Atina Diffley to Keynote
2013 NOFA Summer Conference

by Roz Cummins with Atina Diffley

Gardening, cooking, canning, and freezing were big parts of Atina Diffley’s childhood. Her family produced and wild-harvested the majority of their fruits and vegetables, and their meat and milk came from a neighbor farmer. “We knew where our food came from and how it was grown. We knew what to do with it.” Both her parents had farming backgrounds, and they taught their children self-sufficiency values and skills. “We had the best of both worlds. My dad was an electrical engineer, and mom saw her role as being responsible for the family’s health—to her, that meant good, clean, fresh food. Their 100-acre farm wasn’t viewed as crucial for financial income. It was a spiritual relationship, food source, home, and a responsibility.”

As a child, Atina would say she wanted to be a farmer or a bum when she grew up. But it wasn’t until she left her parent’s home and was buying her food from a grocery store that she realized she had to grow food just to feed herself—the food available didn’t match the quality she was raised on. It was then that she decided on farming, but it was the late 1970s. Interest rates were 15-18% and land prices were rapidly escalating. It seemed impossible to start. She spent several years doing migrant work, picking oranges and apples, and worked as a produce manager. These were valuable experiences later when she became a farmer with crews of her own to manage. She also knew from personal experience how to meet her buyers’ needs.

She started farming for a living in 1985 when she joined her husband Martin who had started the Gardens of Eagan in 1973 on his 4th generation family land in Eagan, MN. Eagan had historically been a community of small market gardeners and an important urban-edge source of food for Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Martin, born in 1949, had grown up on the family land in the midst of this food community, and he was able to tap many of the old timers for information on farming without chemicals. These market gardeners had delivery routes in the city, sold at farmers markets, and direct to grocery stores. Through Martin’s childhood, urban families still prepared for winter by buying produce in bulk and canning or freezing it. Before in-home freezers became widely available in the 1970’s, families would rent freezer drawers at their local butchers. When Martin began selling at the Minneapolis farmers market in 1973, the mainstream stores were still coming to the market to buy direct. The natural food co-ops were just starting and they were also coming to the market. Martin developed his own delivery route in order to supply them with certified organic produce (certified by one of the early private certification groups the Organic Growers and Buyers Association -- OGBA).

By the late 1970’s, the mainstream stores had largely switched to trucked-in produce and customer’s buying habits changed: where they once bought cases to put food up for the winter, they began to buy just enough to eat fresh. This in turn, has changed the way that farmers and grocers market their food as well.

The Diffley family had never used agricultural chemicals and when it was Martin’s turn, the privilege of farming the family land came along with the expectation and the responsibility to prevent erosion, maintain fertility, and feed the family. Atina talks about her first years of farming with Martin as “easy.” “We planted, weeded, harvested, and sold what we grew—hard work physically—but pest and disease management were relatively simple. The land still had intact eco-systems. Pests and disease were managed largely through the diversity of the landscape and our fertility was created with soil-building crops and by protecting the fields from erosion.”

Soon the Diffleys had two children—a 5th generation—growing up on the farm and helping at the roadside stand. They were having the same opportunity that both Martin and Atina had had as children on land—relationship with the life continued on page A-16

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The Natural Farmer Needs You!

The Natural Farmer is a quarterly membership journal of the Northeast Organic Farming Association. We plan a year in advance so those who want to write on a topic can have a lot of lead time. The next 3 issues will be:

Summer 2013: Food Safety
Fall 2013: Food Preservation
Winter 2013-14: Crop Intensification

If you can help us on any of these topics, or have ideas for new ones, please get in touch. We need your help! Deadlines are same as for ads. Moving or missed an issue? The Natural Farmer will not be forwarded by the post office, so you need to make sure your address is up-to-date if you move. Those who regularly send us a subscription fee should send address changes to us. Most of you, however, get this paper as a NOFA member benefit for paying your chapter dues and should send address updates to your local NOFA chapter (listed at the end of each issue).

Archived issues from Summer 1999 through Fall 2005 are available at http://www.library.umass.edu/scoll/digital/tnf/. More recent issues are downloadable at www.nofa.org as pdf files.

Jack Kittredge and Julie Rawson
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Advertisements not only bring in TNF revenue, which means less must come from membership dues, they also make a paper interesting and helpful to those looking for specific goods or services. We carry 2 kinds of ads:

The NOFA Exchange - this is a free bulletin board service (for subscribers or NOFA members who get the TNF) for occasional needs or offerings. Send in up to 100 words and we'll print it free in the next issue. Include a price (if selling) and an address, E-mail or phone number so readers can contact you directly. If you don't get the paper yourself you can still send in an ad - just send $5 along too! Send NOFA Exchange ads directly to The Natural Farmer, 411 Sheldon Rd., Barre, MA 01005 or (preferably) E-mail to TNF@nofa.org.

Display Ads - this is for offering products or services on a regular basis! You can get real attention with display ads. Send camera ready copy to Bob Minnocci, 662 Massachusetts Ave. #6, Boston, MA 02118 or Bob@nofamass.org and an address, E-mail or phone number so readers can contact you directly. Or to typeset a display ad for you - for $45 (which includes one revision -- additional revisions are $10 each). Just send us the text, any graphics, and a sketch of how you want it to look. Include a check for the space charge plus $45.

To the editor:

The failure of the California initiative to label GMO foods got me to thinking -- maybe it was not a failure. Corporate lobbyists spent 45 million opposing advertising, a waste of their profits. We are already protected from GMO products by buying certified organic food. It needs to be shouted out that an item certified organic is a non-GMO product. It points again to the methods of large corporations to disfigure and disorient the purchasing community through mixing messages.

Corporations target niche markets with double talk to fragment and disassociate their consumers from making practical shopping choices. An example of this behavior has been shown on a campaign to target low income inner-city consumers to not drink public water but to buy their bottled water. The water they are selling is not spring water, but water from the public water supply (the same as tap water). The company spins the idea that the water from the tap is not good enough. Water bottling companies have put up water dispensing vending machines in lower income neighborhoods. This is the same water that people will get from their own tap. The water dispensing vending machines are a way to get people to pay more for water. This is how a corporation uses the newspapers and media to sell their overpriced tap water to people.

Again, all the media attention over labeling of GMO products may be a tempest in a teapot aimed at distracting people about their loss of power and inciting a feeling of powerlessness to the people about their ability to choose good foods without GMO ingredients. At first the initiative looked like a negative for GMO ingredients, but now that the vote is over and the initiative "failed", corporations promoting GMO products can look at this as a media victory for themselves. Instead lets congratulate ourselves for choosing organic products and for the corporations wasting $45 million for lobbying against proposition 37, because we are already protected from GMO products by buying certified organic.

Continuing to do your part in the rejection of GMO products by buying organic food is a great contribution to improving our food markets. Your purchases are significant, otherwise why would every single purchase be recorded and inventoried. Let’s use the labeling media brouhaha to continue to use our common sense in making our food purchases and continue to buy organic.

-- Cathy Harragian, birdofthehandfarm@gmail.com

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Frequency discount: we give a 25% discount for year-round ads that reserve the same space for four consecutive issues your fourth ad is free! To receive the frequency discount you must pay for all the issues in advance, upon reserving the space.

Deadlines: We need your ad copy one month before the publication date of each issue. The deadlines are:

January 31 for the Spring issue (mails Mar. 1)
April 30 for the Summer issue (mails Jun. 1)
July 31 for the Fall issue (mails Sept. 1)
October 31 for the Winter issue (mails Dec. 1)

Disclaimer: Advertisers are helping support the paper so please support them. We cannot investigate the claims of advertisers ourselves, so please exercise due caution when considering any product or service. If you learn of any misrepresentation of one of our ads please inform us and we will take appropriate action. We don’t want ads that mislead.

Sponsorships: Individuals or organizations wishing to sponsor The Natural Farmer may do so with a payment of $300 for one year. (Inquire about the frequency discount). In return, we will thank the sponsor in a special area of our ads. If you have questions, or want to reserve space, contact Bob at (617) 236-4893 or Bob@nofamass.org

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NOFA Exchange

Full-time year-round farm worker in Barre, MA. Need heavy lifting, machine savvy person to farm full-time during the season, harvest and process firewood in off season. Needs skill as a carpenter and mechanic. To manage cows, pigs, turkeys and chickens, run machinery in the vegetable fields, and troubleshoot irrigation systems. Must be efficient self-starter who can motivate and manage a crew doing vegetable and fruit work. Salary of $10-$12/hour depending, plus breakfast, lunch and vegetable share. Work 7am – 4pm. Handful of Saturdays and Sundays scheduled well in advance. No housing or transportation available. Send resume and 3 references to julie@mhof.net. Questions? Call 978-355-2853.

Lovely farm for sale in Adams, MA: 30 acres, abuts state reservation with gorgeous mountain views. Includes a few sugar maples, a few antique apple trees, a spring-fed well and a small stream. $299,000. Old farmhouse needs complete renovation but has town water and sewer. Formerly a dairy farm in the early 1900’s, granddaughter would love to see a new farmer revive the property. For details and photos, www.monarchrealtyma.com reference #1999521.

Ridge and Valley Charter School (www.ridgeandvalley.org), a K-8 public school in N.W. New Jersey, seeks experienced teachers/guides with strong educational leadership, mentoring, and coaching. Areas of study include growing, harvesting and storage of organic fruits and vegetables; mushroom and herb cultivation; and raising poultry on the family farm. Land uses including homestead site design, forestry, and pasture management. Experiential learning includes all stages of seed to table vegetable production, brooding and management of the laying flock, meat poultry production, and how to design and build sustainable energy systems for the home and farm. For coaching or workshop information: wildbrowsesusustainability@gmail.com

Blow Your Own Horn

Yearlong Homesteading Internship offered at Wild Browse Farm and Sustainability Center. Want to homestead? Need the skills and self-confidence to begin? Live with us on our 9-acre organic farm/homestead and learn the pleasure of living directly with nature and working with your hands and heart, in this life-enriching experience of voluntary simplicity. Learn to grow organic nutrient-dense vegetables, fruit, shiitake mushrooms and pastured-poultry; manage a woodlot; construction skills; wild-crafting; harvest preservation; alternative energy systems. Minimum one-year commitment; serious candidates only. Send letter of intent, including background, interests, & experience to: Sharon or Pru, wildbrowsesusustainability@gmail.com 87 Bullard Pasture Rd., Wendell, MA.

North Country School/Camp Treetops Farm is seeking summer interns. Interns will assist with the care and management of horses, sheep, chickens, turkeys, pigs, and goats. Our gardens produce about five acres of vegetables, herbs, and fruit for consumption in the school and camp dining rooms. Interns are expected to develop skills related to animal and plant production systems as well as lead farm-based educational activities. Summer interns receive room and board, a modest stipend, and a great educational experience. For more information about our farm and to apply, go to www.nct.org or email Mike Tholen at mtholen@northcountryschool.org

Wild Browse Farm and Sustainability Center: Education and Coaching for the Good Life. Wild Browse Farm and Sustainability Center provides educational leadership, mentoring, and coaching. Send resume and cover letter to: RVCS 1234 Rt. 94, Blairstown, N.J. 07825 or Email: office@ridgeandvalley.org

Please help us thank these Friends of Organic Farming for their generous support!
Russell Libby Passes Away


“He has led MOFGA’s growth over the past decade as the organization moved to the new Common Ground Education Center in Unity, expanded the agricultural services and education programs, and created a subsidiary to run the certification program,” according to MOFGA’s website.

According to Jean English, longtime editor of MOFGA’s newsletter, the organization had a solid base when Libby took over, but “he ran with it and expanded its influence.” English said Libby, “had the brain of an economist,” and could manage the organization, “and he had the heart of a poet,” which let him relate to all sorts of people.

“I’ve had the privilege of knowing and working with Russell for many years — first at MOFGA and more recently as Congress has worked on the latest reauthorization of the Farm Bill,” U.S. Rep. Chellie Pingree said in a statement. “Through-out, I have always looked up to Russell and relied on his wisdom and knowledge on everything from the operations of our farm to changing national policy. He was one of a kind, and his passing is a terrible loss to the entire state.”


NOP Allows Cell Fusion in Seed Breeding

Cell fusion is the fusing of two cells to form a single cell. Egg fertilization is an example. In plant breeding, cell fusion is used in many traditional breeding and hybridization programs as well as in general propagation using tissue culture. In a method known as somatic cell hybridization or protoplast fusion, cell walls of different plants are removed using enzymes and the protoplasts (naked cells without walls) are then fused with the help of chemical or electrical stimuli. The resulting cells have a combination of genetic material from both plants, and are then grown in tissue culture to develop into fully differentiated plantlets.

In response to inquiries the NOP has developed a policy that cell fusion techniques involving recombinant DNA technology or different taxonomic families are considered excluded methods. Seeds produced from cell fusion used as part of traditional breeding techniques, however, that do not involve recombinant DNA technology may be used in organic production.

source: The NOP Organic Insider, Feb. 1, 2013

New NAIS Regulations Released

The National Animal Identification System used to be a proposed horror show of nonsensical and bureaucratic rules requiring tracking of all livestock animals in the country to supposedly protect animal health. Fortunately that proposal was defeated about four years ago by a furious grassroots firestorm of activism. The USDA pulled the idea and agreed that a much less intrusive program would replace it.

Well, that redesign is finally done. For starters, NAIS will apply only to cases of interstate movement. Any intrastate transport of livestock is exempt. In cases where it applies, animals moved in interstate transport would have to be identified and accompanied by a certificate of veterinary inspection or other paperwork. In practical terms, sheep, goat, and pig owners will not be subject to new requirements; the new rule refers to the ID requirements under existing disease control programs for these animals.

Similarly, horse owners have already been identifying horses that cross state lines due to equine infectious anemia programs and will face few burdens in practice. The rule exempts horses that are used for transportation interstate (such as by horse and buggy).

The main impact of the rule will be on cattle and poultry owners. For cattle, the rule requires identification and documentation for beef cattle 18 months or older, as well as dairy cattle and show cattle. The rule, however, exempts cattle going to custom slaughter, cagers tagging required for cattle going to slaughter at inspected plants, and classifies brands, tattoos, and breed registry certificates as acceptable IDs.

Although poultry being moved interstate to an inspected slaughterhouse will need to be identified under the rule, most producers should be able to use group identification for their broilers, since broilers are typically managed in single-age groups. The greatest impact will be on live bird markets, where birds crossing state lines will most likely need to be individually identified.


Federal Labeling for GMOs?

Executives from food companies including PepsiCo, ConAgra and about 20 others, as well as Wal-Mart and advocacy groups that favor GMO labeling, attended a meeting in January in Washington. Instead of quelling the demand for labeling, the narrow defeat of the California Proposition 37 initiative requiring GMO labeling has spawned a ballot initiative in Washington State, legislative proposals in Connecticut, Vermont, New Mexico and Missouri, and a swelling consumer boycott of some organic or “natural” brands owned by major food companies.

“The big food companies found themselves all of a sudden facing the wrath of the consumer movement. The consumers are fighting back,” says a spokesperson from the California Tea Party. The spokesperson says that the companies are now trying to work behind the scenes and keep the labeling issue out of the public eye. The companies are allegedly trying to influence the White House to come around to their way of thinking.

The Natural Farmer  Spring, 2013
in an uncomfortable position after Prop. 37, and they’re talking among themselves about alternatives to merely replaying that light over and over again,” said Charles Benbrook, a research professor at Washington State University who attended the meeting.

One of those alternatives might be federal labeling through the FDA. Anti-GMO activists speculate that a weak FDA requirement, backed by federal pre-emption (which would prohibit any state from passing its own tougher labeling requirements) might be a preferable option to fighting strong state proposals for the next few years.


Mexicans Stage Anti-GMO Hunger Strike
On January 23 Mexican farmers took their struggle against genetically modified (GM) corn to the plaza, embarking on a hunger strike and sit-in in Mexico City. They were there to begin a sit-in and hunger strike to protest two industrial corn plantation projects that have been proposed by U.S.-based multinational agribusiness corporations Monsanto and Pioneer. The companies have asked the Mexican government to issue permits allowing the planting of genetically modified (GMO) corn crops on at least one million hectares of land in the states of Sinaloa and Tamaulipas. In spite of being granted permission to stage the action at the Angel of Independence, the peasant leaders from the National Union of Autonomous Regional Peasant Organizations (UNORCA) were met by anti-riot police who had roped off the area, forcing hundreds of small-holden farmers to set up camp nearby.

source: Grassroots International website, January 23, 2013

Winter Farmers Markets on Rise
The number of winter markets listed in the USDA’s National Farmers Market Directory has increased from 1225 to 1864, or 52%, from 2011 to 2012! Winter markets now account for roughly 24% of the 7865 markets listed in the directory. Markets operating as least once between November and March are considered winter ones.

source: Acres, USA, February, 2013

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Ag-Gag Bills Proposed to Silence Activists
How does corporate agribusiness keep consumers in the dark about the horrors of factory farms? By making it an “act of terrorism” for anyone to investigate animal cruelty, food safety or environmental violations on the corporate-controlled farms that produce the bulk of our meat, eggs and dairy products. And who better to write the “Animal and Ecological Terrorism Act,” designed to protect Big Ag and Big Energy, than the lawyers at the infamous corporate-funded American Legislative Exchange Council?! New Hampshire, Wyoming and Nebraska are the latest states to introduce Ag-Gag laws aimed at preventing employees, journalists or activists from exposing illegal or unethical practices on factory farms.
source: Organic Bytes, January 25, 2013

Prop 37 Closer than Thought
The California Secretary of State has posted the final results for Prop 37 (the California GMO labeling ballot initiative.) Despite being outspent nearly 6 to 1, and a scandalous campaign of dirty tricks and unending barrage of lies and misleading TV ads, proponents nearly won: Yes – 48.6% to No – 51.4%.

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source: California Right to Know press release, January 24, 2013

India to Label Packaged GM Food
As of 2013, Indian consumers will know whether the packaged foods they are buying contain any genetically modified organism. A Gazette Notification issued by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, mandates packaged food producers to disclose GM ingredients, if any are used, in their product. The notification came into effect January 1, 2013, officials at the Food and Consumers Affairs Ministry said.
source: The Hindu Business Line, New Delhi, India, December 31, 2013

Kaiser Permanente Comes Out Against GMOs
Kaiser Permanente, the largest managed healthcare organization in the United States, has advised its members how to avoid GMOs (genetically modified organisms) in food. In its Fall, 2012 newsletter, the organization stated: “Despite what the biotech industry might say, there is little research on the long-term effects of GMOs on human health. Independent research has found that several varieties of GMO corn caused organ damage in rats. Other studies have found that GMOs may lead to an inability in animals to reproduce.” It then went on to suggest several ways to avoid GMOs, including buying organic, looking for the “Non-GMO Project Verified” seal, and avoiding foods containing non-organic soy, corn, canola or cotton-seed oil.
source: Partners in Health, Fall 2012

Pediatricians Speak Out on Pesticides
The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has published a policy statement and report (Pesticide Exposure in Children) warning of the dangers of pesticides. Despite occasional studies and reports, the medical community has been remarkably cautious in speaking generally about exposure to agrichemicals. This report represents one more step in the growing concern among clinicians about these toxins. The AAP also made some statements supporting organic agriculture as a way for consumers to avoid pesticide exposure.

Food Waste
According to the Natural Resources Defense Council, Americans throw out almost every other bite of food, wasting up to 40% of the nation’s food supply at a cost of $165 billion yearly. The Council says the average family squanders about 20 pounds of food per person per month, a 50% increase since the 1970s. Food waste is the largest part of solid waste in American landfills.
source: The Germinator, Winter, 2013

Bovines and Greenhouse Gas Emissions
The intensive cattle farming industry has been under attack recently and has come up with a desperate effort to save its image. They are making the claim that feeding cattle in confinement is the most environmentally friendly way to produce beef!

The argument is based on the fact that cows will produce more methane (a greenhouse gas -- GHG) per pound of animal if fed grass than if fed grain. But this fact by itself ignores the big picture. The methane comes from the fermentation taking place in the cows stomach. It is not created by the beef itself, but is a byproduct of the cows digestion. It is the methane that is the problem.

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place in the rumen (the special stomach capable of digesting cellulose which non-ruminants don’t have) which produces the gas as a byproduct. It is belched forth from the cows during such digestion. But studies suggest that the pasture they are grazing on can offset the deleterious impact of methane by sequestering an equal or larger amount of “carbon dioxide equivalent” (GHG) discussions use this as a standardizing unit because the various gases have different levels of heat absorption and thus climate impact.

Studies of cattle fed in confinement, however, have to deal with various different problems. For one, the production of the corn and soy such cows normally consume must take into account the nitrogen fertilizer used to grow them (whereas pastures are normally fertilized only with the manure of the grazing livestock.) The manufacture and use of nitrogen-based fertilizer is one of the biggest sources of nitrous oxide, a very potent GHG. Additionally, the manure lagoons associated with confinement feeding create the very anaerobic conditions under which manure ferments and produces methane, as opposed to manure dropped by livestock on pasture in aerobic conditions.

The bottom line is that, while grassfed cattle might grow more slowly and produce more methane per pound of meat, this is more than offset by the overall benefits of the entire pasture-based production system— including no environmental costs of producing corn and grain, no pollution for manure lagoons, and the positive impact of carbon sequestration on overall GHG emissions.

You can download a full report (A Breath of Fresh Air) about pasture-based livestock, that includes more detail on these issues, from AnimalWelfareApproved.org.

source: Animal Welfare Approved newsletter, Winter 2012

New Study by CFS

The Center for Food safety has published a 48 page report: “Seed Giants vs Udder Comfort,” which shows how the multinational chemical corporations have compartmentalized the dairy market, and how they are exploiting farmers. You can access a copy at: http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Seed-Giants_final.pdf

source: personal Email

“Udder Comfort is essential part of the good practices we use…”

— William McMahan

COWLITZ MEADOWS DAIRY, Inc. #1, Randle, Washington
THE McMahan FAMILY: 50 cows (Certified Organic) – SCC average: 51,000
2011 Gold Level National Dairy Quality Award

We’ve been using the Udder Comfort™ yellow spray for 2 years now. It works better on somatic cell counts (SCC). Our SCC has been under 100,000 for 3 years. But last year, we were able to get it down to $1,000. We’re on DHIA, so we monitor cows, and when we see one with a high count, we use Udder Comfort and check the quarters regularly with the California Mastitis Test (CMT). It’s always a blessing when they clear up,” says William McMahan.

He and his brothers Ross and Jake and two nephews Wode and Joel, operate Cowlitz Meadows Dairy 1 & 2, Milking 50 cows at both locations.

Farm #1 near Randle, Washington was recognized as a 2011 Gold Level National Dairy Quality Award winner. Producing high quality milk is very important to the McMahan family, and it earns them high premiums through Organic Valley.

“With Udder Comfort, our cows have better udder condition and they milk out better. It helps to start their lactations with that extra stimulation, and they let their milk down better.

“I’m a big believer in essential oils. Udder Comfort is an essential part of the good practices we use to keep our cows more comfortable and producing high quality milk.”

source: personal Email

“30 whitetail deer crossing my vegetable farm…”

I just wanted to say thanks for a great product that made my life easier, and to tell you some success stories that I, and others, have experienced using the new Plantskydd Granular Repellent.

A couple of years ago I had a herd of 30 whitetail deer crossing my land. Their game trail went right through a field where I was planning to plant corn. Rather than put up a fence, I decided to use your new granular Plantskydd product. I dumped 40 lbs in a drop spreader to pull behind my garden tractor, and put down a 3-foot border around my field. Next, I rubbed out the tracks on the game trail so I could see how effective Plantskydd was. The deer always crossed during the night. Well, the next morning that was not a track to be found. And none for the rest of my growing season!

I have a small truck farm where I grow vegetables to sell at Farmer’s Markets as well as to supermarkets. Deer just love beef tops— I have had them eat a 100 foot row in one night! Last year, when my beets came up, I put some granular Plantskydd in a spreader and applied it around the outside row of the beets. The deer didn’t eat a bite. The key is to get the product down before the deer start nibbling. Later in the spring, my pickers came and told me the deer had been eating the zucchini. I took out the spreader and made one trip around the patch applying Plantskydd, and the deer stayed out until after harvest.

We have such a deer problem in the valley that, when I tell folks in my garden seminars about your product, they jump right on it. Hooper’s Garden Center, in Kalispell, Montana, sent one of their customers to me, about your product, they jump right on it. Hooper’s Garden Center, in Kalispell, Montana, sent one of their customers to me, desperate to see if I could help them save a $30,000 investment in flowers that were to be planted for a special event on a large estate. I sent them to the CHS Country Store (also in Kalispell), where they proceeded to clean all the Plantskydd Granular off the shelf. The estate put in an order for 50 more 20 lbs bags this year.

The Plantskydd Granular is my favorite repellent because 1) it works; and 2) it is quick and easy to use—no mess, no fuss.

Sincerely,
Bill Clinton, Kalispell, Montana, April 7, 2010

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First Proposed FDA Food Safety Rules Released for Comment (and yes, farmers and consumers – this means You)

by Steve Gilman
NOFA Interstate Policy Coordinator

After a wild two year ride that finally made it through Congress at the 11th hour, followed by another two years of FDA rule-making and then being held back by the Administration until after the elections – the first proposed rules of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) have been released for a 120 day comment period by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). This is not a light read – the draft produce safety rule (for farmers) and the draft preventative controls rule (for processing facilities) comprise a stack some 1700 pages deep. And some mixed operations might find themselves beholden to both. At stake is how farmers large and small will be regulated in the name of food safety – and how the galloping growth of our local food sector will be impacted.

The immediate undertaking for the Food Safety Task Force (set up in 2009 by farmer groups to ride herd on the legislation) is to divvy up the pages and analyze the proposed rules section by section, red flagging provisions for the comment process. The process is coordinated by staff at the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) in Washington, D.C. and economists, microbiologists and lawyers have also been brought in for expert assistance. Phase II, by the end of February, will be to put together a comprehensive analysis and comments. These will go out in alerts and PR to the grassroots community nationwide in March, April and May in Phase III to help citizens write comments to FDA in the final rule-making process. The comment period closes May 16th.

Key sections in the produce rule deal with worker health and hygiene; agricultural water supply; biological soil amendments; domestic and wild animals; and equipment, tools and buildings – and there are a number of problem areas in each category that we will need to address. Likewise, the processing rule has problems, among others is differentiating between activities that could classify a farm as a facility (and thus subject to all those extra pages of regulations) – such as the distinction between on-farm bagging vs. facility packaging, for example.

Holding on to what we got
Not surprisingly, Big Ag and some consumer groups want to see tighter rules on farmers. A good part of the Task Force’s challenge is to hold on to the beneficial family farm provisions won in the FSMA language that might not make it intact through FDA’s regulatory process into a final rule. Key FSMA amendments were skillfully put in place to prevent a move toward one-size-fits-all regulations that could put smaller scale practitioners out of business and derail the local food movement for grassroots con-

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ners. With this rule-making process the originateing Congressional language is now subject to FDA's regulatory interpretation and the devil is hidden in the pages and pages of definitions and compliance details.

For example, the Tester/Hagan Amendment – put forth by Sen. Jon Tester, an organic farmer from Montana, and Kay Hagan, Senator from North Carolina – created some alternative state and local regulatory pathways for smaller scale farmers that by-pass regular direct federal oversight. This amendment covers farms that gross under $500,000 a year that sell more than half of their produce directly to the final consumer (via Farmers Markets, CSAs, farm stands, grocery stores, and restaurants) within the state, and if the farmer sells in an adjoining state it must be within 275 miles of the farm.

While the Tester language is contained in both rules, it is confusingly different in each and we could end up with a situation where part of a farm is subject to one set of rules or the other or a mixture of both. There are also potential entanglements where skewed definitions of standard harvesting activities can push a farm into being classified as a facility – requiring registration and subject to FDA inspection.

When it comes time for producing comments not only do we have to point out what’s wrong in the proposed regs but also show them the language that will fix the problems. And while we’re compiling a lengthy list of red flag items we also need to underscore what FDA got right. We pushed long and hard for rules that deal with whole categories of produce, for example, not regulating them singly one by one as preferred in the agribusiness model.

FDA’s Withdrawal of Exemption powers
The bottom line for family scale farmers, however, who might be thinking they are exempt from all this (i.e. not produced for personal consumption in the home garden) surely ALL food needs to be safe. Rules only apply to what is sold in the marketplace (from federal rules) under the regs are just as relevant for home grown food. Farmers and processors who may be “exempt” from these rules only apply to what is sold in the marketplace (i.e. not produced for personal consumption in the home garden) surely ALL food needs to be safe. Farmers and processors who may be “exempt” (from federal rules) under the rules are just as responsible for not sickening or killing their customers – or family members who are often the most long shot.

And the “Catch-22” here is that exempt farmers who are not required to keep federal records won’t have the necessary documentation in place to appeal and exonerate their practices should FDA choose to target one’s farm. Undoubtedly this open-ended clause needs to be strictly reformed and clarified with burdens of proof and other legal limitations placed on potential FDA action. But FDA plainly has oversight powers, as FSMA requires that there be a mechanism for revoking the exemption in the rules.

At the same time food safety is narrowly defined in this rule to solely address virulent microbial contamination – while chemical or genetic contamination via pesticides or GMOs, for example, are a huge exemption that is totally ignored by FDA as well as Agribusiness and some consumer groups. This requires concerted comment action.

Personal responsibility
Overall, much of what is contained in the proposed regulations is based on common sense. While these rules only apply to what is sold in the marketplace (i.e. not produced for personal consumption in the home garden) surely ALL food needs to be safe. Farmers and processors who may be “exempt” (from federal rules) under the rules are just as responsible for not sickening or killing their customers – or family members who are often the most long shot. And while the big industrial producers and processors present a much larger risk in the marketplace (GAP’s–lite) (Good Agricultural Practices) workshops are often available where farmers can learn state-of-the-art techniques and put together a personal farm plan to effectively gear up to address these issues without having to go all the way to the audit process.

Next Steps
After the comment period ends on May 16th, FDA will then take them into account and write the final rule, a task requiring months and months. The proposed rule has built-in compliance times for farmers from two to four years beyond that, depending on where they fall in the regulations. Meanwhile, interstate NOFA will be posting helpful materials at the www.nofa.org policy website and there will be wide scale outreach and alerts to help citizens with the comment process this spring. And the summer issue of The Natural Farmer will be focused on Food Safety. Stay tuned – this wild ride is not over by a long shot.

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A limited number of back issues of The Natural Farmer are available for sale. The current issue and the last four issues cost $5.00 @ postpaid. Earlier issues (collector’s copies) cost $8.00 @ and are subject to availability. Subscriptions are $15 per year (or $25/yr. if to a foreign address).

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** From northeast organic farmers to northeast organic farmers **
The suite of over 300,000 family farmers, seed businesses, and members of agricultural organizations (including the NOFAs) against Monsanto entered a new phase in Washington DC in January. Although Judge Naomi Buchwald dismissed the case last Spring, the plaintiffs appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit. That appeal was heard on January 10, 2013.

Because Monsanto had been claiming that this suit is frivolous and a publicity stunt, with no real farmers affected by the outcome, organizers felt it was important to fill the empty seats in the courtroom with real farmers from around the country. As a result a couple dozen of us were invited to Washington DC to attend the oral arguments and the Lafayette Park rally immediately following the hearing.

Food Democracy Now, an Iowa-based support group, as well as the lead plaintiff Organic Seed Growers & Trade Association (OSGATA), raised money to get us to Washington and put us up there (including 2 delicious meals at Nora’s, an upscale certified organic restaurant near DuPont Circle).

I had never attended a hearing at this level before, and was interested in the process. It took place in a very formal mahogany-lined courtroom seating perhaps 100. A small gated area before the bench is where the two attorneys and their retainers sit, with a special row of seats there open only to members of the bar. Apparently the main audience for most of these hearings is attorneys trying to get a better sense of how each judge comes down on particular issues. This is important because some judges are more receptive to particular arguments than others and the wise attorney will tailor his or her arguments to the subset of judges present for a specific case and their known preferences. The bench itself towers above, with enough room for the court’s full roster of a dozen judges, although only three are assigned to each appeal.

Attorney Dan Ravicher, representing the plaintiffs, speaks to the rally supporting the farmers and seed companies after the oral arguments.

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One learns which three judges are taking a particular appeal only the morning of the oral arguments. When our attorney, Dan Ravicher, entered the courtroom and saw the three name plates on the bench indicating which judges we got, he beamed. I asked him what he thought about the luck of our draw. He said we had gotten the best possible set of judges!

The arguments are pretty intense. Each side gets 15 minutes, and then the appeal is over. Neither attorney got very far in making his summary before being interrupted by close questioning. The issue at hand was “standing”. Are the plaintiffs so directly threatened by possible Monsanto legal action that they need the relief of the court?

Dan, representing the plaintiffs, was pressed to come up with examples of farmers who are innocent of intending to infringe a Monsanto patent but whose fields are nevertheless heavily contaminated or in some other way have attracted Monsanto’s legal attention. He responded that there are such cases, although not among the plaintiffs. But, he asserted, the threshold for court relief is current economic harm because of threat of lawsuit – which many plaintiffs are suffering right now because the threat of liability is forcing some to pay for expensive GMO testing of their seed and others to drop certain varieties of crops altogether to avoid the costs of testing.

Monsanto’s attorney, Seth P. Waxman, was asked repeatedly to declare exactly what would trigger a Monsanto enforcement action – a certain percentage of RoundUp Ready plants in a field for which license fees have not been paid, the act of spraying RoundUp on a planting of unlicensed seed, or some other specific and measurable standard. He continually avoided such a declaration, referring instead to a statement on the Monsanto website saying they would not sue anyone for unintentional or minimal contamination. The judges pointed out that such a statement was not binding, was vague, and was retractable and pressed again for some specific guarantee plaintiffs could use for assurance that their activities were not going to trigger a lawsuit. To no avail, however.

“We must bring money back down to earth.”

Slow Money Principle #1
After the short hearing we all left the court and went to a rally that had been organized in Lafayette Park, just outside the court and a block from the White House. About 200 people had assembled to show support for the farmers and the appeal. Speaker after speaker stressed the importance of this case, citing the serious evidence of human health damage from consuming GMOs, the danger of losing control of our food should patents on seed continue to expand, and the threat of the end of organic farming should all seed be contaminated with GMO traits. The crowd was enthusiastic and many banners showed their support.

OSGATA president and Maine farmer Jim Gerritsen spoke for most of us when he said: “This is a complicated lawsuit in terms of legality, but in terms of the people’s interests, it’s a very simple concept. Organic farmers deserve the right to farm the way we choose on our farms. Monsanto does not have the right to trespass onto our farms, to contaminate our crops, to extinguish their value, and then to turn around and claim patent infringement because they have contaminated us. That is the issue at stake in this lawsuit.

“If American farmers are not protected in their right to produce good quality food for America,” he continued, “then you, American citizens, have lost your right of access to good food. We can’t let that happen. It is important that we work together. American farmers know that we need American citizens backing us up, so we are grateful that you have come to show us your support.”

The plaintiff’s lead attorney, Dan Ravicher of the Public Patent Foundation, sums up the case this way: “Monsanto is never going to admit that there can be contamination. Then they would be open to liability for property damage that they have caused. It takes organic farmers three years to purge that contamination. So Monsanto is not going to admit that it is their fault that their seed contaminated an organic farm. They are always going to allege that you are a dirty rotten thief.

“It is prohibitive,” he adds, “for a farmer to prove that he or she is innocent. The cost of an average patent trial is $2 million to $4 million dollars. Farmers can’t afford that. They can’t even afford to hire an attorney to respond to an initial letter. The overwhelming burden of the litigation process makes it impossible for a falsely accused farmer to have a day in court.

“We have asked the court,” he continues, “to reverse the district court’s decision, to reinstate our case and send it back to the court to proceed. Our principle argument is that if our clients don’t have standing today - when they are at guaranteed risk of being contaminated (and Monsanto has falsely accused others who were contaminated) - if we don’t have standing today to seek protection of the courts, when will we have it? Do we have to wait until we are contaminated? Do we have to wait until Monsanto threatens us? Case law clearly says ‘no’.
Ravicher concluded his speech to the rally by saying: “I am praying for Monsanto and I have been praying for them. I am praying for their executives, I pray for their employees, I pray for their stockholders, I pray that they see the light – the effect of their actions. I pray that they realize how harmful their technology is. I pray that they wake up and realize how harmful their business practices are. And I know it will come.

“I’d like to thank all of you,” he continues, “for coming out today supporting us and our clients, and raising awareness around this issue. Ultimately every single American has the opportunity to make a statement about Monsanto three times a day. What they do with their wallet and their dollars speaks more than anything that can happen in court. So if every time someone goes to the grocery store or selects a restaurant they make one decision to buy organic or non-GMO we will make a change that way – not through the courts. Encourage your family, your friends, the next time they go to the store, to at least consider buying organic milk, organic corn, GMO-free soy and other products. It is something I do and it is not hard. Plenty of stores sell these products. The more we demand them the more they will come and the more prices will come down.

“Finally,” he ends, “I would like to thank our clients for having the faith and trust in us to represent them and their interests. Without them we couldn’t do this. I consider ourselves the luckiest attorneys on earth that we get to represent the best people on earth!”

According to Ravicher, should the court decide to sustain the dismissal without comment, it would have done so within a few days of the hearing with a simple “affirmed”. If, however, the judges feel there are issues here that they would like to consider, then a ruling is likely to take 2 to 4 months and involve written analyses by the judges. In such a case a 2 to 1 decision is quite possible. Since we have not seen a quick decision, it is likely we won’t have one now until the Spring.

Shortly after his presentation to the court, Ravicher E-mailed plaintiffs the following:

Hello Organic Seed v Monsanto Appellants.

We had oral argument in our appeal of Judge Buchwald’s dismissal of our case today. The three Court of Appeals judges assigned to our case are Judges Dyk, Bryson and Moore. They are all three very experienced appeals judges and if you want to see more about their background visit http://www.cafc.uscourts.gov/judges.

The bad news is that Judges Bryson and Moore were two of the three judges who heard our case challenging patents on human genes (the AMP case) and they held in that case that only parties who have been directly threatened by a patent holder have standing to bring a declaratory judgment case against the patent holder. If they apply that rule to our case, the two of them will affirm the dismissal, as we
concede that none of our plaintiffs have been directly threatened by Monsanto. We argued why that rule should not apply, but it may be hard for them to change their view. The third judge is actually a very good judge for us, as he believes there is a strong public policy in favor of allowing the public to bring declaratory judgment cases to challenge invalid patents.

Therefore, I think it is quite possible that we will receive a 2-1 decision affirming the district court’s dismissal. I’m hopeful Bryson and/or Moore will change their perspective and that we will receive either a 2-1 or 3-0 decision reversing the district court and reinstating our case, but if the Court of Appeals does indeed affirm the dismissal, our next step will be to ask the Supreme Court to take the case. The good news for us on that is that the Supreme Court has this term taken a case involving Monsanto’s GMO seed patents (the Bowman v Monsanto case) and another case involving the issue of standing to challenge intellectual property (the Already v Nike case).

Since they seem interested in the two issues involved in our case, I think our odds of getting the Supreme Court to take our case would be higher than normal, although still extremely remote.

If the Court of Appeals wants to affirm the district court’s dismissal without any explanation, they will issue a short decision within the next few days that only says “affirmed.” If they believe the case merits a written opinion, it will take them roughly 2-4 months to issue one. As soon as we hear a decision from the court, we will of course let you know. If you would like to hear the oral argument, you can download an MP3 of it from this link: http://oralarguments.caaf.uscourts.gov/default.aspx?ID=2012-1228.mp3

If the Court of Appeals reverses the district court’s dismissal, then they will remand the case back to Judge Buchwald. Monsanto has said that if that were to happen, they intend to make a motion to transfer our case to St. Louis. Since it seems Judge Buchwald does not like our case, it is likely that she would grant their motion to transfer.

After the oral argument, there was a rally in the park that borders the Court of Appeals and the White House. I would estimate there were about 70-80 people at the rally and at least a dozen members of the media, mostly agricultural and international. At the rally, several of the plaintiffs in the attendance spoke, and I also made a few brief comments.

As always, if you have any questions or issues, please don’t hesitate to shoot me an email or give me a call anytime.

Dave Zuckerman, organic farmer and state senator in Vermont, tells crowd about opposition to Monsanto and GMO seeds in his state.

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Jim Gerritsen, Maine potato farmer and one of the leaders of the plaintiffs, tells supporters about the importance of organic seed.
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process. They knew what their parents valued, how they earned their money, and where their food came from.

But there was a problem. The city of Eagan hadn’t left any land zoned for agriculture. Suburban development was consuming the small farms and the Diffleys were one of three farmers left. In 1989 the local school system needed twenty acres of the one hundred and twenty acres still in the family to build a new school. Atina and Martin only owned one acre with their land. Atina likened it to the financial equivalent of paying on interest. As the fields were organic by default, as they hadn’t been sprayed, but they hadn’t been built up either. “We went from being experts (equipped with 140 years of family history on one piece of land) to novices, on land we knew nothing about, that wasn’t in good condition.” Atina explained, “We didn’t make any money those years. Just kept the business going.”

The Diffleys farmed in the midst of development for 5 years, living with their equipment and roadside stand on their one acre, hedged in by development and farming all over the county. “We were a regular parade when we’d go to plant, first the truck and trailer loaded with tractor, transplanter, and field digger, then the water truck, followed by a box truck of plants and the ‘tool van.’ It took years to find the ‘right’ land to purchase, and eventually we bought 97 acres of deep black, fertile prairie loam. It was high in fertility, but it had been farmed heavily, worked up and down the slopes, the waterways plowed through, and the soil was compacted. It needed to have the life brought back to it.”

They continued to farm on their patchwork of eighteen rented fields for the 36-month transition to organic. The soil on their new farm contained more clay and was heavier and more fertile than the sandy loams of the family land, and they adjusted their crop mix and market accordingly. Crawshay and Honeydew melons, former signature crops, were replaced with sweet corn, broccoli, and kale. They worked hard on creating brand name recognition for their farm and the story of the Gardens of Eagan farm, is detailed in her book Wisconsin has since adopted a similar plan.

I am happy to tell you that the Diffleys succeeded at all of their goals: the pipeline did not cross the Gardens of Eagan, and MinnCan now has an Organic Agricultural Mitigation Plan that is used during the installation and maintenance of public utilities. Wisconsin has since adopted a similar plan.

Atina told me how she grew up in a family of women who were physically strong and who worked hard in the fields, but they were also subordinate. It was considered unseemly for women to stand up and speak out. It was very important to her that she had power or to use her voice. She said, “It was while reading the Agricultural Mitigation Impact Plan (AIMP) for the project that I found my strength. This AIMP which is supposedly in place to protect farmers and the land, said, ‘The MinnCan pipeline will not knowingly cause more than 12 years of topsoil erosion.’ It didn’t make any sense to that to organic farmers who had just spent fifteen years building their soil! And ‘not knowingly!’ I realized this was working for them, so of course they aren’t going to change it. It wasn’t going to work for us, so if we wanted something to change, we’d have to be the ones to make it happen.”

The Diffleys were funded as part of the route proceeding and hired attorney Paula MacCabe, they set out to show in a court of law that an organic farm is a valuable natural resource that should be protected as such. They set three goals. 1. To create an “Organic Agriculture Impact Mitigation Plan” that would provide protections for the soils and certification for organic farms; 2. That organic farms be avoided when feasible; and 3. That the MinnCan pipeline go along the road right-of-way rather than bisect the Gardens of Eagan.

The Organic System Plan and organic certification were valuable tools in the legal process. Atina explained, “Our Organic System Plan (1989, the farm has one) was credible evidence. Inspected, certified, and federally registered by a third party, what we said about our farming practices was not just hearsay. We would not have been successful without the certification. We were able to show benefits to society that went beyond the food produced. Our soil building system included the equipment we captured and reduced runoff, providing water quality protections. We provided habitat for biological diversity. For years we had worked with scientists from the University who used chemical pesticides to do beneficial insect research — we had research evidence of those benefits.

We also turned to our customers and asked them to write ‘informed citizen input’ letters to the administrative law judge. The letters were amazing, they talked about their relationship with this one farm, how much they cared, how many years their family had been eating the sweet corn and melons, their family traditions, the first picnic of the year and the Labor Day feasts. There were letters from chemically sensitive customers, from doctors, soil scientists, from children and gardeners. Over a period of six months, over forty-five hundred customers wrote to the judge. MinnCan could have compensated us — the farmers — for their loss, but there was no way they could compensate forty-five thousand customers.

I am happy to tell you that the Diffleys succeeded at all of their goals: the pipeline did not cross the Gardens of Eagan, and MinnCan now has an Organic Agricultural Mitigation Plan that is used during the installation and maintenance of public utilities. Wisconsin has since adopted a similar plan.

Atina’s battle against the Koch’s MinnCan pipeline, and the story of the Gardens of Eagan farm, is detailed in her book Turn Here, Sweet Corn, which is a finalist for the Minnesota Book Prize. There is also a documentary about suburban development made on their farm in the late 1980s by the same name. She will be the keynote speaker at the 2013 NOFA summer conference.

Online Registration for the NOFA Summer Conference will be available as of April 15, 2013. We are currently finalizing the schedule of workshop and speakers. If you are interested in leading a workshop, please contact Ben Grosscup, the NOFA Summer Conference Director – ben.grosscup@nofamass.org or call (413) 549-1568. Sponsorships and Exhibits are also now available. Please contact Bob Mimmaco, NOFA/MA Development Director – bob@nofamass.org, or call (617) 236-4893. Please check our website, www.nofasummerconference.org for updates about our keynote, workshops, pre-conferences, and registration information.
Organic Takes the Lead in Sustainability

by Elizabeth Henderson

Over the past few years, the leaders of the International Federation of Agricultural Movements (IFOAM), of which NOFA is a founding member, have invested a lot of energy trying to influence the international hearings convened by the United Nations on global warming. They have been frustrated by the poor results. That frustration has fueled their determination to push the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to take a stronger position in support of family-scale organic farming as part of the solution to both climate change and world hunger.

After the June, 2012 U. N. Conferences in Rio de Janeiro on Environment and Development, and on Sustainable Development, president of the IFOAM Board and Australian fruit farmer Andre Leu declared: “More than ever our planet suffers the consequences of badly thought through strategies. Industrial food production together with unbalanced global marketing and consumption habits are the key causes of environmental and social harm. Continuing on the same path is not sustainable!”

In the early years of IFOAM’s existence, back in the 1970’s, IFOAM was the world leader in the development of organic standards. When NOFA folks decided to engage in organic certification, we used the IFOAM Basic Standards as our template and adapted them for our region. Now, by launching the Sustainable Agriculture Action Network (SOAAN) timed with its 40th anniversary, IFOAM intends to reclaim this kind of leadership and continue on the same path in order to make the transition to stable, healthy, just and sustainable communities.

In true IFOAM form, organizers have summoned oracles from around the globe for a lengthy discussion to take a strong position in support of family-scale organic farming as part of the solution to both climate change and world hunger.

Day two of the camp was devoted to describing where organic has been and critiquing the SOAAN standards. Urs Niggli, the head of the Swiss organic research institute FIBL, set the tone by referring to “the intrinsic value of all living entities.” In design plans for sustainability, Niggli pointed out that such trade-offs would be using fossil fueled tractors to reduce some of the burdens of physical labor, or using water for irrigation while carefully monitoring the supply not just for one farm but for an entire watershed. Niggli argued persuasively that we need to think about minimum requirements for best practices combined with a commitment to continual improvement.

My role was to address what has been left out in organic standards. I talked about how free trade and cheap food policies have made it a struggle for family-scale organic farmers to make ends meet even in wealthy countries. For a truly sustainable food system, buyers must pay farmers prices that cover the full costs of production, contracts between organic farmers and buyers must be negotiated and be fair to all parties, and working conditions on farms must be safe and based on respectful relations. Taking on those who say that organic standards should be lowered so that small-scale farmers can comply, I argued that the smallest farmers are often the most fully integrated and designed for survival. Not the standards, but the price and procedures of certification are the problem.

The final process of the Camp was to be the most entertaining - a series of “Ishihara” panels. We sat in concentric circles. For the panel on best practices, Professor Raymond Auerbach from South Africa and I sat at the center. Auerbach presented a summary of our group’s analysis of the SOAAN document. My role was to challenge him. Then other participants could join the circle to add comments. A woman from the World Wildlife Fund who has been working on comparisons among eco-labels urged that we use categories that match those used by other projects and avoid “hippy” language like “commons” or “communities”. I rejoined with a defense of using terms that come from people who live close to the earth, like “commons” instead of “environmental aspects.” Quantitative indicators are well and good, but organic agriculture is a movement for transformation. While we do need to communicate with official evaluators of all kinds, it is more important for IFOAM to inspire, empower, and enable the millions of farmers around the globe who are living organic agriculture to speak out.

On the next panel on Legitimacy and Ownership, French farmer Anton Pinschow, whose involvement with IFOAM dates back to 1974, referred to organic
There was consensus among the participants that the process of the sustainability camp was a good one. Everyone had a chance to contribute. The next steps in the process will be another redrafting, followed by another consultation with all the advisors, then at the 2014 World Congress, further discussion at the Motion bizarre (a custom at IFOAM congresses where members have a chance to discuss and amend motions with those who propose them before the entire body has to vote), and passage by the World Board and the General Assembly. IFOAM models participation and transparency, if you have the patience!

Helmy Abouleish, director of the Sekem farm and food company in Egypt, spoke the concluding words—"We are against all odds, but doing it anyway." He called upon us to embrace the culture in agriculture and to use the indicators of sustainable development as tools for continual improvement.

The 40th anniversary party attracted many of the surviving founding parents of IFOAM, leaders in organic agriculture from many countries—Raymond Auerbach from South Africa, Katsu Murayama from Japan, Denis Bourgeois from France. IFOAM held its first meeting in Versailles in 1972 with representatives from 5 countries. Today there are 800 members from 120 countries. Before a crowd of the previous presidents, Andre Leu spoke about the work that lies ahead. The problem of poverty has not been resolved. In many countries, farmers are in debt and losing their farms to banks and land grabs. He called upon IFOAM to make it our priority to bring the most vulnerable among us out of poverty. Organic farming should be the system of choice and then we will all have good and healthy food.

With this practical and informative book Peg Schafer begins to address a real and growing disparity: With this practical and informative book Peg Schafer has made a strong effort to compensate for this, in particular through the collaboration of Jean Giblette of High Falls Garden in Philmont, New York. The bottom line is that North-eastern growers will find this to be a highly useful and practical guide. Having commercially grown American, European, and Asian medicinal plants on a market garden-scale in Pennsylvania and New York, I would have very much appreciated having on hand the two included in this earlier as I mulched my own way through trial and error.

Some may wonder: why grow Chinese plants rather than focus on native herbs or the ones already under cultivation? As Schafer points out, these herbs are increasingly being used in the U.S., and are overwhelmingly being imported. While we must be cautious in growing plants outside of their native habitats and can never assume that the medicinal quality will be equivalent (something the author discusses in depth), the climate of eastern Asia is in fact not unlike that of the continental United States, making many of the plants quite compatible with our ecosystem. One fact the author does not mention is that the native flora of eastern Asia is in fact much more closely related to the native flora of eastern North America than European flora is. In other words, it could be argued that many Chinese plants are more appropriate to our landscape than many of the non-natives we currently grow but are simply more used to. In addition, many readers will realize that they are already familiar with many of these plants, and may even be growing some of them as ornamentals (although when grown as medicine, ornamental cultivars should be avoided).

The book is divided into two main sections. The first section is a series of chapters discussing various subjects such as selecting which herbs to grow, questions of quality and medicinal activity, production, harvesting, and processing methods, market- ing, and conservation. Schafer also gives the sage advice to double and triple check Latin binomials of plants, and to not rely on common or Pinyin names. (One additional resource for this that she does not list is www.tropicos.org.) At times the presentation felt perhaps slightly too autobiographical, but that is probably just a personal preference and other readers may enjoy the anecdotes and stories.

Experienced growers may be tempted to skip over some of the discussions on topics such as cover crops, composting, disease and pest control, nursery propagation, and irrigation. I would recommend not doing so, as Schafer occasionally inserts nuggets of information relevant specifically to herb production. Also included in these earlier chapters are several useful charts that are quick references on regional compatibility, harvesting information, and potential invasiveness. This last point is vital for anyone considering growing medicinals, as some plants can prove to be quite invasive. The author clearly states that the charts are meant as starting points for experimentation and trials, and not as gospel. I did, however, find some errors, such as certain herbs that can in fact be grown in the Northeast not being listed as such. In one case, Asian ginseng or Panax ginseng, it appears to be an oversight, since the herb profile later in the book lists it as appropriate to the Northeast; in other cases such as Albizia julibrissin and Eucyrum chinesis, these are potential crops at the very least for those in the milder parts of the Northeast such as New Jersey or Long Island.

The second section, making up almost two-thirds of the book, are 79 individual herb profiles, out of more than 250 plants that the author has trialed over the years. This is in many ways the “meat” of the book and will in all likelihood be the part that growers probably just a personal preference and other readers may enjoy the anecdotes and stories.

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ally used in Chinese medicine. I have successfully part apply to these herbs, as they are not gener-

Medicine (OM) community would not for the most tious in planting this.

Schafer also includes a handful of Ayurvedic herbs (traditional herbs of India). I assume she did this because they are popular herbs that represent opportu-
nities for domestic growers, but she includes them without much explanation, which might confuse those less familiar with the topic. For instance, the book’s discussions of working with the Oriental Medicine (OM) community would not for the most part apply to these herbs, as they are not gener-

ally used in Chinese medicine. I have successfully grown two of the four Ayurvedic herbs she profiles, tulsi/holy basil (Ocimum sanctum) and ashwagandha (Withania somnifera), in both northeastern Penn-

sylvania and the southern Catskills. Unfortunately, she implies that ashwagandha is inappropriate for growing in the Northeast. While it is true that it will only grow as an annual in the Northeast it can be successfully cultivated with methods similar to its fellow nightshades, and there is strong consensus in the herbal community and industry that it produces potent, high quality medicine. Ashwagandha would certainly be on my list of most highly recommended medicinal plants to grow in the Northeast.

Overall Schafer makes a strong case for increased production of Chinese medicinals here in the U.S. She rightly identifies the market trends that call for this: increasingly endangered populations of plants in Asia, the growing popularity of Chinese herbs in the U.S., and the growing support for local economies. Added to this is the challenge of finding organic, unadulterated herbs from Asia. Although this can sometimes be exaggerated, as the author points out it is in fact difficult to source certified organic herbs from China. But there are reputable companies selling high quality herbs grown without the use of agrochemicals.

Although there is discussion of pricing and market-

ing it is brief, laying out key considerations, while the focus of the book is on cultivation. Organic certification is mainly presented as a wise market-

decision, since more and more of the industry, including smaller tincture and tea companies, want to label their products as organic and cannot do so without the crop being certified. I particularly ap-

preciated her discussion of fair prices and fair wages for those involved in production, supporting small-scale growers abroad when we do purchase import-

ed herbs, and promoting grower cooperation rather than competition, including innovative projects to form grower groups for herb production.

One of the best pieces of advice that the author repeats and emphasizes throughout the book is to develop a relationship with herbalists and other practitioners. They are not only a potential market but also have the expertise to assess quality and potency. This is even more crucial when the herb in question should undergo traditional processing methods to achieve particular medicinal applica-
tions. Growers can begin with small trials, learning both what grows well and what meets the quality demands of the herbal community, and then increase production with a more assured market.

The book closes with some useful resources. As mentioned above, one of our most valuable re-
sources in the Northeast region would be High Falls Garden and the related local herb initiative (www.

localherb.org).

None of my critiques, which I consider to be minor, diminishes in any way an enthusiastic recommenda-
tion of this book for any gardener or grower inter-

ested in growing medicinals or who is already doing so. There are very few books on growing medicinal plants, and this is the only one I am aware of fo-
cused on Chinese herbs. Hopefully, as time goes on, we will be able to produce much more region-spe-
cific and detailed information – something which Schafer urges herself and is helping to make happen through her ongoing good work.

The Encyclopedia of Country Living by Carla Emery Sasquatch Books, 2012 Softcover, 922 pp, $29.95 reviewed by Larry Siegel

I first made acquaintance with The Encyclopedia of Country Living sometime in the ’70s when I no-

sacked a stack of them on a remainder table at Barnes & Noble (back when there was but one Barnes & Noble, before it and its ilk had morphed into city-

states). It was unlike any book I had seen before. Or since. Massive (over 8 pounds with weighted five pounds) with pages of any which color, it appeared to be run off a mimeograph machine. That was, I soon learned, because it was run off a mimeograph ma-

machine, the first edition sent, in installments, to 875 subscribers. I had purchased a new, “improved” edi-
tion. Pages had been compiled, three-hole punched, and bound with plastic-coated wire. They were collated by a volunteer group of women in an unoc-
cupied apartment at an old folk’s home in Moscow, Idaho.

It was the dawn of my homesteading activities. I devoured the book, reading every word on its 928 pages. I have been working this land for the past week or so, to unearth the original book but it remains a vivid image in my mind. Typos were rife, pages added here and there (numbered by half page), and the book was held together with rubber bands (after the ‘binding’ gave out). As if it mattered. I devoured it nonetheless.

I was aware that sometime after my purchase a mainstream publisher had picked it up and issued a commercial edition. Not being aware of what had transpired since then (it was the 40th anniversary edition was about to be released. I have since learned that 750,000 copies have been sold, it has gone through ten editions, and comprehensive resource sources are provided (and updated). It is difficult to convey in a review of a couple hun-
dred (even thousand) words the breadth and scope of this book. The promotional material attached to my review copy states that Carla Emery will provide advice on how to cultivate a garden, buy

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Typical Nutrient Analysis

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land, bread, bread, rare farm animals, make sausage, build a barn, grow mushrooms, can peaches, plant a tree, milk a goat, charm butter, mill your own flour, grow herbs, tap for maple syrup, store food for winter, butcher animals, keep beehives, cultivate a rice patty, make 20-minute cheese, build irrigation systems, pickle vegetables, forage for wild food, build a chicken coop, catch a pig, cook on a wood stove.” I could easily note twenty-five other topics for which advice is provided (as well as twenty-five after that). Carla Emery is not gathering information from various sources; she is sharing her personal experiences while performing these tasks. The book is, in fact (notwithstanding the mountains of information provided), a deeply personal one. Carla Emery refers to the book as a letter to a friend. And many of her friends responded with letters offering feedback, tips, and, most importantly, a feeling of connectedness with the author. They became part of succeeding editions.

Despite the diversity of material, the primary emphasis is on the production of food. There are three aspects to the production of food. The first is to grow it and gather it and raise it. The second is to ensure that a supply will be on hand throughout the year. And the third is to bring it to the kitchen and transform it into a meal.

The chronology of the book is a book unto itself: Carla (and five young ones) constantly on the road paddling the book. Carla getting discovered (appear- ing on TV talk shows), Carla pulling the plug on the whole celebrity thing to return to the life she had written about. This all occurred in the space of four years.

Sadly, Carla Emery divorced in 1985; perhaps a reflection of the strains on a relationship engendered by the vigorous and demanding lifestyle she has described. Even more sadly, Carla Emery died in 2005, though she’d probably be overjoyed that her book was indispensable to me when I started growing vegetables thirty-five years ago and I believe it would be indispensable to those of you starting out now.

CT NOFA Office: PO Box 164, Stevenson, CT 06491, phone (203) 888-5146, Fax (203) 888-9280, Email: ctnofa@ctnofa.org, website: www.ctnofa.org

Executive Director: Bill Damman, PO Box 164, Stevenson, CT 06491, (203) 888-5146, 203-888-9280 (fax), bill@ctnofa.org

Administrative Assistant: Debbie Semonich, PO Box 164, Stevenson, CT 06491, deb@ctnofa.org, 203-888-5146

CT NOFA Education Coordinator, Teresa Sugihara, PO Box 164, Stevenson, CT 06491, tersa@ctnofa.org, 203-888-5146

Farms Pledge Program: Contact the office.

Event and Outreach Coordinator: Kristiane Huber, PO Box 164, Stevenson, CT 06491, kristiane@ctnofa.org, 203-888-5146

Bookkeeper: Rita Schilten, PO Box 164, Stevenson, CT 06491, rita@ctnofa.org, 203-888-5146

Marketing Coordinator: Melissa Gabus, melissa@ctnofa.org, 203-888-5146

President: Bettylyndy Sand, 38 Somerset Drive, Manchester CT 06040, 860-647-7097, bettylyndy.gardeningset@verizon.net

Vice President: John D. Turenne, Sustainable Food Systems, LLC, PO Box 4625, Wallingford CT 06492, 203-294-9635, juturenne@sustainablefoodsystems.com

Treasurer: Howard Shafker, 51 Brevay Drive, West Hartford CT 06117, 203-831-2972, hshafker@comcast.net

Secretary: Janet Heller, 452 Adams Street, Manchester CT 06040, 860-645-6897, janet.heller@snet.net

Massachusetts

President: Linda Simkins, Natick Community Organic Farm, 117 Eliot Street, South Natick, MA 01760, (508) 655-2204, lsimkins.norganic@verizon.net

Vice President: Leslie Cox, Hampshire College Farm, Amherst, MA 01002 (413) 530-2029, lexco@hampshire.edu

Secretary: Elaine Petersen, 92 New Westminster Road, Hubbardston, MA 01452 (978) 928-4707, hemlockhollow@charternet.org

Treasurer: Jean-Claude Bourrault, 31 Parkton Road, #1, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130, (617) 983-1417, jeanc@aol.com

Executive Director: Julie Rawson, 411 Sheldon Road, Barre, MA 01005 (978) 355-2653, Fax: (978) 355-4046, julie@nofamass.org

Administrative Director: Kathleen Geary, 327 East Street, Peterham, MA 01366, (978) 724-3314 (Mondays & Thursdays call (978) 355-2853), info@nofamass.org

Webmaster: David Pontius, 26 School Street, Northfield, MA 01345, (413) 498-2721, webmaster@nofamass.org

Connecticut

Winter Conference Coordinator: Cathleen O’Keefe, 9 Denton Street, PO Box 52, Montague, MA 01347, (413) 387-2316, wc@nofamass.org

Public Relations, Development and Newsletter Editor: Mike Lombard, Anne Aasgaard & Isaac Lombard, 327 East Street, Barre, MA 01005 (413) 549-1568, ben.grosscup@ctnofa.org

Website: www.nofa.org

Baystate Organic Certifiers: Administrator: Don Franczyk, 1220 Cedarwood Circle, Dighton, MA 02764, (774) 872-5544, baystateorganic@earthlink.net, website: www.baystateorganic.org

New Hampshire

NOFA-NH Office: 4 Park St., Ste. 208, Concord, NH 03301, (603) 224-5022, email: info@nofanh.org

Website: www.nofanh.org

Executive Director: Janet H. Wilkinson, 4 Jordan Avenue, Concord, NH 03301, (603) 224-5022, email: janet.wilkinson@nofanh.org

Newsletter Editor: KC Wright, 4 Park St., Ste. 208, Concord, NH 03301, (603) 224-5022, email: editor@nofanh.org

Operations Manager: Eleanor Lang, 4 Park St., Ste. 208, Concord, NH 03301, (603) 224-5022, email: eleanor@nofanh.org

Business Manager: Janet Munson, 4 Park St., Ste. 208, Concord, NH 03301, (603) 224-5022, email: janet@nofanh.org

Bulk Order Coordinator: Jennifer Quinlin, PO Box 92, Stratford, NH 03884, home: (603) 269-0063, cell: (603) 731-1182, ejeny@worldpath.net

Winter Conference Coordinator: Jo Russavage, 4 Park St., Ste. 208, Concord, NH 03301, (603) 224-5022, email: janet@nofanh.org

NH Herbal Network Representative: Maria Noel Groves, 4 Park St., Ste. 208, Concord, NH 03301, (603) 224-5022, email: nhh@nofanh.org

President: Scott Morrison, 4 Jordan Avenue, Concord, NH 03301, home: (603) 226-9434, cell: (603) 491-6263, email: scott@s-morrison.com

Vice President: Joan O’Connor, PO Box 387, Hampden, NH 03826, home: (603) 428-3530, email: joc COM e NH@yahoo.com

Treasurer: Jared Yentzen, Stark Hwy North, Dunbar, NH 03866, work: (603) 224-5537, email: jyeataon@norweebler.com

Secretary: Alexis Simpson, 20 Main Street, #2400, Exeter, NH 03833, home: (603) 772-9314, cell: (603) 705-0665, email: alsimpson@gmail.com

Organic Certification: Vickie Smith, NH Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food, Division of Regulatory Services, Caller Box 2042, Concord, NH 03303 (603) 271-3665, email: vsmith@ag.state.nh.us, website: www.agriculture.nh.gov

New Jersey

Executive Director: Camille Miller, 334 River Road, Hillsborough, NJ 08844, (908) 371-1111 x 1, cmilll- er@nofanj.com

President: Al Popso, Plumstead Farm, PO Box 213, Port Murray, NJ 07856, (908) 390-7655, popl- woodall@comcast.net
Calendar

Wednesday, March 6, 13, 20, & 27: Exploring the Small Farm Dream, Duke Farms, Hillsborough, NJ For more info: http://www.nofamass.org/contact.htm, 908-371-1111

Thursday, March 7: CSA Fair, Billings Forge Farmers Market, Hartford, CT. For more info, see ctnofa.org or call 203-888-5146.


Saturday, March 9: Making Soft Cheeses, Gill, MA For more info: 413-658-5374 or ben.grosscup@nofamass.org or www.nofamass.org.

Saturday, March 9: Products of the Hive, Brookline, MA, For more info: drew@nofamass.org

Sunday, March 10: CSA Fair, Fiddleheads Food Coop, New London, CT. For more info, see ctnofa.org or call 203-888-5146.

Wednesday, March 13: “Genetic Roulette” showing and discussion, Wellesley, MA, for more info: nofamass.org, jack@nofamass.org

Wednesdays, March 13, 20, 27 & April 3: Vermonter Farmer to Farmer On-Farm Energy Greenhouse & Tunnel Tour, farm locations TBA. For more info: info@nofavt.org, www.nofavt.org or 802-247-4699

Thursday, March 14, April 11: Winter Market, Princeton Public Library, NJ For more info: info@princetonfarmersmarket.com, or www.princetonfarmersmarket.org

Saturday, March 16: Farm Systems for Harvesting Food Every Season, North Amherst, MA For more info: 413-658-5374 or ben.grosscup@nofamass.org or www.nofamass.org.

Saturday, March 16: High Tunnels for Winter and Spring Greens Production, Dartmouth, MA For more info: 413-658-5374 or ben.grosscup@nofamass.org or www.nofamass.org.

Sunday, March 17: NOFA/RI Greenhouse & Seed Starting CRAFT Workshop, Providence, RI For more info: nofari@live.com, www.nofari.org, or 401-523-2653

Tuesday, March 19: “Genetic Roulette” showing and discussion, Petersham, MA, For more info: nofamass.org, jack@nofamass.org


Saturday, March 23: Rutgers Gardener’s School, New Brunswick, NJ For more info: knigge@njasw.rutgers.edu, or http://www.cpe.rutgers.edu/courses/ current/a01201ca.html

Saturday, March 23 and Sunday, March 24: Organic Bee School, Boston, MA, For more info: drew@nofamass.org

Sunday, March 24: Cultured Dairy Products and Cheeses at Home, Cummingham, MA For more info: 413-658-5374 or ben.grosscup@nofamass.org or www.nofamass.org.


Saturday, April 6: 12th Annual Environmental Forum, Galloway, NJ For more info: watertrend@gmail.com, or http://tinturel.gov/aginfleo

Saturday, April 13: Making Hard Cheeses, Gill, MA For more info: 413-658-5374 or ben.grosscup@nofamass.org or www.nofamass.org.

Sunday, April 14: Making Semi-Firm Farmstead Cheese, Williamstown, MA For more info: 413-658-5374 or ben.grosscup@nofamass.org or www.nofamass.org.

Saturday, April 20: Raising Chickens in the Backyard, Hubbardston, MA For more info: 413-658-5374 or ben.grosscup@nofamass.org or www.nofamass.org.

Saturday, April 20: NOFA/RI Aquaponics & Mushroom Cultivation CRAFT Workshop, Pawtucket, RI For more info: nofari@live.com, www.nofari.org, or 401-523-2653

Saturday, April 27: Making Fresh Goat Cheese, Sterling, MA For more info: 413-658-5374 or ben.grosscup@nofamass.org or www.nofamass.org.

Saturday, May 11: Raising 100% Grass Fed Beef, Hardwick, MA For more info: 413-658-5374 or ben.grosscup@nofamass.org or www.nofamass.org.

Thursday May 16, Friday May 17, and Saturday May 18: Rutgers Beekeeping Course for New Beekeepers, Bordentown, NJ For more info: knigge@njasw.rutgers.edu, or http://www.cpe.rutgers.edu/courses/current/a0641cc.html

Saturday, May 26: Making Simple Cheeses, Foxborough, MA For more info: 413-658-5374 or ben.grosscup@nofamass.org or www.nofamass.org.

Sunday, May 26: Managing a Horse-Powered CSA, Conway, MA For more info: 413-658-5374 or ben.grosscup@nofamass.org or www.nofamass.org.

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Contact: NOFA-NJ, 334 River Road, Hillsborough, NJ 08844, Phone: (908) 371-1111 x 2, Email: kwalsh@nofanj.org, or join online at www.nofanj.org


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

Rhode Island: Student/Senior: $20, Individual: $25, Family $35, Business $50

Contact: Membership, NOFA RI, c/o Dan Lawton, 247 Evans Road, Chepachet, RI 02814, (401) 523-2653, nofari@live.com

Vermonter: 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

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