

**NOFA-VT Events** For more info: www.nofavt.org or 802-434-4122

**Wednesday, Sept. 7**: Crop Planning; Succession Planting Diversification Choices, Poultney, VT

**Wednesday, Sept. 8**: Practices to Promote Fresh Produce Food Safety for Direct Markets, East Thetford, VT

**Sunday, Sept. 12**: Pastured Pork Through All Seasons, Cornish, NH

**Wednesday, Sept. 15**: Dazing Deep: On-Farm Soil Management, Burlington, VT

**Thursday, Sept. 16**: Biodiversity for Sugarbush Health, E. Fairfield, VT

**Wednesday, Sept. 22**: Organic Pest and Disease Management, West Rutland, VT

**Sunday, Oct 24**: From Forest to Farm to Feast: The Delicious Reclamation of a Farm with Animals, Randolph, VT

**Monday, Oct 25**: What’s a Coopil? Low-cost Storage for the Winter Market, Cabot, VT

**Thursday, Nov 4, Nov 18, & Dec 9**: On-Farm Energy: three-part course for intermediate to advanced vegetable growers, Berlin, VT

**Tuesday, Nov. 16, Nov 30 & Dec 14**: Marketing that Sells: three-part course for intermediate to advanced vegetable growers, Berlin, VT

**NOFA/Mass Events. For more info: ben.grosscup@nofamass.org, or 413-658-5374

**Saturday, Sept. 11**: Massachusetts Food Preservation Workshop Days, Ashland, Barre, Shirley, Winchenod Springs, Shelburne, Great Barrington

**Saturday, Sept. 18**: Massachusetts Food Preservation Workshop Days, Brookline, Princeton, Groton, Northampton

**Saturday, Sept. 18**: Making Soft Cheeses, Gill

**Saturday, Sept. 25**: Making Fresh Goat Cheese, Westminster

**Saturday, Oct. 2**: Making Cultured Dairy Products, Peterham

**Saturday, Oct. 9**: Making Hard Cheeses, Gill

**Saturday, Nov. 13**: Making Dipped Cards and Italian and Swiss Cheeses, Gill

**Saturday, Nov. 20**: Fresh Mozzarella and Queso Blanco, Foxboro

**Friday, Nov 5 and Saturday, Nov 6**: 3rd Annual Advanced Growers’ Seminar With Jerry Brunetti – “Human Health and Soil Health”, Barre

**Saturday, Nov. 13**: “How to Run a Successful CSA”, Barre, VT

**Oct. 2010 - Aug 2011**: “Nutrient Density Series – Crop Production Courses”

**September 25, Nov 20, Feb. 12, May, 7, and Jul. 9**: Amherst

**September 26, Oct. 16, Feb. 19, Apr. 16, and Jun. 18**: Dartmouth

**Sundays Oct. 17, Jan. 9, Feb. 20, Apr. 17, and Jun. 19**: Chelmsford

**NOFA/RRI Events, for more info: Katie Miller at katie.miller@gmail.com or call NOFA/RRI at 401-523-2653. Directions to the farms can be found online.**

**Sunday, Sept. 12**: Growing Big Volumes on Small Acreage, South Side Community Land Trust, Providence, RI

**Sunday, Sept. 19**: Red Prep Without a Tractor: Red Planet Farm, Johnston, RI

**Sunday, Oct. 3rd**: Growing Seed at Scratch Farm, Cranston, RI

**November**: Winter growing at Roots Farm, Bristol, RI
The issue contains news, features, and articles about organic growing in the Northeast.

Tracie Smith, New Hampshire organic grower, has seeded clover and buckwheat between these 200 foot long rows of beans. Tracie’s successful CSA grosses $104,000 per year, of which she nets almost $1,000.

This issue contains news, features, and articles about organic growing in the Northeast, plus a special supplement on Organic Farms and Money.