2008 NOFA Summer Conference Presents Challenges, Opportunities

by Megan Pacelli

Raw milk. What are the benefits? Is it a healthier choice? Is it safe? How can you get it? What does it mean to you, and to the farming community?

Where can you learn the answers to these questions and more? The NOFA Summer Conference!

Find out what why everyone’s talking about raw milk and what it means to you: on a national level, on your farm, and even in your own kitchen. You’ll learn the benefits of raw milk, how it can keep your family healthier, and your farm more profitable. You’ll also learn more what our government has to say about raw milk and the debate that it has sparked nationwide.

At the forefront of this debate is Saturday’s keynote speaker, Mark McAfee. Founder of the Organic Pastures Dairy Company in California, the only retail approved raw organic dairy products producer in North America, Mark is a pioneer in raw organic milk production, safety and technology.

Mark has been highly involved in the movement to change the laws regarding raw milk, and will speak to us firsthand about his experiences on the evening of Saturday, August 9th. Also on Saturday, from 10:00-11:30 am, don’t miss his workshop entitled Raw Milk Nutrition and Safety. He will discuss the real life experiences of producing organic raw dairy products in California. Testing, safety, politics, nutrition, production and marketing aspects will be shared.

Along with Mark’s insight, we will have presenters from all over the Northeast coming to share what they know about raw milk. If you are a consumer of raw milk (or would like to be!) don’t miss the following workshops:

Homemade Dairy Products
Saturday, August 9th from 1:00-2:30 pm
Desirée Ball comes to us from Connecticut. She is enthusiastic about organic; and pasture systems & watershed management research unit. She will answer questions about her cows, goats, and chickens.

Vermont’s Farm Fresh Milk Campaign
Sunday, August 10th from 10:00-11:30 am
Rural Vermont has launched a campaign to make Farm Fresh Milk (raw and unpasteurized) easier to buy and sell in Vermont. Shelby Hammond and Colin Gunn from Rural Vermont will present this workshop. Come hear about their goals, approach, and their progress in pursuit of increasing access to this wholesome, local product.

If you are more interested in learning about the mechanics of running a raw or organic dairy, the following workshops are for you:

Sidehill Farm Dairy Tour
Saturday, August 9th from 1:00-2:30 pm
Amy Klippenstein and Paul Lacinski of Massachusetts have been homesteaders and vegetable farmers for many years. They are now in their third year of small-scale dairy production at Sidehill Farm. In this workshop, you will walk pastures and discuss intensive grazing, grass, manure, and fertility management, and animal health. You will also tour the milking facilities and discuss milking procedures, sanitation, and regulations for raw milk and processed dairy products. Tastings of raw milk and yogurt will follow.

Principles of Dairy Nutrition on Pasture*
Saturday, August 9, from 8:00-9:30 am
This workshop is part of the grazing school. Kathy Sodor, Animal Scientist, USDA-ARS Pasture Systems & Watershed Management Research Unit. Learn how to improve nutrition of your dairy herd through pasture and herd management, and strategic supplementation. Topics to be included: supplementing cows to complement pasture quality and quantity, improved pasture management strategies, and research results on grazing behavior, supplementation, and pasture forage mixtures.

Transitioning a Dairy Farm to Organic
Saturday, August 9th, from 8:00-9:30 am
Sarah Flack of Vermont is a Grazing & Organic Consultant, farmer & author of Organic Dairy Production. Sarah will answer questions like: What should you consider before transitioning? What resources are there & when is the best time to transition? Topics will include: overview of organic standards, current organic milk markets, allowed health care products, organic forages & grains, soil health & allowed fertilizers, record keeping requirements, transition cost planning & more.

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The Internet: It’s Changing Farming, Too

by Jack Kittredge

Every new technology changes things in unexpected ways. The Internet is no exception. While developed to facilitate communication between high tech scientists and government researchers, its impact a generation later has been to empower individuals in a way never quite imagined. Careers have blossomed on Ebay for hobbyists buying and selling things which would have been far too rare or obscure previously. Amazon has developed a national inventory network enabling you to find that out-of-print book (or other product) in a small shop in Oregon or Missouri that might otherwise have languished on the shelf for years. Search engines like Google have enabled users to find precise, detailed information on practically any topic, putting expertise for the first time into the hands of Everyone.

Farmers have fared no differently. In many communities one can find farm-based pre-order services that deliver a year-round supply beef, pork, poultry, lamb, raw milk, dairy products and eggs to drop-off points in cities. When they add baked goods, seasonal produce, honey, maple syrup and other value-added products to the mix. When visiting my daughter in Washington DC this spring, I went with her to a pick-up point on Capitol Hill. She was getting raw milk, but the range of products supplied on a pre-order basis from an Amish farm in Pennsylvania was astonishing. Thirty or so families ordered weekly on the Internet for that pick-up site, which was one of more than a dozen in the metro region.

Such an infusion of direct sales income from a wider market into the farm balance sheet has been an exciting boost for some farmers. The Internet has proven to be a way to reach more than the people who frequent farmers markets, stop at roadside stands, or will join a CSA. For some specialty products it has enabled a national marketplace and resulted in orders from buyers thousands of miles away. Some of the articles in this issue feature those opportunities and success stories.

Of course any new technology is only a tool — one that can result in positive or negative impacts. The ability to order products locally can undermine one of the key foundations of the local food network — the relationship between the farmer and the eater. Without that face-to-face connection (and the likelihood of the buyer actually going to the farm and seeing conditions there) it becomes possible for the relationship to drift back to that of faceless buyer and seller. Once that happens, there is nothing to stop the buyer from pressuring for lower prices, and the seller from cutting corners on quality.

This is where organic certification may play an important role. A prudent consumer will understand that, in the absence of a personal connection with the farmer, some institutional structure is needed to check abuse. For certified organic farms there is a protocol for inspection, verification, and documentation that can go a long way towards reassuring the buyer that conditions are as the farmer represents them. Organic farms that are marketing via the Internet would be wise to feature their certification for just this reason.

We hope this issue helps readers more clearly see the potential, as well as the difficulties, of marketing farm products on the Internet. There are a thousand stories we could have told. We hope that the ones we chose are illustrative examples of this burgeoning communications technology and how it is impacting the business of farming.
Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I am starting to read the most recent issue and with particular interest the section on manure and compost. I find it a bit disconcerting that you missed the topic of antibiotic uptake in vegetables when grown in manure. This is a serious concern. Below is the link to a study done back in 2005 and mentioned previously in The Natural Farmer as well as Growing for Market. Is this being ignored due to the large amount of confinement operation manure being used by farmers? It is a difficult issue that needs to be investigated further, not only with cow manure but all animal manures where antibiotics are used.

http://jeq.scijournals.org/cgi/content/full/34/6/2082

Thanks Joe Baley
Screamin’ Ridge Farm

Thanks, Joe,

As I’m sure you know, organic farmers are not allowed to use raw manure on their crops (as opposed to conventional farmers, the vast majority in this country, who can). A primary reason to compost manure before using it for fertility is to bring it to a high enough temperature for a long enough time to break down complex chemicals like antibiotics to their basic elemental parts again. On page 19 of the last issue we report on a Colorado State University study on exactly that: antibiotics and how long they persist in manure given different management systems. They found that manure turned, watered, and with occasional amendments (actively managed as compost) may need as much as six months for them to be significantly reduced. Antibiotic resistant genes may persist even longer.

Many organic farms do not even bring in outside manure for exactly the reasons you cite, preferring to have a mixed operation and generate manure that contains only components acceptable on an organic operation.

The study you cite does not look at composted manure, however, but tests either soils directly spiked with antibiotics, or soils mixed with fresh manure from pigs given routine doses of antibiotics. While it is important to know that plants grown in fresh manure from animals given antibiotics will uptake a portion of them and are thus a danger to human health, I do think it is important to realize that this problem can be dealt with by proper manure handling, which was the focus of the issue.

Jack Kittredge

Dear Julie and Jack,

Here’s the cash to continue our receiving your fine journal. Our local Yancey County Farmers Market has had two sale days. The opening day we doubled last year’s customers. We all planted more produce this year and we still may not fulfill demand.

Another activity in our county has been that many more people are planting gardens or expanding existing ones. A person at the market last week called them the new Victory Gardens. Victory over whom, I did not get a chance to ask. Maybe the oil companies. This growth in demand for local food is causing the industrial ag companies (organic and conventional) to mount a counterattack.

We have to be ready to fight back. The problems caused by Industrial Ag. must be resolved within their own arena. Local food is the solution and we cannot allow our best farmers to be driven out of business. Our duty is to provide the freshest, healthiest food at an affordable price. Fuel prices will continue to rise, so inputs for conventional farmers will go up and up. For years, when talking to other farmers about my methods (old time farming or what is now called organic) I said it would not be totally for health reasons, economics would be the real driver for conversion. So soon it will be more economical to use organic methods than conventional ones.

Best Wishes,
Robert Thompson
Burnsville, NC

Dear Robert,

And a happy day that will be! Someone once said that the true value of a gallon of gasoline is the amount of money you would have to pay someone to push you, in your car, for 24 miles!

But not everything will be rosy when organic farming becomes more profitable than conventional. Once making a buck is easier with organic methods, we will be attracting in a lot of folks interested only in making a buck. So lets be careful, now when demand is strong and we have the ear of the consumer, to be transparent about our practices and invite people to come to the farm and ask questions for themselves about what is going on. We need to set a high standard of expectation for the day when we might be competing with folks whose practices couldn’t stand up to careful scrutiny.

Jack Kittredge

Please help us thank these Friends of Organic Farming for their generous support!

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

Welcoming Note to New York Subscribers

With this issue we welcome back the entire membership of NOFA-NY! Several years ago, for financial reasons, NOFA-NY was forced to eliminate subscriptions to The Natural Farmer as a member benefit. At a recent Governing Council meeting the chapter decided to once again include a sub with every membership. We are very happy to be read by the entire 7-state NOFA membership once again!

Of course, during the last few years a number of NOFA-NY members decided they wanted to subscribe directly to the paper. They have religiously been sending checks and getting the paper as private individuals. Many of those subscriptions have not yet expired, so with this issue many NOFA-NY members will get two copies of the paper.

From our point of view both subs have been paid for, one by the individual and the other by the chapter, so we owe them both to be sent. We hope those who receive two copies will donate one to a friend, to a library, or to another place where it will be used. But if you think this is a waste of paper and postage and want us to discontinue your second copy, just let us know and we will be happy to comply. The problem should sort itself out over the next year as all subscriptions have not yet expired, so with this issue many NOFA-NY members will get two copies of the paper.

Once again, we are very happy to be read by all NOFA members again!! – Jack Kittredge and Julie Rawson
The Natural Farmer  Summer, 2008

NOFA Exchange

Blow Your Own Horn!

Coastal Maine Internship. Wayback Farm, a Biodynamic homestead, is opening application for intern/beginner farmers. This is not a job, but a learning opportunity for journeypersons to advance skills in building, mechanics, masonry, systems and independent growing projects using Wayback land and equipment. Please call Paul Bernacki at 207-342-5052 or write Wayback Farm, Belmont, Maine, 04952.

Couple seeking apprenticeship on farm that intensively grazes multiple species. Combined 6+1 years livestock experience, including dairy sheep, goats, cows, and meat lambs and veal. Experience haying, raising Marinmissus, maintaining home garden, layers, and meat birds. Seeking to diversify our skills, especially in the areas of fencing systems, irrigation, parasite control, and nutrition, in order to help us achieve our goal of having our own grass-based enterprise in the future. Would prefer to work in exchange for room and board. We are hard workers and a good team. Email illuci@hotmail.com.

Help Wanted. Real Pickles is a small business, based in Montague, MA, producing raw, naturally fermented pickled foods from local, organic vegetables. We are seeking part-time help, for fermentation and packaging finished product for distribution. Work is physically demanding, with a growing demand. Please contact the market manager, Jessica Hayes at 617-470-9128 or email to jhans@equilibriofilms.com.

Help Fight Poverty! Join the Institute for International Cooperation and Development to fight poverty and bridge the gap between the poor and the rich in the Americas! The program, called Fight Poverty, starts October 1st, 2008, and is a total of 9 months with this structure: 2 months preparation in the U.S., 1 month bus travel in Brazil exploring the country’s diversity and contradictions, 4 months volunteer work in Brazil in our Child Aid project, 2 months in the U.S., spreading knowledge about poverty. For more information please visit our website: www.icasd-volunteer.org or contact us by email: info@icasd-volunteer.org.

Cultivating Wellness Conference September 13 & 14 at D Arces in Dorchester, NH. Register now to secure your place at this celebration of land stewardship and community wellbeing in the White Mountains. Attend hands-on workshops, field and forest plant walks, educational classes and healing sessions with New England holistic practitioners and wellness experts. Jim Merkel will deliver the keynote address, “Wellness Through Simplicity.” Visit our website or contact us for a full list of speakers, workshop descriptions and other information. www.icasd-volunteer.org/info@icasd-volunteer.org (603) 786-2366. Two-Day Registration: $100 (including Five Organic Meals and Camping: $150)

Videotape at NOFA Summer Conference. Good job for competent teen. Equipment and training provided. Must be available Friday, August 8 at 1:00 pm thru 2:30 pm on Sunday August 10 to videotape 8 workshops and 2 keynote. Must get to 2 off-site workshops for tours. Pays $300 for weekend. Contact Jack@nofamass.org.

WHEEL HOES

For Ecological Farming

Wipe your weeds out in a jiffy without using sprays!

REDUCED PRICES!

We would like to get Valley Oak Wheel Hoes into the hands of more farmers and gardeners. There is a new, improved model that costs $50 less, and we are offering wholesale prices for bulk purchases. Shipping is still only $5 per order.

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

The wheel hoe is ideal for quick and easy hoeing of weeds, soil loosening, and making furrows.

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

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

Optional accessories include:

- Blades in widths ranging from 5–18 inches
- Furrower
- Three dive cultivator
- Four dive cultivator

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

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

One Year Money Back Guarantee

CSA farming opportunity for experienced, community-minded organic farmer's. Thriving 230-member Anchor Run CSA provides livable income to current farm family and has vibrant core group. 12 acre CSA with space in barn & outbuildings are part of scenic 100-acre municipally-owned open space preserve in S.E. PA. Rental of two houses negotiable. Equipment available at fair price.

Commitment to community education and expansion of sustainable agriculture in the region desirable. Long term relationship beginning Dec. 2008 sought by supportive community. Visit www.anchornurunfarm.com and www.wrightstownpa.org for more info. Contact Tali at: tali1968@gmail.com or Robin at ecorobinhood@comcast.net to apply.

The Cape Ann Farmers’ Market is looking for new vendors! CAFM is only in its second full season and is located in downtown Gloucester, MA on Thursdays 3 – 7 pm (starting July 10th). It is a vibrant market and this is a great opportunity to reach a community that is really hungry for fresh quality foods. We are specifically looking for meat, cheese, dairy and fiber producers, but any and all prospective vendors are encouraged to apply. CAFM is a growing market with a growing demand. Please contact the market manager, Jessica Hayes at 617-470-9128 or email cafm@sustainablerecaapeann.org.
USDA Pulls A Dirty Trick On Animal ID

For months the USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has been making hay over efforts to give meat traceback the way food processors do. The agency announced plan to establish a system made up of animal ID numbers with each animal getting an individual ID number that includes a premises number, a day of birth and sex and a location where the animal is currently located. The plan was presented as a way to deal with the meat safety agency’s new role under the country’s new Food Safety Modernization Act. The USDA claims the system will enhance the agency’s ability to trace the meat back to its source in case of any problems. The same system is being called on by critics as an invasion of privacy and as a tool that will be used to control animal farming. The USDA says the system is meant to protect the public’s health but critics say it will be used to control animal farming practices and to pressure farmers to change their practices.

In a budget presentation March 19, 2013, the USDA said it would propose a rule to implement the Animal Identification system. The rule would require each livestock animal to be identified with a “marking, symbol, or identification number” on the animal’s ear. The marking, symbol, or identification number must include a premises number and an identification number that includes a day of birth and sex and a location where the animal is currently located. The premise number identifies the premises where the animal is or was produced, and the ID number identifies the location where the animal is or was kept.

According to the USDA, the Animal Identification system will facilitate the traceback of animals and will provide a means to determine the identity of the animal and the premises where the animal was produced. The agency also said the system will facilitate the identification of animals during an emerging food safety incident. The system will be implemented in phases, with the first phase scheduled to begin in 2014. The USDA said it would seek public input on the proposed rule before finalizing it.

The Animal Identification system will require all livestock animals to be identified by an ear tag or electronic identification device. The USDA said it will not make it mandatory for farmers to use electronic identification devices, but it will not require farmers to use them. The agency said it would seek comments on whether to require electronic identification devices and, if so, what type of devices should be used.

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New Evidence Sets a Lingering Question – Is Organic Food More Nutritious? A comprehensive review of 97 published studies comparing the nutritional quality of organic and conventionally grown produce was completed since 2003, a team of scientists conclude that organically grown plant-based foods are 25% more nutrient dense, on average, and hence deliver more essential nutrients per serving weight. The new report is published as a “State of Science Review” by The Organic Center and is entitled “New Evidence Confirms the Nutritional Superiority of Plant-Based Organic Foods.”

Earthworms Bioconcentrate Perfumes and Drugs Pharmaceuticals and personal care products (PCPs) end up in the tons of solid sludge left behind by wastewater treatment processes. Those so-called biocidal biocides are often repackaged and sold as fertilizers for both industrial and small-scale agriculture. In a new survey, published in the February 2008 issue of Environmental Science & Technology, researchers show for the first time that those compounds can turn up in earthworms. The findings illustrate the wisdom of allowing earthworms to be carried from treatment facility to field. Biocides provide “great value as sources of organic carbon and nutrient compounds,” says coauthor Edward Furlong of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), but “you still have to understand the trace constituents.” The proof-of-concept study also demonstrates that worms are taking up some of the compounds into their tissues and biotransforming them there, with unknown effects, says study coauthor Dana Kolpin, also of USGS. Because the worms seem to concentrate compounds, a treatment facility might not be able to bring levels in the soils, they can be “a sort of sentinel, or magnifying glass of what’s in the soil,” she adds. source: http://pubs.acs.org/subscriptions/journals/estab-w/2008/06/doi/science/nl_earthworms.html

Major Reduction in Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Organic and Grass-fed Practices According to an article in the journal Environmental Health Perspectives entitled “Global Farm Animal Production and Global Warming: Impacting and Magnifying the Earthworms’ Magnifying Glass,” the USDA has assumed overall leadership, while Mark Bradly heads up the accreditation section, Richard Munsell is back in charge of the overall operation, and the compliance directorship is currently vacant. An electronic reading room has also been set up where interested parties can be sure that the rulemaking process is free and open to the public. source: Organic Processing, March/April 2008

USDA Makes Implantable Computer Chips Its De Facto Standard for NAIS Despite claims that its National Animal Identification System will be “technology neutral,” the USDA is favoring radiofrequency identification (RFID) ear tags and implants. In April it made the tags part of the tuberculosis testing program for cattle. Of the eight identification devices USDA has approved, seven are RFID ear tags and the eighth is an implantable microchip for horses. The health risk of tuberculosis from cows is very small. The USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service bovine TB factsheet gives the incidence of positive reactors to the test (positive reactors are not necessarily infected animals) at 0.025% among animals from the 21st century America, humans catch the disease from other humans, not from cows. “This is yet another deceptive and underhanded tactic by USDA to force farmers into their bureaucratic and costly NAIS program. Dairy farmers are already dealing with skyrocketing costs of production. NAIS will not do anything to address animal disease and will only drive more family farmers out of business,” said Paul Rozwadowski, a Wisconsin dairy farmer and chair of the National Family Farm Coalition’s Dairy Subcommittee.

Group to Sue over NAIS Problems The Farm to Consumer Legal Defense Fund (FTCLDF) has announced its intent to sue the USDA and US Department of Agriculture for both procedural and substantive problems with the program. Those interested in those procedures can contact the FTCLDF at 25 page document listing them at: http://www.ftcldf.org/docs/Notice%20 to%20Agricultural%20Industry%20-%20May%202006.pdf. The FTCLDF is a new group, created to help farmers defend their right to market directly to consumers products that the consumers choose. They educate farmers about legal models that can minimize government interference, advocate before state officials to change statutes and administrative regulations, and represent farmers who have fallen afoul of federal or state law by marketing products directly to consumers. Besides fighting NAIS, they are active in work involving raw milk, eggs and farm-slaughtered meat. The FTCLDF can be reached at 1170 Rocklin Road, Ste. 300, Rocklin, CA and its corporate headquarters in Rocklin is at http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop.

Global Organic Market to Top $86 Billion by 2009 That is the prediction of Global Industry Analysts, Inc. The US is the biggest single market, with $43 billion in sales. A comprehensive market is second source: The Organic & Non-GMO Report, February, 2008

NAFTA is a Disaster for Mexico’s Rural Economy The Mexican Agriculture and Cattle Farming Commission has issued an analysis of the effects of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) which says that the indices of poverty in the countryside have risen dramatically since the signing of the agreement. Financing in agriculture has fallen even more. Chemical fertilizer industry was totally eliminated, while the price of beans and tortilla corn (supported by US subsidies) has increased sharply. The Mexican countryside is in the bottom third of the countries, with over three million Mexicans emigrating to the US. Not all nations are doing poorly, however. Carlos Slim, of Mexico City, becomes the richest Mexican, based on holdings of $68 billion at the end of July, 2007. source: The Ram's Horn, February, 2008

USDA Eyes Forcing National Marketing Agreement on Greens Growers In the wake of the September, 2006 spinach contamination tragedy, the California leafy greens industry adopted the Leafy Green Marketing Agreement (LGMA) in February of 2007. It specifies “best practices” for growing, harvesting, and handling leafy green products. The adopting handlers agreed to buy only from growers who adhere to those rules. The LGMA model has spread to other states and now the industry wants to, and has registered names such as “Marketside”, “City Thyme”, and “Field and Vine” for this purpose. According to the Financial Times “United States giant stores, the planning process for [small] stores does not require public consultation, potentially creating a way for Wal-Mart to grow into cities and states where its Supercenter expansion has been slowed by union-backed political opposition.”

United Goes Solar United Natural Foods, Inc. is installing solar power systems on the roofs of its distribution facility in Rocklin, CA and its corporate headquarters in Dayville, CT. The Rocklin system is composed of 7000 panels covering 4 acres of rooftop and supplies the buildings’ entire refrigeration needs during the hot summer months. Executives expect the investment’s payback period to be 4.3 years. source: Whole Foods Magazine, March, 2008

Study: Nitrogen Fertilizers Deplete Soils, Contribute to Green House Gases A study published in the Journal of Environmental Quality finds (surprise!) that under modern high-yield farming, conventional farming systems are burning up our soils through over-application of nitrogen. Apparently the nitrogen enables the rapid consumption of soil carbon, leaving less sequestered and more given off in greenhouse gases. It’s just the opposite of what conventional wisdom has preached since we began using heavy doses of N on crops 30 years ago,” said Richard Mulvaney, one of the four University of Illinois agronomists who conducted the research. “My colleagues and I were simply amazed when we examined the data.” source: Keve Center Field Notes, Spring, 2008

Wal-Mart to Open Small Food Markets Wal-Mart will open four small stores (20,000 square feet) in Arizona this fall to test its concept of offering its sales of fresh foods and groceries. The company has registered names such as “Marketside”, “City Thyme”, and “Field and Vine” for this purpose. source: The Natural Farmer, March, 2008

NOP Reorganized The National Organic Program has been reorganized into three branches: standards development and rulemaking; a regulatory office, and enforcement. Barbara Robinson has assumed overall leadership, while Mark Bradly heads up the accreditation section, Richard Munsell is back in charge of the overall operation, and the compliance directorship is currently vacant. According to the Financial Times “United States giant stores, the planning process for [small] stores does not require public consultation, potentially creating a way for Wal-Mart to grow into cities and states where its Supercenter expansion has been slowed by union-backed political opposition.”

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**Farm to Table Environmental Costs**

This graphic assigns the environmental costs of conventional farmed food to its production on farm, its transportation to the store, and transportation home. Environmental costs include pesticide contamination, soil erosion, greenhouse gas emission and biodiversity losses. CSAs look pretty good!

![Environmental Costs of Food System, Farm to Table](image)

*source: Kerr Center Field Notes, Spring, 2008*

**E. coli Levels Linked to Feeding Distillers Grains?**

A record number of pounds of US beef were recalled in 2007 for E. coli contamination. The USDA is wondering whether that may be linked to the growing use for cattle feed of distillers grains, a byproduct of the fermentation process (think ethanol as well as whiskey). The USDA is now feeding 300 cattle a 40% diet of distillers grains and an all-corn diet to a control group. (No mention of feeding grass to any cattle!)

*source: Acres, USA, March, 2008*

**Cell Phones & Semen**

Woe to the young men double-tasking on their cell phones as they rush through life’s chores!

*Clorox Buys Burt’s Bees*

In another example of the expansion of major corporations into the alternative food and health care markets, the personal care brand Burt’s Bees has been bought by Clorox.

*source: Acres, USA, March, 2008*

**Kaolin Good but Not Great**

According to Hortideas, Canadian researchers compared three treatments of ‘Liberty’ apples:

- 10 applications of Kaolin in 2003 and 15 in 2004 so that the trees were covered at all times with a thin coating.
- applications of synthetic pesticides at 75% of recommended rates based on action thresholds,
- no pesticide applications.

The percentages of damaged fruits were:

- 2003: 77
- 2004: 93
- Kaolin: 78
- Nothing: 100
- Pesticide: 83

Kaolin was not effective against codling moth and less effective than synthetic pesticides against tarnished plant bug as well as plum curculio.

*source: Growing for Market, April, 2008*

**New Guides Help Farmers Understand Organic Dairy Contracts**

The Farmers Legal Action Group (FLAG) has published two guides to help farmers understand and negotiate organic milk contracts. The first is called *When Your Processor Requires More than Organic Certification: Additional Requirements in Organic Milk Contracts*. It reviews contracts for the sale of organic milk that were used in 2007. The second is called *Hushed Up: Confidentiality Clauses in Organic Milk Contracts*. Some contracts for the sale of organic milk require farmers to agree not to disclose the terms of the contract with any other party. These contract clauses can discourage farmers from seeking legal advice, or from discussing farming or financial concerns with other farmers or financial advisors.

*source: FLAG press release, May 13, 2008*

**Farm Bill News**

By the time you read this the Farm Bill most likely will have been vetoed by the president, and one or both houses of Congress may well have overriden the veto. But in case you have been too busy in the field to follow the hoopla, here are a few things this bill contains.

**Organic Agriculture**

took a starring role in this farm bill. The Conferees agreed to provide $22 million in mandatory funding over 5 years for organic certification cost share, an increase of $17 million and a top NCSCA farm bill priority. The bill also provides $5 million to fund an organic data collection initiative and a new program to provide financial assistance for organic conversion housed within the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The Conservation Security Program to be renamed the Conservation Stewardship Program will include an easy cross walk to eligibility for organic farmers. The Organic Research and Extension Initiative, a competitive grants program, will be funded at $78 million over 4 years. While the bill retains the organic crop insurance surcharge it directs USDA to review risk data for organic and conventional crops and unless they find a significant variation the surcharge must be dropped or reduced.

**The Conservation Security Program**

renamed the Conservation Stewardship Program is going national with a continuous sign up. The bill provides the resources necessary - $1.1 billion in new and mandatory funding - to enroll approximately 115 million acres in the CSP by 2017. The program and payment structure

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**POTTING MIXES**

**COMPOSTS**

**CUSTOM SOIL BLENDS**

Montpelier, Vermont  
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Good potting soil requires the right compost.

We make our composts specifically for use in our mixes.

All of our products are blended from ingredients acceptable for use in certified organic crop production.

**Attention Bedding Plant Growers:**

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**Share your success with your customers**

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**All Purpose Fortified Potting Mix:** A complete growing-on mix for soil blocks, trays, or small containers.

**Light Fortified Potting Mix:** Developed for growers who prefer the handling characteristics of peat-lite mixes, for smaller celled plastic flats.

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**Compost Plus, Transplant Booster Mix:** Excellent for water-in top dressing for small celled trays, hanging baskets and potted plants. Use a cup or two in the hole at transplanting.

Products are available in bulk or in bags, and we can arrange trucking.

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We speak organic.
The bill also includes a compromise provision allowing the interstate sale of state inspected meat for certain small packers. The new Rural Microenterprise Assistance Program was given $15 million in mandatory funding over 4 years. RMAP will provide small loans and technical assistance to rural entrepreneurs with low and moderate incomes to establish small businesses in rural areas. The Value Added Producer Grant program took a hit to its funding receiving just $15 million in mandatory funding over 4 years although additional annual appropriations are authorized. The National Campaign had pushed for $40 million in mandatory funding for the VAPG. The bill, however, provides new grant priorities for projects that support local food system development and for small and midsize family farms and beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

Community Food Security - The Community Food Project program was funded at $5 million annually over 10 years to make matching grants to community organizations working on local hunger, nutrition and food access issues. The bill also includes a provision allowing local schools to establish a purchasing preference for locally produced fruits, vegetables, dairy and meats for school meals. The bill establishes a new competitive grant program to spur innovation and locally produced food. USDA’s Rural Business and Industry Loan Program now includes a priority for entities engaged in local food distribution and marketing. Five percent (about $50 million a year) of the guaranteed loan funds are to be set aside for these types of enterprises. Beginning and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers - Section 2501, a competitive grant program to assist socially disadvantaged farmers access USDA programs received $75 million in mandatory funding over 4 years, a significant increase over current authorized levels and a first time mandatory allocation. The bill creates a new Beginning Farmer and Rancher Individual Development Account pilot program available in 15 states to establish matched savings accounts for the purchase of farmland, farm equipment or livestock. No mandatory funding was provided so this new program will have to win funding in the annual appropriations process. The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program won mandatory funding of $75 million over 4 years to administer a competitive grants program for organizations providing technical assistance and other services to beginning farmers. This program was created in the 2002 farm bill but was never funded.

source: National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture Digest #12, May 13, 2008
A Web site is an important tool for your business if you sell your products directly to consumers. With each passing day, the Internet grows in importance as a source of information for people looking for locally grown food and farm products.

While your older customers know where you are because they’ve been coming to your farm for years, many new customers will seek out information about your farm on the Web before they commit to a visit. At a minimum, your farm needs a good, simple Web site that is nicely laid out and features great images. It should list the theme of your business and should use the same logo that is on your other marketing materials.

Many farms add additional features to their Web sites, like blogs, a harvest calendar, event information, and a sign-up list for e-mail alerts. Some of these more advanced features are described in the tip sheets on blogs, online stores, and permission marketing.

What do I want my Web site to do?

Your Web site needs to convince first-time visitors to stick around long enough to find the information they are looking for. An effective site will excite customers about your farm and bring them to your stand.

Think like a customer when you design your Web site. All important information—who you are, where you are located, your hours of operation and your products—need to be on the first page or ‘home page’ of the site or in a clearly identified page just one click away. Make sure this essential information is easily found on your Web site—you will keep your customers around longer.

Once you have their attention you can offer them products—need to be on the first page or ‘home page’ of the site or in a clearly identified page just one click away. Make sure this essential information is easily found on your Web site—you will keep your customers around longer.

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What are you best known for? Customers also enjoy telling a great story, but your customers won’t stick around if they take too long to load. Make sure your pictures are appropriately sized and good quality. And take new photos every year or two—hair styles change, employees move on.

Who will create my Web site?

The first decision many businesses make is deciding whether to create a Web site themselves or hire help. Doing it yourself seems like a good idea... until you get started. Unless you are very comfortable using complex computer software, building a Web site will be very time consuming and frustrating.

Some farms rely on children, relatives or friends to build their Web site for them. More often than not these ‘free’ projects get bogged down. Volunteer or amateur web designers rarely have your site as a top priority and are often learning how to build a Web site as they go. You will probably not feel comfortable asking them to pick up the pace and your relationships might become strained.

Roxanne Austin worked to create a Web site for her farm, Austin Brothers Valley Farm in Belchertown, Massachusetts in 2007 and has this advice to offer farmers: “Start working on it in October, not January—that’s what we did and it was too late!”

Working with consultants

If you decide to hire a consultant ask him or her to show you a portfolio of Web sites they have created. Talk to some of their previous clients. Some questions to ask are:

• Does the designer get work done on time?
• Do the designer stick to a quoted budget?
• Will the designer set a site up so the clients can update it themselves?
• Is the designer easy to reach and quick to respond to questions or problems?

Don’t wait until your first meeting with a designer to start planning your site. You will save a lot of time and money if you bring an outline of your ideas, budget and expectations to the meeting. “It really helped to know what we wanted when we met with the designer,” says Roxanne. “It helped us get closer to our vision, faster.”

Define your goals. What do you want the Web site to do for your business? Do you want to attract people to the farm? Sell online? These are two different goals and require different functions and approaches to work well on the Web.

Identify your budget. You would not expect the cheapest and most inexperienced mechanic to do a good job fixing your tractor, but you might be tempted to go for the rock bottom price on a Web site. Why? Your Web site, if done well, will be one of your most important marketing tools. Do your best to find the person with the right experience and the best price for your Web site.

Get it in writing. Have a clear understanding and a written agreement with whomever you hire. Set deadlines and prices in advance.

Stay on schedule. Most Web site delays are caused by clients who take too long to make decisions or get information from their designer. Respond quickly to your designer’s questions and get information to him or her on time.

Learn how to use your site. Spend time thinking like a customer and try to ‘break’ your Web site! It’s a great way to find glitches and to see if what you thought made sense on paper makes sense once it’s online. If you are planning on doing some updates yourself, learn how and practice. “It would have helped us to plan more one-on-one training with our web designer so they could show us how to make small changes to our site,” says Roxanne.

Spread the word

You can have a great Web site that no one knows about. Once your site is up and running, get its address onto everything you print—business cards, brochures, letterhead, bags, t-shirts, etc.—and make sure your e-mail address is from your farm’s domain, not from a free site like Yahoo! or Juno. Many small business owners overlook this important detail. If you are paying to host a Web site you have at least 10 free e-mail accounts that come with it and that feature your domain name. Use them.

Bringing it all together

Taken separately, Web sites, blogs, stores and e-mail newsletters are interesting activities with some potential. When they are well-integrated they can increase your sales. There are numerous examples of online businesses that are very successful at integrated online marketing and sales—and not just Amazon.com. Your blog should drive customers to your Web site, and your store should drive customers into your physical store.
your store, not just give them free entertainment. Your e-mail newsletter can tell thousands of readers about your store, not just give them free entertainment. Amazon.com. Your blog should drive customers to your store, not just give them free entertainment. Your e-mail newsletter can tell thousands of readers that you are having a monthly sale and give them an easy path to a purchase in your online store. Your online store can offer a simple, efficient way to get a piece of the farm delivered to a customer at the bottom of the homepage with a link to the website designer. Permission marketing is not just about getting the customer to agree to hear from you. It’s about making sure you tell the customer what they want to hear. Create a simple, direct message that contains useful information, such as:

- **Favorite crops being harvested**
- **Stories and anecdotes from the farm**
- **Recipes and tips for using your products**
- **Upcoming events and activities**
- **Special offers for e-mail list members**

Any or all of these topics should be considered for your e-mail messages. You don’t need fancy graphics or a slick layout. A simple direct message informing valued customers about happenings on the farm will do the trick.

**Getting beyond yes**

Many customers are happy to give permission to send them e-mail messages. Once you master the simple e-mail message and begin seeing the rewards, you might be tempted to get more sophisticated. That’s great. You can learn more about your customers’ interests by asking them more questions. Create a form with check boxes to gather specific information. Do they want Знаю how to make them work for you, so you can spend more time doing the work you love.

**Building Relationships Through Permission Marketing**

**Persuade consumers to raise their hands**

**to volunteer their attention.**

You tell consumers a little something about your company and its products, they tell you a little something about themselves, you tell them a little more—and over time, you create a mutually beneficial relationship. Permission marketing is marketing without interruptions.

**Getting started**

A customer will give you permission to send them e-mail messages if they know when in it for them—and you do.

You know your customers appreciate your farm’s products. Some know your harvest season as well as you do. Some are eager to learn more. Many want to feel the connection with the family that is growing their food. Permission marketing can make them feel like an ‘insider’—especially when your limited supply of delicious berries is ready for picking.

Create a simple slip that customers can use at your farm to give you their names and e-mail addresses. You can even create a free raffle for a weekly, monthly, or seasonal prize. Train your family and staff to remind customers of the opportunity to sign up for your e-mail list with each sale. Reassure customers that you never sell or rent your list, and that you want to be able to let them know first when it’s harvest time on the farm. Some customers may demur, but many will eagerly sign up. You now have their attention and permission to send them periodic e-mail messages. As Godin says:

**But that’s the beginning of the story, not the end.**

You have their attention into permission, permission into learning, and learning into trust. Then you can get customers to change their behavior.

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**Getting beyond yes**

Many customers are happy to give permission to send them e-mail messages. Once you master the simple e-mail message and begin seeing the rewards, you might be tempted to get more sophisticated. That’s great. You can learn more about your customers’ interests by asking them more questions. Create a form with check boxes to gather specific information. Do they want to hear more about your PYO crops? Farm events? Recipes? Keep the list short and sweet. You can then use these forms to find out what they want to hear about.

You can also add more sophisticated design elements to your e-mails, like your farm logo, pictures, and a professional layout. E-mail companies like Constant Contact allow you to improve the look of your e-mail newsletter with simple-to-use templates and to track the responses of your customers. You can learn who opens your e-mail and what they click on. Future e-mail messages can be tailored to these customers’ interests.

Carefully manage your e-mail list as it grows. It’s worth a lot—these are your best customers and it is far easier to get them to return to the farm than to get a new customer to stop by. Help turn your customers into ambassadors by making it easy for them to forward your messages to friends.

**Should I stop my mass-market advertising?**

**Permission marketing makes frequent advertising unattractive.**

It’s not spam…right?

By its definition permission marketing is not spam. But make sure the rules, regulations, and industry-guided practices are part of your e-mail program.

**Protect privacy.**

If you are sending an e-mail from your personal account, make sure to protect the privacy of your customers by putting their addresses into the ‘BCC’ address field. This stands for blind carbon copy and it means that they won’t see the other e-mail addresses on your list. Simply send the message to yourself and BCC the rest of your list. Alternatively, sign up for a reputable online e-mail service such as Constant Contact, which follows industry rules and regulations for bulk e-mail messages—and offers great data on customer response to your messages.

**Include reminders.**

Some customers will not remember that they signed up for your list. In all your e-mails be sure to include a friendly reminder that they signed up and that they can remove themselves from your list at any time. Again, companies like Constant Contact create permission reminders and facilitate address removals for you.

**Avoid suspicious subject lines.**

We’ve all grown
Online Stores

Do you need an online store? The answer depends partly on whether you are selling bales of hay or jars of jam! But the explosion of online sales has pushed the boundaries of what people expect to buy via the Internet. Do you want wild salmon from Alaska to arrive on your doorstep the day after it’s caught? If you have the money, there’s someone online happy to sell it to you.

As a local farmer, you need to decide what purpose an online store will serve. Are you looking to expand sales to local customers or gain new ones from all over the country? Are you hoping to grow online sales in order to cut back on market or festival sales, or are you looking for overall business growth? While there are unique technical requirements to creating an online store, the success or failure of an online store is very similar to a bricks and mortar store.

In this tip sheet we will discuss some of the pros and cons of online stores to help you decide if they make sense for your farm. It takes technical knowledge and skills to create and implement online stores, so be sure you understand how they can help your business before you invest time and money in them. Expect a somewhat steep learning curve and be prepared to hire professionals to help.

Features the skills which go into your products will build good will and sales

Benefits of an online store

Convenient for the customer

There’s no doubt that online retailing is exceptionally convenient for the customer, who can order a jug of syrup or a jar of jelly at any hour of the day or night and have it arrive a few days later. Your online store can easily satisfy the impulsive buying habits of today’s consumers.

Convenient for the farmer

Who wouldn’t want to wake up in the morning and find orders waiting to be filled? Some farmers create stores to reduce their travel off-farm, like Marian Wetzel of Sunny Acres Farm in Watertown, Massachusetts. “We started our online store so we can be on the farm more.”

Potential for growth

A successful store can increase income for your business and help you reduce other marketing venues. “We wanted to reduce our off-farm markets,” says Marian. “If we could sell more from our home base it would make a lot of sense. You have to pay a lot for a booth at a fair or festival.”

Challenges of an online store

Building the store

In the best scenario your increased sales will pay you back for the creation of your store. But there is a certain amount of sticker shock that happens when you first venture into online sales. Since you are unlikely to have the technical expertise to create a store yourself, you are going to have to find and evaluate someone who can help you. Even the most basic store will cost at least $1,000. If your primary market is a farmers market, that may seem high. But if you are doing craft shows or festivals you know you can easily spend that much on a booth fee and gas to get there—for only two days of selling!

Marketing the store

There is no ‘if you build it, they will come’ in the online world. Marketing to your existing customers is a good start, but not the only step. Online stores need online advertising and marketing programs. There are also unique technical requirements to getting people to find your store. Marian is undertaking a significant overhaul of her Web site and store with this in mind. “Online sales have been slower than expected,” says Marian. “Even though we have been online for years, we are just getting the hang of getting linked to other sites and getting good search engine placement. It will take time to see results.”

Fulfiling orders

While you know you are not L.L. Bean, your customers expect you to act like it. Items need to be well packaged and shipped promptly. Don’t allow daydreams of online sales profits obscure the reality of packaging and shipping your products. Be sure to thoroughly research your shipping requirements and costs before you get started so you don’t lose money under-charging for shipping. Make sure you have enough hands on deck to ship orders so your customers are not left hanging.

Balancing resources

Like most pieces of farm equipment, an online store is an expensive acquisition, but it can be very useful in the long term. Make sure you have carefully planned what you need to spend and that you have the resources to keep the store going for at least a year so you can measure its success.

Bringing it all together

Taken separately, Web sites, blogs, stores and e-mail newsletters are interesting activities with some potential. When they are well-integrated they can build good will and sales

Address book and later scale up when managing the list becomes too big of a burden and they know that it is a successful tool for their farm.

Collect Contacts. In order to use permission marketing as a tool, you first have to get permission. That means that people have to sign up for your e-mail newsletters and updates. They can sign up on your website or at your farm. You should also keep a sign-up sheet for your stall at farmers’ markets or festivals.

This material is produced by CISA (Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture) based upon work supported by USDA/CSREES under Award Number 2004-49200-02254.

Attractive images of your products can bring you new customers

Increase your sales. There are numerous examples of online businesses that are very successful at integrated online marketing and sales—and not just Amazon.com. Your blog should drive customers to your store, not just give them free entertainment. Your e-mail newsletter can tell thousands of readers that you are having a monthly sale and give them an easy path to a purchase in your online store. Your online store can offer a simple, efficient way to get a piece of the farm delivered to a customer across town or across the country. Understanding the power of these tools collectively will help you understand how to make them work for you, so you can spend more time doing the work you love.

Like most pieces of farm equipment, an online store is an expensive acquisition, but it can be very useful in the long term.

Technical Assistance

Getting Started:

Decide if your farm needs an online store. Some products are more appropriately sold online than others. As a general rule, value-added products (i.e. jam, yarn, etc.) can be sold online because they can be packaged and shipped directly. Fresh produce or perishable items can be sold online if it somehow increases the convenience of the shopper. For example, online payments for CSA memberships may be convenient to have online, but may not require an entire online store unless you also have other products you wish to sell. Farm products can also be pre-sold online and then available for pick-up. This will likely only be popular for hard-to-find items or bulk orders so that they can be ready to go before the customer comes around for pick-up. Be sure that you will have the time to be able to follow up with online orders in a timely fashion.

If you choose to create your own online store, do some research. There are many websites offering to help create online stores for individual websites. Some of them are more of a DIY-style, while others produce a standard “storefront.” Be sure that you understand all of the fees involved in this process. Some stores like this that have a “host” other than your website will charge monthly fees, transaction fees, and/or setup fees. They may also limit you to the number of products you can advertise or the number of transactions allowed per month. Be sure that you really understand what you are getting before making an agreement. If you plan to do a large amount of sales, it will likely pay off to have your own store set up by a designer. This will cost a lot more upfront, but will likely pay off over time with fewer monthly fees.

Accepting credit cards. When setting up your
“You should have a blog.” How many times have you thought this or had it suggested to you by a family member or customer? Internet marketing and sales can be an important part of increasing revenue for many small businesses. But do you really need a blog? The definitive answer is “maybe!”

According to a study by America Online and Roper Starch Worldwide, nearly half of Internet users say the medium is becoming a necessity, and almost three-quarters use it to make buying decisions. That’s a lot of potential. But can blogs work for your business? Only if they are part of your overall marketing plan, and if you have budgeted time and money for them.

In this tip sheet we will discuss some of the pros and cons of blogs to help you decide if they make sense for your farm. It takes technical knowledge and skills to create and implement blogs, so be sure you understand how they can help your business before you invest time and money in them.

Do I need a blog?

A blog is simply part of a Web site where an author’s entries are displayed in chronological order. Think of it as an online diary or notebook. Many bloggers use their blogs to chronicle the minutiae of their lives, their political opinions, favorite recipes, local news, or any other subject imaginable.

You can use a blog as a marketing tool. It gives people insight into the successes, challenges and joys of rural living and can connect them to your farm and help grow your sales. Today’s consumer often seeks out online information about a farm before committing to a visit or purchase. A blog can give potential customers a glimpse into life on your farm, your products, and—most importantly—you! Consumers admire the hard work and rural life of farmers, and they enjoy feeling a part of yours, even if only via a blog.

Benefits of blogs

Farmers are beginning to use blogs to show customers life on the farm. Marian Welch, of Justamere Tree Farm in Worthington, Massachusetts, started blogging in the summer of 2007. With a few months of entries under her belt she’s beginning to get more comfortable with the process. “I’m getting into a rhythm and doing about 2–3 entries a month,” says Marian. “I try to keep them short—I figure people aren’t going to want me to go on and on! Plus that’s how I am anyway.” She notes that many of her customers are surprised that she has a blog. “People look at me and go, ‘You have a blog?’ I tell them I know, it doesn’t sound like me!”

Barbara Parry of Foxfire Fiber and Designs in Shelburne, Massachusetts started blogging in spring 2007. Her photo-rich blog is full of details about life on her busy sheep farm. “I am not very computer savvy so I thought I would never be able to figure out how to do it,” says Barb. “But there are a number of services that make it easy. It’s been a nice tool to have. People feel like they have a more personal connection to my business and the farm.”

Marian and Barb understand that many people enjoy reading blog entries and that they are looking for images of your finished products and your raw materials help convey the value of your work straightforward, but you should be comfortable updating and maintaining your website before trying to undertake an online store.

This material is produced by CISA (Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture) based upon work supported by USDA/CSREES under Award Number 2004-49200-02254.

“Family farmers are the heart of this great country.

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

The Animal Welfare Approved program and food label promote the well-being of animals and the sustainability of high welfare, independent family farms. If you are a farmer, we invite you to get in touch with us about joining the free program.

Contact Lauren Riga at lauren@awionline.org or (703) 836-4300.
"useful" information—a recipe, a story, a connection to life on the farm. Both women have learned a number of valuable lessons about blogs:

User statistics can tell you a lot about your blog. Blog software offers a number of ways of analyzing your visitor patterns: how people are finding you, how long they are staying, are they subscribing to your blog and more. This data can show you how to adjust your blog and Web site to best match your customers’ interests.

Blog entries get picked up by search engines. “If I mention a festival that we are attending in our blog, we can see that people have come to us by searching for that event,” says Marian. “They get curious about us and spend time on our site.”

Recipes are a consistent attraction. “I try to make at least one entry per month a recipe because people love food,” says Marian.

Pictures are key. We’re visual creatures. Photographs illustrate your stories beautifully, and they don’t need to be professionally done. “Remembering to keep you camera handy all the time is a challenge,” says Barb. “But things don’t stand still on the farm and good pictures help tell your story.”

Contests can draw people to your blog. “We’ve been handing out our card at farmers markets. It has a nice picture on one side and information on the back to tell them how to go to our site and register for a free gift certificate,” says Marian. “We’re definitely going to do this every couple of months, as we get dozens of new people registered each time we do it.”

Challenges to blogs

Mastering the technology

Many farmers find it hard to make the time for anything computer-related, especially if they are not comfortable with the technology. The learning curve for blogging is not steep if you are already a computer user. But some farmers are literally back to square one. Look for local classes that you are having a monthly sale and give them a nice picture on one side and information on the back to tell them how to go to our site and register for a free gift certificate,” says Marian. “We’re definitely going to do this every couple of months, as we get dozens of new people registered each time we do it.”

Making the time and finding a balance

“Your busy season is when you have the most subject material, but don’t wait until that time to get things off the ground,” says Barb. “I started the blog because I wanted to share what was going on in lambing season since it takes over my life and I never answer e-mails. But that was a hard time to get started!”

Overcommitting is a common pitfall among new bloggers. Experienced by the process, some bloggers post very frequently, only to find that life on the farm reasserts itself and the blog gets abandoned. If you can only manage erratic entries, your readers (i.e. customers) will abandon you. Pace yourself. It is much better to post less frequent but more high quality entries than to be constantly apologizing in your blog for not posting for the last few months.

Keeping it fresh

This goes hand in hand with balance. If you are only planning to do two to three entries a month you will easily find a variety of things to talk about. And that keeps it fresh for your readers.

Staying positive

Blogging can be a very personal process. But if you are blogging about life on your farm remember that your blog is primarily a marketing tool, not a personal diary. Keep your blog positive, but realistic. While there will be moments of drama on your farm, everyone appreciates a happy ending. For example, turn the tale of weather-related crop problems from one of scarcity into one of gratitude. Don’t tell customers you are expecting a poor harvest—tell them that this year’s crop is going to be even more special, and that they should stop by soon to get some, as supplies are limited.

Bringing it all together

Taken separately, Web sites, blogs, stores and e-mail newsletters are interesting activities with some potential. When they are well-integrated they can increase your sales. There are numerous examples of online businesses that are very successful at integrated online marketing and sales—and not just Amazon.com. Your blog should drive customers to your store, not just give them free entertainment. Your e-mail newsletter can tell thousands of readers that you are having a monthly sale and give them an easy path to a purchase in your online store. Your online store can offer a simple, efficient way to get a piece of the farm delivered to a customer across town or across the country. Understand the power of these tools collectively will help you understand how to make them work for you, so you can spend more time doing the work you love.

Technical Assistance

Getting Started:

Find a web domain. There are many blog “hosts” that offer user-friendly templates ready for your personalization. The most popular of these sites are Blogger, Wordpress, and Typepad. Look around at other blogs and look to see who “hosts” them. Find a style that appeals to you and look into what that host has to offer. Best yet, most blogs are free and searchable—meaning that search engines will pick up on your blog. Some blog “hosts” do charge fees, though most don’t. There are, however, some fees involved in “domain mapping” or linking your blog directly to your farm website.

Link your blog to your website. Most blogs have the host’s name in their web address. For example, if you create a blog named “The Farm,” the web address might read, “http://thefarm.blog.com,” whereas your farm website address is “http://www.thefarm.com.” It can be confusing to give out two different web addresses, so many blog hosts offer “domain mapping” or the opportunity to change the domain (or web address) to match your farm’s web address and keep your blog at “http://www.thefarm.com/blog.”

Post regularly. Whether you post daily, weekly, or monthly, creating a rhythm to your entries will help maintain a reader-base. Your customers are interested in the day-to-day life of the farm and what you do, so your busiest time of the year will also likely be the peak of their interest.

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B99.9 Biodiesel


Fuel expected to be available Spring 2009.

Cloud Point= -15° Fahrenheit

Dr. Jesse Reich
888.574.1577
North Andover, MA
Thank you farmers, for all that you do.

From all the folks at Stonyfield Farm

Stonyfield.com
Throughout the country businesses are popping up which deliver organic food directly to customers. Usually an internet “store” or online pre-ordering system is the primary way buyers interact with the business. Of these services, “Organics to You”, is based in Portland, Oregon. The website is, appropriately enough, www.organicstoyou.org. It serves the Portland and Vancouver, Washington metropolitan area. A map of the area is divided into quarters, and each quarter is assigned a weekday for delivery: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday. You simply enter your zip code to discover your delivery day.

What you order online is one or more bins of seasonal local (and some non-local) fruit and/or vegetables. Everything is 100% organic. There is a large variety of bins you can order: from the “Bin for One” with 12 to 14 different fruits and veggies at $25 to the “Value Bin” with 17 to 20 difference varieties for $55. In between are the “Small Bin” of 14 to 16 varieties at $30, the “Large Bin” of 16 to 19 varieties at $45, and the “Kid’s Bin”, “Office Bin”, “Juicer Bin”, various sized “Fruit Bins” and a straight “Vegetable Bin”. For instance the Value Bin for the week of April 21st includes:

- 3-4 Pink Lady Apples
- 2 Granny Smith Apples
- 5-6 Anjou Pears
- 2 Tommy Atkins Mango
- 3 Ataulfo Mangos
- 1 lb. Tangerines
- 1 bunch Chives
- 1 bunch Mustard Greens
- 1 lb. Asparagus
- 3 lb. Potatoes
- 5-6 oz. Crimini Mushrooms
- 1 bunch Radish
- 1 lb. Snap Peas
- 1 bunch Spinach
- 2 bunch Carrots
- 4-5 oz. Salad Mix
- 1 Cucumber
- 1 lb. Rutabaga

Everything is locally raised except the mangos, tangerines, mustard greens, asparagus, snap peas, spinach, carrots, and cucumber. A statement on the website advises that: Produce may change, daily; as often as the weather changes, due to the fact the only thing constant is change, due to the fact the only thing constant is change, due to the fact the only thing constant is change, due to the fact the only thing constant is change. A “Frequently Asked Questions” (FAQ) page answers most questions about how it works.

On the website customers can learn more about the farms producing the food. A number of the farms are located on a map, with each farm’s location linked to a few paragraphs and perhaps a picture. For instance, Gathering Together Farm is number 7 on the map and clicking it gets you this message (along with a picture of the family):

- Salad Add-ons
  - 6-8 oz. Salad Mix
  - 1-2 Cucumbers
  - 1 lb. Tomatoes
  - 1 pkg. Romaine Hearts
  - 4-5 oz. bulk Spinach

- Kid Stuff Add-ons
  - 1 lb. Carrots
  - 5-6 Bananas
  - 7-8 oz. Raisins
  - 8 oz. Strawberries
  - 1-2 Avocado

- Fruit Add-ons
  - 5-6 Bananas
  - 4-5 Tangerines
  - 2-4 Asian Pears
  - 8 oz. Strawberries
  - 2 Grapefruit
  - 3-4 Kiwi

In addition, a wide variety of other foods can be added to a delivery ‘a la carte’. These include various breads, eggs, milk, butter, cheese, yogurt, hummus, tofu, soy and rice milk, chai, and coffee. They plan to offer beef, chicken and bison soon. The breads are baked locally, the dairy products are Organic Valley brand from local farms, and the other products are from West Coast companies, but not necessarily sourced from local farms.

A “Frequently Asked Questions” (FAQ) page answers most questions about how it works.

Along the Mary’s River, at the edge of the Coastal Range, Sally Brewer, John Eveland, Haylee (in picture), Joelene Jebbia and Rodrigo Garcia gather together to create their bountiful harvest. They manage approximately 30 acres of “small, odd shaped fields” to grow over 40 different varieties of vegetables. They have been doing this for 15 years, and profess to be “diversified to the point of Chaos”! They market their crops not only though grocery stores, but at their farmstand and farmer’s markets all over Oregon. They also maintain a 180-member subscription farm program. Please visit their website at www.gatheringtogetherfarm.com.
Summer, 2008

for more pictures of people who truly love being farmers.

Other such internet-based home delivery services for organic produce and more are:

http://www.diamondorganics.com/
http://www.boxedgreens.com/
http://www.doortodoorganic.com/
http://www.pioneerorganic.com/
http://www.planetorganics.com/
http://www.greenling.com/
http://www.seedbreeze.com/
http://www.organicdirect.com/
http://www.urbanorganic.com/
http://www.organicdirect.com/
http://www.greenling.com/
http://www.planetorganics.com/
http://www.doortodoororganics.com/
http://www.diamondorganics.com/

Organics to You

FAQs

We’ve gathered together a few questions that we hear from time to time. Take a look and see if your question is here. If you can’t find your answers here, give us a call at 503-236-6496.

Where does the produce come from?

This is one of the most important questions. Our Produce mostly comes Directly from Local area farms (link to farm pg.), so in buying direct from the farmer we are assuring that you get the freshest pro-
duce, also that the money is staying within the com-
munities we serve and helps in keeping small family farms operational. We also do get local produce and other produce, mostly during the off growing sea-
munities we serve and helps in keeping small family

How much does a bin serve? Is there a pre-
scribed weight?

This can vary based on how much you eat and how much you eat at home, things like that. There is

No Problem. Just let me know when you sign up or thru email or telephone (503-236-6496) at any time to make adjustments. You can also give suggestions of things you like, or it can be a surprise what we will switch out.

How much you eat at home, things like that. There is no prescribed weight for the bin. It varies each week due to what is in season and available. All the bins do get a certain number of produce items each week, to ensure a diverse menu for you to choose from.

Commitment?

What does being a member mean? Is there a pre-
commitment?

What if I’m not going to be home?

Well, we have it set up so you don’t need to be

Where do I pay?

There are a few ways to pay. You can pay in ad-
vance, by credit card or by mail. You also can pay

How do you deliver in my area?

We deliver all over the Portland metro area, includ-
ing most of Vancouver, WA. You can check out our
delivery map and type in your zip code to see your
delivery day.

http://www.farmfreshtoyou.com/
http://www.orlandoorganics.com/
http://www.urbanorganic.com/
http://www.organicdirect.com/
http://www.seabreezed.com/
http://www.greenling.com/
http://www.planetorganics.com/
http://www.doortodoororganics.com/
http://www.diamondorganics.com/

Do you deliver in my area?

It is as easy as 1,2,3. First find out if we

You are not locked in to any size or frequency.

If you did not go thru something in a week

What does being a member mean? Is there a pre-
commitment?

What if I’m not going to be home?

We deliver mostly local, organic products such as

1. What do I do if I need to skip a week for any rea-

2. What other Products do you deliver?

We deliver mostly local, organic products such as

1. What do I do if I need to skip a week for any rea-

2. What other Products do you deliver?

We deliver mostly local, organic products such as

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2. What other Products do you deliver?

We deliver mostly local, organic products such as

1. What do I do if I need to skip a week for any rea-

2. What other Products do you deliver?
Membership is just a term used to describe people who are already getting produce. There will soon be some discounts to local, businesses and shops. There is no commitment and no subscription. You can get one bin or 3 years worth.

What if I live in a secure building?

Well, what usually happens is that there is either a key or code that can get us in, or maybe an office/person to buzz us in, or maybe even a neighbor who can let us in. It usually works out.

Make Your Barn Fly & Mosquito Free
using Natural Pyrethrum with
INSECTAWAY’s
Automatic Overhead Control Systems

THE BEST INVENTION SINCE THE TAIL!

Keeping your animals free of biting insects is what our system was designed for, but limited range has always been a problem. The InsectAway System knocks down disease spreading flies in every corner of your barn. Watch vet bills go down and profits come up! Your livestock can eat, rest, and produce. You will notice an immediate healthy change with profitable results.

Once your InsectAway System is on the job, you’ll have the best pyrethrum working for you, 24 hours a day. 7 days a week. InsectAway is EPA approved and safe for all warm-blooded animals. Call us about your InsectAway System

100 % SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

NEW! ORGANIC PyGanic® ECII Crop Protection EC 1.4a and 5.0a
Also OMRI, EPA & USDA Approved

Pyrethrum has been used effectively to control insects for decades and is non-persistent, degrading rapidly in the environment. This rapid degradation of pyrethrum has resulted in limited known cases of insect resistance making it an excellent choice for the control of agricultural pests. From a toxicological viewpoint, pyrethrum has been extensively studied. It is low in acute toxicity to man and other vertebrate animals, is non-carcinogenic, causes no adverse reproductive affects and is non-mutagenic.

PyGanic® Crop Protection Products contain a new and unique form of pyrethrum and are listed by the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) for use in organic production. Until now, no other pyrethrum product has achieved this listing. Through proprietary technological advances PyGanic® has successfully developed a product that is compliant with all organic practices and maintains all the desirable attributes of pyrethrum-flush, rapid knockdown, kill and minimal environmental impact.

PyGanic® is effective in killing over 40 agricultural pests and is approved for use on over 200 crops and ornamentals. A few of the more important pests controlled by PyGanic® include: grassy winged sharpshooter, Colorado potato beetle, stink bug, aphids, thrips and loopers.

LEWIS POLLED HEREFORDS

We have a variety of Certified Organic, Purebred Hereford and Black Baldie cows and heifers for sale. High quality genetics, many are previous show winners. Also have grass-raised and grass-finished organic steers for sale. None of these animals have ever received grains and have proven they are outdoor winter-hardy and fast gainers on grass.

Contact:
Marco Turco, Manager 518-586-6357
or
TJ Benway, Herdsman
518-726-6483
Fax: 518-963-7799

SUMMERS, 2008

The Natural Farmer

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Creating Your Web Presence: A Primer

The growth of the number of websites has been phenomenal since 1990

Number of websites (1990 - 2008)

The growth of websites from year 1990 to 2008

The Natural Farmer

Summer, 2008

reprinted from Wikipedia.org with significant additions and modifications by Jack Kittredge

Although most readers of The Natural Farmer are familiar with websites, browsers, and search engines as at least occasional users, links and connecting our diverse family who still don’t have a space on MySpace, a face on FaceBook, or even a computer, and who write longhand letters when they want to communicate matters of substance.

In recognition of these benighted (or perhaps blessed?) readers, this primer starts from square one and assumes no previous knowledge of information technology.

A “website” is a collection of information about a particular topic or subject, stored on a computer but viewable on a distant computer when both are linked via electronic communications like telephone or cable systems. A website may contain many “pages”, each of which consists of information appropriate for a particular aspect or function of the site.

The most common way of linking those separate computers is a network called the “World Wide Web” (WWW) or hypertext (continually changing in response to user input). Hypertext can develop very complex and dynamic systems of linking and cross-referencing information. The most famous implementation of hypertext is, of course, the Web.

The web is really just a system of interlinked hypertext documents accessed via the Internet. With a Web “browser” (software resident on a user’s computer which enables the user to read and interpret web pages) a user views web pages that may contain text, images, videos, and other multimedia and navigates between them using hyperlinks. The navigation is possible because each web page has a distinct “Uniform Resource Locator” (URL). That URL is stored as part of the normally unseen information contained in a hyperlink.

Every URL on the Internet contains a hostname, which is a domain name assigned to a host computer that has a distinct IP address, “Nofa.org”, for instance, is a host name. The page “http://www.nofa.org/tn” is a particular page on the nofa.org website — the one dealing with The Natural Farmer.

The introductory “http://” tells the user’s computer to send a request to the hostname “nofa.org” using the “HyperText Transfer Protocol” system for communicating over the Internet. The request is sent by way of the communications port on the user’s computer that is connected to the Internet.

Viewing a web page on the World Wide Web normally begins either by typing the URL of the page into a browser, or by activating a hyperlink to that page or resource. The browser then initiates a series of communication messages, behind the scenes, in order to fetch and display the new information.

First, the server-name portion of the URL is resolved into an IP address using the global, distributed Internet database known as the “domain name system”, or DNS. This IP address is necessary to contact and send data packets to the web server. If you happen to know the IP address itself, you can type that in instead of the URL and get the same web page. The hostname portion of a URL is case insensitive (since DNS specifically ignores case); other parts are not required to be.

The browser then requests the resource by sending an HTTP request to the web server at that particular address. In the case of a typical web page, the text of the page is requested first and parsed immediately by the web browser, which will then make additional requests for images and any other files that form a part of the page. Statistics measuring a website’s popularity are usually based on the number of ‘page views’ or associated server ‘hits’, or file requests, which take place.

Having received the required files from the web server, the browser then renders the page onto the screen as specified by “markup language” — such as HyperText Markup Language (HTML) -- in which the page is written. Any images and other resources are incorporated to produce the on-screen web page that the user sees.

Most web pages will themselves contain hyperlinks to other related pages and perhaps to downloadable files, source documents, definitions and other web resources. Such a collection of useful, related resources, interconnected via hyperlinks, creates a “web” of information.

History of the Web

The underlying ideas of the Web can be traced as far back as 1980, when, at the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) in Switzerland, Tim Berners-Lee built a system containing many of the core ideas in today’s Web.

In March 1989, Berners-Lee wrote a proposal that referenced that system and described an even more elaborate information management system. He published a more formal proposal for the World Wide Web on November 12, 1990. The role model for that proposal was provided by a Dynatext markup language that CERN had licensed.

The Dynatext system was considered, however, too technically advanced, too expensive and with an inappropriate licensing policy for general High Energy Physics community use: a fee was required for accessing each document and for each time a document was used.

By Christmas 1990, Berners-Lee had built all the tools necessary for a working Web: the first web browser (which was a web editor as well), the first web server, and the first web pages which described the project itself.

On August 6, 1991, he posted a short summary of the World Wide Web project on the alt.hypertext newsgroup. This date also marked the debut of the Web as a publicly available service on the Internet.

Berners-Lee’s breakthrough was to marry hypertext to the Internet. In his book Weaving The Web, he explains that he had repeatedly suggested that a marriage between the two technologies was possible to members of both technical communities, but when no one took up his invitation, he finally tackled the project himself.

The World Wide Web had a number of advantages compared to other hypertext systems that were then available. The Web required only unidirectional...
links rather than bidirectional ones. This made it possible for someone to link to another resource without action by the owner of that resource. It also significantly reduced the difficulty of implementing web servers and browsers in comparison to earlier systems, but in turn presented the chronic problem of "link rot" (the changing of the location of a web page with the result that a link referencing it can no longer find it). Unlike predecessors such as HyperCard, the World Wide Web was nonproprietary, making it possible to develop servers and clients independently and to add extensions without licensing restrictions.

On April 30, 1993, CERN announced that the World Wide Web would be free to anyone, with no fees due. Coming two months after the announcement that the competing Gopher protocol was no longer free to use, this announcement produced a rapid shift away from Gopher and towards the Web.

Scholars generally agree, however, that the turning point for the World Wide Web began with the introduction of the Mosaic web browser in 1993, a graphical browser developed by a team at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA-UUC), led by Marc Andreessen. Funding for Mosaic came from the High-Performance Computing and Communications Initiative, a funding program initiated by then-Senator Al Gore’s High Performance Computing and Communication Act of 1991, also known as the Gore Bill. Prior to the release of Mosaic, graphics were not commonly mixed with text in webpages, and its popularity was less than older protocols in use over the Internet, such as Gopher and Wide Area Information Servers (WAIS). Mosaic’s graphical user interface allowed the Web to become, by far, the most popular Internet protocol.

Designing for the Web

Web design is the process of conceptualizing, planning, modeling, and delivering content via the Internet in a form suitable for interpretation and display by a web browser or other web-based "graphical user interface" (GUI).

The intent of web design is to create a website that presents content to the end user, usually in the form of web pages. Such elements as text, forms, and images can be placed on the page, as well as more complex items such as animations, videos, and sounds.

It is important to take the time to plan exactly what is needed in a particular website. This consists of thoroughly considering the audience or target market, as well as defining the purpose and deciding what content will be developed.

A purpose statement should consider what the website is designed to accomplish and what the users will get from it. Such a statement can help the rest of the planning process as the audience is identified and the content of the site is developed. Setting short and long term goals for the website will also help make the purpose clear and help plan for the future when expansion, modification, and improvement will take place. Goal-setting practices and measurable objectives can track the progress of the site and determine success.

Defining the audience is a key step in the website planning process. The audience is the group of people who are expected to visit your website – the market being targeted. These people will be viewing the website for a specific reason and it is important to know exactly what they are looking for when they visit the site. Taking into account the characteristics of the audience will enable your website to be more effective in delivering the desired content to them.

Collecting a list of the necessary content, then organizing it according to the audience’s needs, is a key step in website planning. In the process of gathering the content being offered, any items that do not support the defined purpose or accomplish target audience objectives should be removed. It is a good idea to test the content and purpose on a focus group and compare the offerings to what the audience needs. The next step is to organize the basic information structure by categorizing the content and organizing it according to user needs. Each category should be named with a concise and descriptive title that will become a link on the website. Planning for the value content ensures that the wants or needs of the target audience and the purpose of the site will be fulfilled.

The layout and interface of individual pages may be planned using a storyboard. In the process of storyboarding, a record is made of the description, purpose and title of each page in the site, and they are linked together according to the most effective and logical diagram type. Depending on the number of pages required for the website, documentation methods may include using pieces of paper and drawing lines to connect them, or creating the storyboard using computer software.

To be accessible, web pages and sites must conform to certain principles. Different browsers display information differently, and standards across various platforms are only slowly being developed. Popular browsers have a lifetime and may not be compatible with newer design innovations. Internet Explorer 6, for instance, although still popular, is old enough to not be compliant with newer graphic standards for web design. Also, Content Management Systems that allow changes to be made to web pages without the need for knowing a programming language are becoming more common. Many website incompatibilities go unnoticed by the designer and unreported by the users. The only way to be certain a website will work on a particular platform is to test it on that platform.

Since the designer has no control over several factors that the user will select, including the size of the browser window, the actual web browser used, the input devices used (mouse, touch screen, voice command, text, cell phone number pad, etc.) and the size and characteristics of available fonts, web design that produces consistent results for every user can be a challenge.

Some designers choose to control the appearance of the elements on the screen by using specific width designations. Whenever the text, images, and...
layout of a design do not change as the browser changes, this is referred to as a fixed width design. Proponents of fixed width design prefer control over the layout of a site and the precision placement of objects on the page.

Other designers choose a liquid design. A liquid design is one where the design moves to flow content into the whole screen, or a portion of the screen, no matter what the size of the browser window. Proponents of liquid design prefer greater compatibility and using the screen space available.

Depending on the purpose of the content, a web designer may decide to use either fixed or liquid layouts on a case-by-case basis. Both liquid and fixed design developers must make decisions about how the design should degrade on higher and lower screen resolutions. Sometimes the pragmatic choice is made to flow the design between a minimum and a maximum width.

Ideally the graphics and text of a web design should include a single style that flows throughout, to show consistency. The style should be professional, appealing and relevant. A problem with using lots of graphics on a page is that download times can be greatly lengthened, often irritating the user. This has become less of a problem as the Internet has evolved, with high-speed carriers and the use of vector graphics shortening load times.

Some web developers with a graphic arts background may pay more attention to how a page looks than considering other issues such as text that enables visitors to find the page via a search engine. As a result, designers can get into disputes where some want more 'pretty' graphics, and others want lots of 'ugly' keyword-rich text, bullet lists, and text links. One could argue that this is a false dichotomy due to the possibility that a web design and text links. Many web pages are created, they are typically linked together using a navigation menu composed of hyperlinks to the various URLs.

Web development has been one of the fastest growing industries in the world over the last 10 years. The growth of E-commerce has been phenomenal and more and more businesses are realizing that without an internet presence they are losing out on reaching potential customers for their goods and services.

The cost of web site development and hosting has dropped dramatically during the last 10 years. Tools and platforms have been created which make the process far simpler. Some of these are available for little or no charge. LAMP, for example, is an open source package which includes Linux as an operating system, Apache as a web server, MySQL as a database management system, and the programming languages Perl, Python, and PHP. There are also proprietary programs such as Microsoft’s FrontPage or Adobe’s Dreamweaver.

To place your order or receive additional information call or write:

info@reallpickles.com
(413) 863-9063
www.reallpickles.com
DQ Box 4C, Montague, MA 01351

Don't take it so hard!
SoPhTec Water Conditioning Systems solve your hard water problems without salt, electricity or chemicals.

- Controls hardness, calcium scale and corrosion.
- Removes existing scale.
- Helps control sulfur odor.
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- No maintenance or service.
- Use less soaps & detergents.
- Extends equipment life (such as water heater).
- Prevents scale buildup, clogging of pipes & equipment.
- Safe for soil, plant life & animals.

The SoPhTec water conditioning system makes hard water act like soft water.

Other applications: Farms, Greenhouses, Dairy’s & Irrigation Systems.

Works with city or well water.

SoPhTec is a cost effective, environmentally friendly alternative to a salt based softener.

Total system cost for the home is only $409 - shipping & handling included (continental US).

90 day money back guarantee & ten year warranty (residential system).

Conditioned water used for irrigation penetrates the soil and the plant cells better than unconditioned water. It significantly reduces water spotting on leaves and fruit. In greenhouse tests cuttings rooted more quickly and produced healthier plants. Crops such as cantaloupes and tomatoes have been shown to produce more and larger fruit.

To place your order or receive additional information call or write:

MagneTec • 949-548-7639 • Toll Free 1-877-854-SOFT (7638)
711 W 17th St., Bldg. F-3, Costa Mesa, CA 92627
email • magnetec@sbcglobal.net

REAL PICKLES
Naturally Fermented & Raw

NORTHEAST GROWN 100% ORGANIC

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

Sold in natural foods stores in the Northeast and We ship 1/2 & 1 gallon buckets! (Call or check our website for more information.)

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

SoPhTec Water Conditioning Systems solve your hard water problems without salt, electricity or chemicals.

- Controls hardness, calcium scale and corrosion.
- Removes existing scale.
- Helps control sulfur odor.
- Saves energy costs.
- No maintenance or service.
- Use less soaps & detergents.
- Extends equipment life (such as water heater).
- Prevents scale buildup, clogging of pipes & equipment.
- Safe for soil, plant life & animals.

The SoPhTec water conditioning system makes hard water act like soft water.

Other applications: Farms, Greenhouses, Dairy’s & Irrigation Systems.

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After the browser war (the competition for dominance in the web browser marketplace between Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator during the late 1990s subsided, and the dominant browsers became more compliant with the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), designers started turning toward CSS as an alternate means of laying out their pages. CSS proponents say that tables should be used only for tabular data, not for layout. All modern Web browsers support CSS with different degrees of limitations.

Adobe Flash (formerly Macromedia Flash) is a proprietary, robust graphics animation or application development program used to create and deliver dynamic content, media (such as sound and video), and interactive applications over the Web via the browser. It has become very popular and according to one study 98% of US Web users have the Flash Player installed.

Many graphic artists use Flash because it gives them exact control over every part of the design, and anything can be animated and generally “jazzed up”. Some application designers enjoy Flash because it lets them create applications that do not have to be refreshed or go to a new web page every time an action occurs. Another advantage is that Flash can use embedded fonts instead of the standard fonts installed on most computers.

There are many sites which forgo HTML entirely for Flash. Other sites may use Flash content combined with HTML. Flash may also be used to protect content from unauthorized duplication or searching.

Flash detractors claim that Flash websites tend to be poorly designed, and often use confusing and non-standard user-interfaces. Up until recently search engines have been unable to index Flash objects, which has prevented sites from having their contents easily found. This is because many search engine crawlers rely on text to index websites. It is possible to specify alternate content to be displayed for browsers that do not support Flash. Using alternate content also helps search engines to understand the page, and can result in much better visibility for the page.

Once a web site is completed, it must be “published” or uploaded to a server or computer on the internet in order to be viewable to the public. Once published, the web master may use a variety of techniques to increase the traffic, or hits, that the web site receives. This may include submitting the web site to a search engine such as Google or Yahoo, exchanging links with other web sites, creating affiliations with similar web sites, or even advertising on other appropriate sites.
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Local Foods Plymouth

by Jack Kittredge

Plymouth, New Hampshire, is about half way up the state. It’s north of the heavily populated border area along the Massachusetts line, north of the major city, Manchester, and of the capital, Concord. It is even north of most of the good farm country, nestled up in the foothills that begin the Green Mountains.

With fewer than 4000 permanent residents, Plymouth is also home to Plymouth State College— a school with a strong environmental reputation. As Sandra Jones, co-director of the Plymouth Area Renewable Energy Initiative (PAREI) puts it: “Plymouth is a special place. I’ve lived here since 1980 and see lots of people go off and travel, and then come back here. I think it’s the quality of life and the environment. A lot of us are graduates of Plymouth State College.”

But this is the land of cold winters and tall snows. For all their love of nature, people here take filling their woodsheds seriously.

Yet on a Thursday at the beginning of April, with several feet of snow still on the ground, dozens of farmers congregate downtown to deliver food to buyers who have ordered and paid for it online through a program called Local Foods Plymouth (LFP). The foods distributed include tomatoes, raw milk, eggs, beef, pork and emu meat, apples, pastries, maple syrup, cheese and bread. To all appearances the market is thriving!

Farmers had called or Emailed LFP by Monday morning what they would have available for Thursday afternoon’s distribution. The products and prices were listed online (at http://lfp.dacres.org/) and buyers ordered on a first-come first-served basis at the online store from Monday afternoon through midnight on Tuesday. The buyers paid with a credit card or a Paypal account. The farmers were notified of what they had sold on Wednesday, and were responsible for bringing it to the LFP table for distribution a half hour before the market opened on Thursday.

Originally the program was designed around the seasonal Thursday afternoon farmers market in Plymouth. That market was originally created by Carol Perkins of Longview Farms as a way to enable low income women to eat healthier by using WIC coupons. Since the USDA didn’t allow their use at farm stands, she got the Episcopal Church to sponsor the market.

“What we did at the farmers market,” said Melissa Greenawalt-Yelle, LFP coordinator, “is that we set up a booth, just like any other farm. Farmers deliver what they have harvested to the LFP and we put the milk and meat into coolers with ice packs. A lot of the farmers have their own table there, as well. When the LFP buyers show up it is just a matter of going to the cooler from each farm, packing up the products that buyer gets, putting them together and transferring them to the buyer. Volunteers help with this whole process. Often after picking up their order, buyers will proceed to check out what else is available at the market as well.”

But this winter (2007-2008) LFP decided to continue on a year-round basis. Many farmers had storage crops, animal products, or value added foods that were not subject to seasonal availability. And consumers especially craved local foods when they were scarce.

A local businessman, Mark Younger of the UPS Store, offered LFP space in his downtown storefront every other Tuesday while the Farmers Market was not operational. An additional lucky benefit was that Mark regularly receives Styrofoam coolers from a pharmaceutical rep customer and provides them to LFP to recycle at food distribution. A student volunteer has designed beautiful signs to label the coolers by farm both, to promote the farms and also to keep the food separate.

Purchasers could order by visiting the online store from Monday afternoon through Wednesday morning what they would have available for the next distribution. They said one way that you can reduce energy use is to reduce the amount of travel necessary for food to get to the plate. There were some people who were very conscious of that, and others who hadn’t thought much about it. I wasn’t all that tuned into the issue, but the purpose of these membership meetings is brainstorming and bringing good minds together. So the conversation started about how could we create a program that gets people to buy more local food?

“A woman named Abby Holmes was there,” Sandra continued, “with a couple of interns from D Acres, an organic farm about 25 miles away in Dorchester, NH. She said: ‘We have an idea! We think we could do some sort of on-line ordering. We could get farmers to report what it is they have for sale and list it on-line.’ That way they could only harvest what was sold. Our farmers market here in Plymouth is very small – maybe 6 or 8 vendors – and often they don’t sell everything they harvest, so there is a lot of waste.”

So from the farmers point of view it prevents waste, but from an energy standpoint it also prevents people from going from farm stand to farm stand to get what they want. That saves energy. So the farmers and the energy conscious consumers came together and within three weeks PAREI, with help from D Acres, had a grant proposal sent in to the New Hampshire Department of Agriculture to help set this up. The Department gave them $1000, and an early boost to get the idea organized.

Accurate record-keeping is of course essential to the success of LFP, and Melissa explained how they accomplished that: “There is a spreadsheet that we fill out to list the items available”, she says, “and we upload that to the site where it gets displayed in the store. The site also has pages introducing each farm. It allows farmers to benefit from sales via credit card, which most aren’t set up to take directly. The proceeds go into a Paypal account where we can draw the funds down as we need them. There is a small percent taken by Paypal for processing the credit card, of course. They provide a real service. We pay the farmers the first Thursday of the month for the past month’s sales.

At distribution,” she continued, “we have all the food order by farm on one list, and by buyer on another list. The lists break it down for what each farmer sold and what each buyer bought. Software produces all this -- you just enter in the dates and it keeps track of it all for you. That saves a lot of time, so we have more time for outreach, helping out with things. When the farmer brings in an order we check it off on the farmer list, and when the buyer picks up, we check that off on the buyer list.”

Although LFP is running without a farmers market during the winter, there really is a synergy between it and the farmers market during the summer. LFP emails and promotional work bring more people to the farmers market, and the convenience of distribution there, where farmers and buyers are coming anyway, makes for fewer trips and saved gasoline.

LFP actually sold less during the summer of 2007 than that of 2006. Melissa believes that was because more of their customers started going to the farmers market to make purchases. She points for evidence to the fact that the farmers also reported that sales at the market were a lot better in 2007.

Why is such a thriving market taking place in such an isolated location?

The idea for an online food buying service grew out of discussions in January of 2006 at membership meetings of PAREI. The group helps people install energy saving and producing devices like solar hot water heaters and solar space heaters. It tends to be a hands-on organization – not advocates or focusing on education, but getting practical things done. The membership meetings are that way too.

“We call them energy exchanges,” Sandra said. “People come together and talk. We were talking at one about how we can reduce our energy consumption as households. There were several people there who had an interest in eating locally. They said one way that you can reduce energy use is to reduce the amount of travel necessary for food to get to the plate. There were some people who were very conscious of that, and others who hadn’t thought much about it. I wasn’t all that tuned into the issue, but the purpose of these membership meetings is brainstorming and bringing good minds together. So the conversation started about how could we create a program that gets people to buy more local food?

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"We came up with this idea of creating a schedule”, Jones recalled. “We wanted to see something regular – farmers reporting on Sunday night or Monday morning what they had to sell, with us being able to report back to them by Wednesday morning what they had sold, and deliver it on Thursday. We wanted to keep the same schedule every week.

“Abby and Sam, an intern at D Acres, incorporated that system into a website. We ended up getting another Department of Agriculture grant for $3500 that summer to support the project. So we got $4500 in grants from year 1, plus a lot of volunteer time from the Energy Initiative and D Acres – probably $10,000 or $11,000 in volunteer time.”

In the second year, 2007, they got a larger grant from the Department of Agriculture -- $6900 – plus the buyers donated about $1000 to run the program. They also got about $3000 from private foundations around the area. At the end of the second year they had raised all their operating costs and had $1000 left to get started in 2008.

The winter market is brand new this year, but seems to have met with strong support.

“The response has been fantastic,” Melissa said. “The product selection is obviously more limited, but people have been amazed at what they are able to buy in the wintertime— raw milk, storage crops, meats, cheeses, hydroponic tomatoes, apples...”

Sandra agreed: “People are yearning for local produce in the winter, and prices are quite high. That is when local food can start competing! We have unplanted fields out there. All of our farmers will tell you they have land they are not using. We want all that to be planted, and sold, for local food. Right now New Hampshire provides 5% of its own food, and that is scary! If energy prices keep rising, and food prices keep pace, we’re going to be in a pickle.

“We consume about 400 gallons of oil each for our food”, she continued.

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Most of the LFP buyers are year round residents. Although not a major tourist destination like some of the nearby towns in the Lakes and White Mountain region, Plymouth does get some summer visitors who will stop off at the farmers market. But the group the LFP would like to reach out to for growth are the about 4000 students at Plymouth State College. A lot of them have off-campus apartments and do their own cooking. Melissa is planning to try to find ways to catch their attention, – possibly with something on YouTube!

One of the advantages of buying your food online, according to Sandra, is that you can go on at 9 o’clock at night when it is quiet. “You’re not at the supermarket trying to remember how many eggs you have left to figure out what food to buy. You place your order and you’re done. You don’t have to think about it again except to pick it up – which is fun. You end up buying extra stuff at the farmers market anyway!”

I talked with various buyers who were picking up their orders to see what appealed to them about the system.

Lee-Ann has been a buyer from the first year. “I’m not from here and it took me awhile to acclimate to the community,” she said. “But I started going to the farmers market and met the farmer at Currier Brook Farm. We home school and my boys have volunteered there a lot. They’re volunteering here today. They help Melissa get the order together. Last winter we spent a lot of time at D Acres. They’re an educational farm and have a lot of workshops. One of their main goals is keeping local farming going.

“My husband had an almost heart attack two years ago. That opened our eyes to the health of our family and learning more about how we could stay healthy. We were eating just like most typical Americans than. We would eat at McDonalds without a second thought. We weren’t really aware. So now it has become a part of our lives to seek better health for our family. Why do people buy this food? The number one thing I hear from buyer after buyer is that the food here tastes better!”

Dave Lewis retired to the region 13 years ago from New York. “What am I doing here? I’m picking up food,” he said. “I like to eat. I just started this year. I heard about it from friends. I’d like to do more local food. The taste is really good, it’s good for you, the energy issue is important, and I think we have a lot of loyalty to this region and would like to see it more independent. I don’t remember what I’m picking up, but Melissa has a list (laughs). We’re trying to do more in-season food. We live in Nova Scotia in the summer and go to the farmers market there, too.”

Jane Kellogg prefers using the online service even in the summer, when the farmers market is...
functioning. “You know what is available”, she pointed out. “You can plan your week’s shopping around it. You order Monday or Tuesday and you know what will be here, so you can plan accordingly. You get an Email message each week from Melissa with a link to the website. But she writes up the greatest little letter to everyone—its fun! She mentions what’s available, especially what’s new, gives recipes and ideas. It’s great!”

Todd Allison joined last year. “I use both this and the farmers market”, he said. “For something like tomatoes I’ll wait for the farmers market, but things like bread and eggs – things I think they might run out of – I’ll order ahead. I’m kind of a farmers market junkie! Local food is better. I used to be the director of a nature program and preached about local foods. So I have to practice it! I’ve tried markets all over the state. Plymouth’s used to be pretty poor, but it’s gotten better. Littleton is the best in the state, I think. They have 40 tables at least.”

Zak Brohinsky bought eggs, bacon and bread, packing them out on his bike. “I’m a first time buyer,” he said. “I heard about it from my professor, at the state college. He mentioned that there was a local PAREI meeting one night, so I went. I talked to Melissa and I signed up for the local foods program. I have an off-campus apartment. I talked to Melissa and I signed up for the local foods program. I have an off-campus apartment. I try to buy local when I can. This is the first super-local thing I’ve done since coming here. I think its important, not just to help the local farmers, but its better food, healthier. I love it. Plus I don’t like going to the big grocery stores. I’m majoring in environmental issues and find this exciting. I hope more younger people do it.

“I’m originally from Connecticut. I spent two years at the University of Connecticut and realized I didn’t want a big university any more. I picked Plymouth over a small college in Arizona. They were both environmentally friendly and had access to outdoor programs. I love hiking. What a better place to be than in the White Mountains?”

Melissa estimates that, in the summertime, 75% of the farms participating in the LFP also go to

photo by Jack Kittredge

Nathan Old, of Robie Farm, brings raw milk and various types of cheeses to the breakdown.

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Nathan Old, of Robie Farm, brings raw milk and various types of cheeses to the breakdown.
the farmers market. Some started going because they had to go because of the LFP - they have guaranteed sales already. They say “Ok, I know I made this much already, I might as well bring some more and sell it there.”

Almost half of the farms at the farmers market don’t participate in the LFP, however. Sandra believes that some of them just aren’t familiar with the LFP yet. “There is no risk involved – 95 to 96 percent of the purchase price goes to the farmer. Some weeks the farmers don’t have the staff to participate in the farmers market. But they can still do the LFP.”

Some local farms have farmstands, but there are only a few small CSAs in the area. “We are doing so much consumer education,” Sandra said, “that I don’t think we are competing with existing markets. I think we are expanding the market. Our goal is to sell everything that a farmer can produce in this area. There is so much demand that we think we can do that, and bring more farmers into the market. And they can farm more specifically for us. We don’t have much season extension stuff. Some farms have the harder greens, one farm last fall offered storage crops like potatoes, beets, carrots, onions, winter squash, corn meal, and dried beans. They sold everything they offered. Now they are talking about planting more storage crops this year for winter sales.”

On the day in early April when I visited the Local Foods Plymouth distribution, according to Melissa, they had their best winter day ever. “We have over thirty buyers and sold $898 worth of food from 11 farms,” she reported. “We have eggs, granola, bread, jam, apple butter, apples and apple slices, (Cortland, Macintosh, Northern Spy) pork, maple syrup, honey, emus, milk, hydroponic tomatoes, beef.”

She talked to the farmers and seemed to know what is going on in each operation. “The apples have a cold storage system that keeps them well into April,” she said, “but this is the last week that they are going to have apples. They have been switching over more to apple butter, applesauce, and things like that. People who are making syrup say this year there seems to be a high syrup content to the sap. Normally it takes 40 gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup. This year they can do it with 32!”

I interviewed some of the farmers as they brought in their products.

Dan Nelson, from Hobbit Hill Farm, grows hydroponic tomatoes. “This is our first year, so it has been a lot of work,” he admitted. “We have a regular 30 by 60 foot greenhouse with an outside wood-fired furnace. There are about 275 plants in there. It’s going real well and we’re quite happy with it. We believe it will work out economically.”

“The two things that go against you are electricity and heat. The heat we have pretty well taken care of. It’s an outside boiler which heats water which flows through the system. There is a backup system in case there is a problem. We figure about 24 cords will get us through the winter. I was buying it cut, then I bought some log length and I did my own cutting. Buying log length and then cutting it down is the most economical. I can get it for about $80 a cord, cut it to 2 foot lengths, and store it in another small hoop house. Once I throw in my gas for cutting I figure it costs me $100 a cord. We started up October first and will go through the end of May. It costs us $2400 for the winter, less than many people pay to heat their houses. Our coldest day was 20 below, and the greenhouse that night was 64 degrees! It is a double layer house with air blown between the layers.

“Getting enough light is a problem,” he continued. “We use electric lights, but we didn’t have enough this winter. We had 8 and we need 20. Electric is the biggest cost. This is all brand new to me. I grew up on a farm, but it was a poultry farm! We thought this was a neat thing to do, and we had a captured market in the winter months. Once the cold frames stop in November, you can’t buy local fresh produce here. We get $3.25 a pound for our tomatoes at LFP. We want to sell to restaurants, and we’re asking $1.75 to $3.00 at the restaurants. I got an order for 30 pounds from one of them today!”
Benny and Jeremiah, two home schooled kids, help Nathan Old deliver the raw milk and cheeses which have been order from his farm.

“We’ll shut down and cleanout at the end of May, and start seeding the middle of July. The variety is ‘Trust’. We’ll transplant them back into the house in September. I’m semi-retired and this is all I do. This was to keep us active and bring in a little money to pay taxes and insurance. The LFP has worked well for us. We’re pleased with it.”

Carol Friedrich, of Currier Brook Farm, sells pork at a USDA inspected plant so I can sell it here. It’s natural and is aged for about three months, and then a Manchego which isn’t quite ready yet. The Swaledale goes for $18 a pound, and the smoked Toma is $10 a pound. We make cheese three times a week while the milk is still fresh and warm. I’ve been doing this for a year. Lee and Betty Sue Robie own the farm, and I’m one of their adopted sons. I grew up in Kansas and have lived in this area for about four years. I met their son at college and came up with him to intern here and liked it.

“Raw milk is quite popular here, especially considering our rural nature. We sell about 30 gallons a day from our farm store. We have some people who come a couple of times a week to buy the raw milk. When we aren’t running it all right at the farm and make it all grass-fed. Right now we have to buy in grain. We haven’t figured out the math exactly, but I figure we could cut our herd in half and make the same living if we sold all our milk on the raw. We get $5 a gallon for raw, and bulk milk goes for right around $20 a hundredweight. That figures out at about $1.80 per gallon. We have to pay for the bottles and the bottling with the raw milk, so that cuts into the net

Nathan Old works at Robey’s farm, a dairy operation. “We make the cheese right on the farm,” he said.

“We make four types: Swaledale, which is a type of English cheddar, Toma, which is a semi-hard Italian cheese, then a smoked Toma which has a natural rind and is aged for about three months, and then a Manchego which isn’t quite ready yet. The Swaledale goes for $18 a pound, and the smoked Toma is $10 a pound. We make cheese three times a week while the milk is still fresh and warm. I’ve been doing this for a year. Lee and Betty Sue Robie own the farm, and I’m one of their adopted sons. I grew up in Kansas and have lived in this area for about four years. I met their son at college and came up with him to intern here and liked it.

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“We’re ‘all natural’ and we prefer that to organic. We want to be able to treat our cows if they get sick. Under organic regulations, if you use antibiotics you can’t ever bring that cow back on-stream. We feel if the milk tests antibiotic-free you should be able to sell it. We have 50 or 60 acres of grazing land. We should be able to support 30 or 40 cows on that. We’re working on setting up fencing and doing rotational grazing to make better use of our pastures. We seem to get most of our business from word of mouth. We do occasional ads but mostly our milk and beef and pork sell out as fast as we can produce them.”

Bill Erickson, of D Acres, brought bread, granola and eggs. “We try to raise food primarily for our own subsistence first,” he explained. “We feed all the interns and guests that come through before we try to sell any. We have five staff positions, plus two to twelve interns. The farm belonged to the director’s great aunt and uncle back in the 1940s. I’ve been there just over a year. I’m more or less focused on the annual and perennial food production, and the educational work that revolves around that. We grow over a hundred different species of perennials – hazelnuts, butternuts, pecans, hardy kiwi, blueberries, raspberries, peaches, apples, plums. We had a good apple year last year. They were blemished and we couldn’t sell them, but they make great cider and sauce. Peaches do well for us.

Peggy Hewes, of Riverside Emus, brought emu meat, emu eggs, pork and beef. “This is a wonderful idea,” she said. “It works really well – has really expanded our sales. We started participating last summer. This was a great alternative for us because we didn’t have the time to come and set up for the whole afternoon. When we knew exactly what our sales were we could come in and drop things off. We sell directly from our farm and I do a little market in our neighborhood in Groton. We sell some of our pork and beef in local stores and distributors. Our sausages are quite popular.

“Emu eggs make a nice quiche. One is equivalent to maybe 8 or 10 chicken eggs. You can bake with them like a regular egg, and if you blow it out and retain the shell it makes a great decoration. The birds lay every three or four nights between December and April. This is our first attempt to market fresh ones. Mostly we sell the ones that are blown out.

“We’ve been doing Emus for about 14 years. We’re still learning about them. For meat, you take an emu to market at about a year and a half. But we have a permanent breeding population that still has many of our original birds. I think they can live 30 or 40 years. The meat is prized as a low-fat source. But another product is emu oil, a therapeutic oil made from rendering emu fat. It is generally used topically, or for inflammation issues.”

Local Foods Plymouth is trying to make it easy for other communities to replicate something similar. Abby Holm, the original coordinator, is now working at a CSA in southern New Hampshire, but is in love with the project. She provides training for communities anywhere who want to do something similar. For $1000 they can get a package she calls ‘Local Foods Anywhere’. You get the detailed software LFP uses for ordering and tracking orders, plus a website with a host company which prides itself on hosting environmental projects and will work with you to help with the technical aspects. You also get the training you need to set up a program. According to Sandra, Abby said recently that several communities are applying for grants to emulate the LFP model, including one in Colorado. (Abby can be contacted at abigailholm@gmail.com.)

Todd Allison admits to being a farmers market junkie. He has shopped at them all over New Hampshire and says the LFP program has definitely improved the size and scope of the Plymouth farmers market.

Bill Erickson shows bread and eggs produced at D Acres. The farm primarily raises food for its educational programs and interns, but does sell some products at LFP.
They are even talking of setting up an online ordering system for local restaurants. It would be a little more complicated, because the farmers would be charging wholesale prices and may not want those made public, but that could be accomplished with a password system.
The Nuts and Bolts of Selling Online

compiled by Jack Kittredge

A few fundamental principles govern almost any online business. They are the same principles as you would need for any business, but the online nature of the transaction gives them a new twist.

Organization
Make it easy for your customers to find what they need. Think carefully about how to organize your products and give customers more than one way to find what they’re looking for. For example, you can provide links to different product categories, as well as a search function where customers can enter a product name. Make it easy for customers to retrace their steps if they get lost. List prices with the items, rather than requiring buyers to go to a separate page to find that information. The same rule applies to making available your company’s return and exchange policies, contact information, shipping charges and other information customers need before they complete purchases. Let customers know what the steps in a purchase will be so that they know what to expect.

Ease of Purchase
A shopping cart is a metaphor that has proven useful for online businesses. There are lots of cart software applications to choose among, many of which are free and open-source. Also, many hosting companies offer them as a part of their hosting service. Try a few trial sales with your cart to ensure it’s user-friendly and easy to understand. Paypal also has a cart application, if you choose to have that be a payment system you use.

But don’t forget telephone ordering! Some consumers still aren’t comfortable negotiating a site or giving their credit card information over the Internet. The capacity to receive orders by phone is very helpful to getting their business.

When a customer hits the Buy button, they don’t want to spend several minutes waiting for a response — or even worse, getting an error message. Make sure your software and servers are capable of handling whatever your customers throw at them. If you’re using a third-party service, this means ensuring they use adequate technology. If you’re building your own site from scratch, it means investing in the best possible software and hardware.

Fulfillment
Prompt order fulfillment is a facet of selling online that’s commonly neglected. Turnaround time is critical in keeping customers happy. Is someone minding the store when you go away for a week? Can you handle an unexpected influx of orders? Do you have the product, the containers, the labels, the shipping capacity?

Customer Service
Selling online is not that different from selling products in a traditional store. You need to provide good customer service. And don’t forget the personal touch! Customers are the lifeblood of your business and appreciate being remembered, both online and in real stores.

You will also need to think about how to keep your customers coming back. This can include special incentives for repeat customers, free gifts with purchases, or coupons to use on future purchases. A stagnant site often results in sales that dwindle. Keep updating your site, and add new content in addition to your products. Fresh content keeps customers coming back.

Promotion
Promotion is essential to online success. Depending on your products, search engines may deliver new customers to your site, but you may well have to list yourself with some of the services that promote organic products and local foods, like localharvest.org. Such sites can bring the early customers that you need to get up and running. One can advertise websites, of course, but that can be expensive and if your products are of high quality word of mouth will probably be your best advertisement.

Payment
Online stores can accept a variety of payment types: credit cards, electronic cash, purchase orders, or cash and checks sent via mail. Figure out what you will accept and make sure your host can handle the ones your customers are likely to use. For offline payments, such as cash and checks sent via mail or credit card numbers sent via fax, publish your mailing address and fax and phone numbers in an obvious place on your site.

Privacy Policy
If you are going to be accepting credit cards, it is wise to write a privacy policy that will protect you and provide your customers with trust in your site. Online customers deserve to know what you plan to do with the information you collect from them. Online merchants often make this information available in the form of a check to “NOFA Video Project” at the address above.

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

Please send me the circled videos. I enclose $15 for each in the form of a check to “NOFA Video Project” at the address above.

Kathy Morris
Suburban Garden
Bill MacKentley
NOFA Video Project, 411 Sheldon Rd., Barre, MA 01005
to do with the data you collect. Your privacy policy should cover the following topics.

The “we collect” statement describes what you collect from your users. This can include email addresses from sign-up forms, contact information, physical addresses, credit card or bank information, IP addresses, browser and operating system information, as well as other information that you may require your customers to enter.

You should state if you save, share, or sell your customers’ email addresses. Keep in mind that if you use a third-party ad service, merchant account, or service, the customer’s email address may be used in this transaction. You should state that you or a third party will use their information in order to place their order. Find out if the third party will retain the user’s information and, if so, what will be done with it. Be sure your policy covers this information as well.

On an e-commerce site, credit card information and physical addresses are used to process orders. You should also state what you will do with this information once an order has been processed. Do you retain their credit card numbers and addresses once an order has shipped? Will you sell or share this information with third parties?

If your site uses cookies, say so in your policy. Inform your users what information is collected with the cookie and what is done with the information once it has been collected. Since many companies that serve ads collect information on site visitors, you should also consider revealing your ad-server relationships.

Future use of any data collected should be covered as well. For example, if you process an order and save the customer’s address to send out a postcard on a new product, disclose this information too. This can include customer promotional emails or any reason that you might use their data in the future.

Your policy should also cover your site’s security. Mention any steps that you’ve taken to protect customer data from hackers. Also include your business contact information, including specific email addresses or phone numbers that visitors can use if they feel that your privacy policy has been broken.

Security

Although sending a credit card number over the Internet is extremely safe, customers still worry. Most online payment systems send credit card numbers and other sensitive information via encrypted connections. If your system does this, make sure customers know their information is absolutely secure.

One popular way to transmit credit card data securely over the Web is with the secure socket layer (SSL) protocol. It protects your customers’ sensitive information, including credit card and personal information, during online transactions. To use it, you (or your Web hosting provider) will need to use a Web server that supports SSL, and your customers’ Web browser must also support SSL (most, if not all, do). You’ll also need a digital certificate that identifies you as a legitimate business — these are available for a fee from companies such as VeriSign and Thawte, and many hosting providers will handle this for you for a small fee.

Credit Cards

To accept credit card transactions you’ll need either an online payment service or a merchant account. If you already have an account for your existing business, you might be able to use the same account to accept credit cards online. In other cases, your Web developer or hosting service can help you establish a merchant account with an online transaction-processing service.

Online Payment Services provide an attractive alternative to traditional payment methods for smaller operations. Unlike credit cards companies, services such as PayPal (<www.paypal.com>) and CheckFree (<www.checkfree.com>) don’t require businesses to have merchant accounts. These services make paying online quicker and more secure than sending paper checks or cash, since they use electronic funds transfer to settle transactions. These services have become especially popular among users of online auctions such as eBay, and many other online businesses now use these services as well. Before you sign up with a payment service, however, it’s important to know how it works and how to avoid potential problems.

Google Checkout (<checkout.google.com>) is another online payment processing service. Users store their credit or debit card and shipping information in a Google account and can thus purchase at participating stores at the click of a button. Google Checkout charges merchants 2.0% plus $0.20 per transaction.

Payment services use a relatively simple process to transfer money. Buyers and sellers set up their accounts by providing enough information — their real name, e-mail address, and credit card or checking account information — to verify their identities. To pay another member, a buyer enters the recipient’s e-mail address and the amount of the transaction; that amount is then debited to the recipient’s account. If the recipient isn’t a member of the payment service, they’ll get an e-mail directing them to the service, where they $20 for a foreign address
must complete a registration form to claim their funds. Members can access money in their accounts by transferring it into their bank accounts, or by requesting a check from the payment service.

Payment services charge a small fee to transfer funds, but these fees are often less than the recipient would pay for a credit card merchant account. In addition, payment services can be especially helpful for making small, repetitive payments, such as affiliate rewards, commissions, and customer rebates.

There are some significant drawbacks to payment services, however. Most services impose daily or weekly limits on the amount of money customers can send or receive; people who want to exceed those limits might be charged an additional fee for a “business account” or “premiere account.” Customers should also remember that these services aren’t banks — they’re not subject to strict banking regulations or protected by federal deposit insurance.

Most payment services provide less protection against fraud and abuse than credit card companies. Conversely, payment services are sometimes quick to freeze a customer’s account if they suspect fraud or other criminal activities — so quick, in fact, that customers have sometimes complained about having their accounts frozen for no apparent reason. Make sure you understand and accept a service’s dispute policy, limits on liability, fee structure, and other regulations before you sign up.

Merchant Accounts. If you’re serious about taking credit card payments online and expect to be doing a significant business that way, you’ll probably want to go with a merchant account service. Most banks offer merchant accounts — the problem is figuring out which one offers the best price, which is typically a percentage of each credit card order you submit. Here are just a few of the services currently out there.

- Gotmerchant.com
- Instabill.com
- MerchantWarehouse.com
- MonsiteMerchantAccount.com
- NorthAmericanBancard (nabancard.com)
- Total Merchant Services

Web Site Hosting Agreements
Once your Web site is developed and ready to be viewed by the outside world, it must be transferred to a server connected to the Internet. Most Web site owners decide to have a third-party hosting service make the site available, and the terms and conditions of such services is usually embodied in a Web Site Hosting Agreement. Although for small sites such agreements are largely standard, you should pay attention to it should things go wrong.

The key provisions for such agreements include:

- Scope of Services. The specific services provided by the hosting service should be precisely identified.
- Updates and Modifications. The mechanism and obligations of the hosting service to update and modify the site should be spelled out.
- Performance. The agreement should address various performance issues, including minimum performance criteria, uptime, server response time, problem response time, technical assistance, and remedies for system failure.
- Termination and Transfer. The Web site owner should have relative flexibility to terminate the agreement for any reason. Upon termination, the hosting service should be obligated to use reasonable efforts to transfer the site to a successor hosting service.
- Warranties. The Web site owner will want a number of warranties from the host provider, primarily dealing with performance and the technology provided by the hosting service.
- Liability. The liability for breach by the hosting service, such as potentially “lost” business due to site malfunction, should be addressed, although many providers attempt to limit their liability to the amount of fees paid to the provider under the agreement.

Online Credit Card Processors by William T Lasley,

by the percentage of your sales for a time period in the event of charge backs from customers. For example, a processor may hold 15% of sales for 6 months. If there are no disputed sales in that time period, you will be paid the withheld money.

- Payment Schedule -- When you will be paid for payments received by your processor. There are many ways you can be paid including direct deposit, check and sometimes even a deposit in your credit card account.

Terms to Know -

- Merchant Account -- The traditional way to accept credit and debit card payments. Opening a traditional merchant account usually involves a credit check, deposits and purchasing or leasing a terminal to process payments. If you are interested in opening a merchant account, start by contacting your local bank, then compare with other services you can find online.
- Transaction Fee -- The rates you will be charged each time you process a sale. Be sure to look for any hidden expenses that may not be obvious when checking rates. The fee may involve a percentage of the overall sale, a one time fee per sale, or both.
- Charge Back -- If a consumer contacts their credit card company to dispute a sale and the claim is found to be legitimate by the credit card company, you may be forced to pay the money back. To reduce your liability in charge backs, keep a shipping record/receipt stating where you shipped your merchandise for each sale. It’s also a good idea to only ship to the same address as the cardholder.
- Reserve -- Alternative processors may hold a percentage of your sales for a time period in the

Credit Card Processing Workflow

Customer

Web Server

CC processing code

Gateway

Clearinghouses (VisaNet, Nova, Paymentech, Global)

6.1 Customer Bank

6.2 Merchant Bank

7.1 Merchant Account

Many Hands Organic Farm
Julie Rawson & Jack Kittredge (978) 355-2853
Barre, MA, www.mhof.net, farm@mhof.net

Certified by Baystate Organic Certifiers

Summer, 2008 The Natural Farmer
Mel, now 70 years old, grew up in Collinsville, Connecticut where his father had a weekend and evening nursery.

“My father grew up on a farm and had done some market gardening in his teenage years,” Mel says, “and my mother was kind of a naturalist. So I had that nursery background, and worked in the family vegetable garden since I was 6 or 7 years old. You can say I was geared to go into biology.”

When it came time for Bristol to go to college he went to Harvard in, of course, biology. After his sophomore year he had an opportunity to accompany a researcher from the University museum in a visit to India, Pakistan and Nepal for a year and a half long bird study in 1957 and 1958.

“It was probably the most extraordinary experience of my life,” he recalls, “and fed my interest in Anthropology. When I came back I was torn whether to go to medical school or study botany. I finally opted for botany and went on to get a doctorate in ethnobotany at Harvard. After that I taught at the University of Hawaii for two years, but then left to go to Western Samoa where I collected plants and talked to people in about 250 villages about their use for medicine and food.”

During that time, however, Mel decided he wanted his own little place in the world of botany – not just going around taking notes about what other people were doing. He felt like reading, writing and lecturing were just recording life as lived by others and didn’t fulfill his sense of living a life of his own on this earth.

So in 1969 Bristol came to the little town of Sherman, Connecticut to start a nursery of his own. He found a fertile spot of 25 acres that was once a lakebed where the soil – a sandy loam with no stones in it – had washed down from the hills for thousands of years.

“It’s the best farmland in the county,” Mel states. Once he had the location, he set about starting a business.

“I realized I was going to start a nursery and needed a business name for it,” he recalls. “A lot of places locally are known as ‘Joe’s Place’ or ‘Bob’s Place.’ My name is Melvin Lee Bristol, but Melvin didn’t sound right in terms of publicity and I’m opposed to the use of nicknames in business names. So we decided to call the place Lee Bristol Nursery. From 1970 until 1985 years we were ‘Lee Bristol Nursery.’

“My name is Melvin Lee Bristol, but Melvin didn’t sound right in terms of publicity and I’m opposed to the use of nicknames in business names. So we decided to call the place Lee Bristol Nursery. From 1970 until 1985 years we were ‘Lee Bristol Nursery.‘

One of these working farms, less than 5 miles from the New York border, is that of Mel and Diana Bristol – Bloomingfields Farm.

Mel and Diana, his second wife, have been married for 25 years. Her passions are textiles – she is a spinner and weaver using wool from the farm’s flock of sheep – and gardening. She constructed a walled kitchen garden incorporating an elaborate brick maze that is full of her favorite edible and flowering plants.

But now she spends more time helping Mel with the online daylily business they have constructed at www.bloomingfieldsfarm.com. She does the order processing and accounting, as well as helping with the digging and shipping.

Mel with a week’s orders, ready to be shipped out.

In order to help the nursery business grow and pay the bills in the meantime, Mel started getting landscaping work. He carefully defined landscaping as designing and planting – no mowing, no weeding, no snowplowing, no maintenance. That worked out well. He got a good reputation and worked for some very high profile people who had homes nearby.

“There were two things that got me a little turned off on landscaping, however,” he says. “One, the customers were very needy. They wanted things done when they wanted them. I was growing a wide diversity of plants, but many could only be dug in spring and fall. So that affected our timing. Our slack time was in August!”

“The other,” he continues, “was that in the operation of the nursery – the trees, shrubs and evergreens – one always sold a ball of earth with every plant that went out of here. Year by year by year the terrain was lowered. We have inherited some pools and puddles in certain areas because we dug evergreens out of them. I understood that this was happening. You drive out of here with a ton of dirt on your pickup truck and it isn’t coming back!”

Bristol didn’t like selling his topsoil, and wanted to get landscaping out of his business mix.

“I decided perennial plants were a nice answer to that,” he says. “I would grow them, sell them without dirt, and let others make the landscaping decisions. That was 1985. I haven’t set foot on another person’s property for landscaping purposes since then! I was very happy to be out of landscaping, even though I earned more money in those days than I do today. People pay real money for landscaping.”

Some of the more important perennials Mel sold were daylilies. He had published a mail-order catalog of them since 1974. It was mimaформed in black and white and did not have photographs – just a few line drawings – but listed about 85 different varieties and sold them nationwide.

He first came across them in Hawaii where there was a huge, beautiful planting across from his house. He liked the color orange and was fascinated by the plants! When he looked up daylilies he found that they were, even back then, America’s favorite perennial flower. That remains true today.

“I saw a lot of landscape uses for them,” he explains. “My whole approach to landscaping is a problem-solving one. How can I make people happier on their property? Daylilies are good for landscapes because they never die. They always bear. They’re always getting better. They don’t require much attention. They don’t have disease problems. They don’t have general insect problems. A person doesn’t need to take care of them. They take care of themselves. After two or three years they choke out weeds pretty well.

“Daylilies make good ground covers,” Bristol continues, “because they are colorful for a long time. I have some that will bloom for 6 weeks. The average daylily blooms for about three weeks, even though each flower only lasts a day – thus the name – but there is a succession of buds coming along on the same flower stalk, or scape, so another will open tomorrow.

The one problem Mel has found with daylilies is deer. Deer love to eat the buds and the flowers. Prior to 1984 and 1985, he says, they didn’t have many deer where he is. But that has changed. Now they’re all over the place.

Many people mistake the roadside daylily with the commercial flowers. But the roadside daylily is a triploid and its pollen is sterile. It can’t be used in breeding. There were about 20 varieties of Hemerocallis from the cold parts of the far East – Korea, Japan, and China – which have given rise to the 55,000 varieties of daylilies we have now. They have been turned into a ‘hybrid swarm’ by hundreds of people who are active daylily hybridizers.

“Fifteen to sixteen thousand different varieties can be purchased tomorrow morning if you want,” he says. “We have about 350 varieties here!”

Bristol doesn’t know how big the daylily market really is. He has 400 to 500 separate orders a year, with some customers making several orders during the year. But, he says ruefully, once you have some daylilies you might need a few more the next year, and one more the following year, but after that there is a point where you say ‘I have my daylilies.’

There is a very large daylily society – the American Hemerocallis Society – that he says is essentially a collectors group. There are 10,000 or 11,000 members want to talk about their 100 or 200 varieties. Some have as many as 500 or 600 more, and a

Mel with a week’s orders, ready to be shipped out.

by Jack Kittredge

Marketing Daylilies Online

by Jack Kittredge

by Jack Kittredge

The Natural Farmer

Summer, 2008
**DUNG BEETLES** by Charles Walters. Dung beetles have always been nature’s greatest recyclers — a way, they were the first organic farmers. They were also the first cultivators of vegetable farming. As farmers we must use the many benefits of grassland based livestock production, dung beetles are given a solid plan of metabolizing their crucial role on farm and ranch. Charles Walters digs deep into modern science and ancient history, traditional folklore and the best practical advice to reverse the dying dung beetle, composting systems and recycling — all animals with fascinating and amazing creating. Anyone interested in organic forms of farming will be entertained finding the last of the dung beetles. Softcover, 240 pages.

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**FOUNTAINIONS OF NATURAL FARMING**

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**A happy man, Mel stands among his daylilies!**

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**Significant budget to expand their collection. There are meetings, contests, awards, regional daylily groups and a very nice journal.**

“But the truth is, Mel admits, “I’m more of a NOFA guy. I’m more of a farmer. I want to plant stuff out and watch it grow. I’m not oriented to being a collector.”

The number of daylily specialists in America -- people who Bristol thinks of as his competitors -- is about 400. That doesn’t count all the garden centers, Home Depots, Kmart stores and Wal-Marts – all of which sell daylilies. Of the 400 specialists, he estimates that three-quarters of them are retired people who have had an expensive hobby and now want to convert it into something that will pay for itself and maybe give them some retirement income. He feels most of them are biting off more than they understand!

Mel’s son is an economist and has told his father: ‘‘Da’’ you’re not a man at all. There is no way a niche is defined as 400 providers. A niche wants to be somewhere between 5 and a dozen providers.’’

Bristol says there are only 3 or 4 organic daylily producers he is aware of – one in Ohio, one on Martha’s Vineyard, and one in Vermont. He feels it is hard to tell whether being organic helps him with sales or not.

Mel grows daylily every day for a minimum of 24 months before it is sold. He has divided his 1 acre daylily field into quarters and thus has a crop in one section for this year, one in another for next year and one in a third area for 2009. He has buckwheat where he will put the 2010 crop. To keep all the varieties straight he settled on a unique 4 letter code for each variety many years ago. He labels the rows with them, and picks by those labels.

The whole daylily field is surrounded by plastic deer fence. Bristol has had outdoor dogs for many years, but has had to keep them confined so they wouldn’t wander at night. Once one forced an 18-wheeler to come to a complete stop by standing in the highway.
Mel and Diana in front of their house made of recycled barn lumber and old but fascinating salvage items.

and not moving. In lieu of dogs, he says the fence works fairly well. There are daylilies outside the fence, but they have no flowers because deer have eaten them.

Unless he is hybridizing, Mel doesn’t grow daylilies out from seed. He cuts larger plants apart and plants the sections. He says it makes the most sense to sell them from 24 to 30 months old: “The standard is to send out a plant with three fans. We can divide them into three parts and plant them as one fan plants, but they take longer to flower. Retail customers want their daylilies to flower quickly. Unless you have a daylily that has grown into its third summer, when you cut it apart into three-fan sections you’ll find it is difficult to get ones that are aesthetically acceptable to the customer. They look too small, like they don’t have enough roots. They are fine for propagation. The nurserymen will accept anything because they know it will grow. But the retail customer has

Bristol says they get orders for daylilies during every month except December. But they don’t ship out orders until it is appropriate for the area they are going to.

“When we acknowledge an order,” he says, “we tell you the day we are going to ship it. We never miss that date, and people like that. If somebody orders in February from Virginia, we tell them what day in April we are going to send it. It’s always a Monday. However, a Minnesota order will be held until the first Monday in May.”

Everything is dug to order. Nothing is sitting on a shelf. The sole exception is the special offer during the winter. That is a set of six popular but deeply discounted plants. If Mel gets an order for these during the winter from California, Texas or Florida, he’ll ship it.

“Unlike many perennials,” he explains, “you can dig daylilies throughout the growing season because they are rugged, sturdy plants. We don’t even moisten the roots when we ship. We actually try to dry them so they won’t grow mold in the shipping box. We add a little dry peat moss to the roots to ship them.”

“When we go through the orders planning to pick,” says Diana, “we take a tag off the wall with the correct variety initials on it for each daylily to be picked, and write the order number on it. Then we sort the tags by variety, dig exactly enough of each variety to match the tags, and assemble the orders. It’s very organized.”

She also keeps records of each order on a Quick-Books database. She uses that for farm sales taxes.

Bloomingfields Farm is open for visitors on Friday, Saturday and Sunday from Memorial Day until Labor Day. But they only take orders from visitors. They don’t fill orders on the spot. An incentive program, however, encourages on-the-spot orders by offering prompt free shipping.

Mel’s transition from a nursery doing local landscaping business to an internet-based mail-order company has been gradual. Although he offered mail order daylilies as early as 1975 via his catalog, he says a big boost in business came when they decided to accept credit cards.

“When we made the decision to go to Mastercard and Visa,” he recalls, “that was important. In our context, it showed up immediately in sales. People were making bigger orders. We went to that back in the mail-order days, long before online marketing required it.”

Bloomingfields Farm still does not have a shopping cart system with instant electronic card processing on their site. People send their order and credit card number over a secure system, but it operates much like an Email. When the farm gets the information, Diana enters the credit card numbers and sends them to the bank. That way the only processing fee they pay is the one the bank charges – roughly two and a half percent – and there is no credit card service acting as an intermediary.

Mel does not print a catalog or purchase print advertising anymore.

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Diana enters the credit card numbers and sends them to the bank. That way the only processing fee they pay is the one the bank charges – roughly two and a half percent – and there is no credit card service acting as an intermediary.

Mel does not print a catalog or purchase print advertising anymore.
“We do fully 95% of our sales from the website,” he says. “Most of our walk-in traffic now comes from the internet. We’re selling less and less locally, because of the deer around here.”

When the farm first went onto the internet Mel’s son designed the website. But Bristol has always had an interest in language and believes that people who are interested in language can work well with building a website.

“I caught the ball and ran with it,” he says, “and my son’s design is now unrecognizable. It turned out I enjoyed designing the site. I don’t use Front Page or one of those programs -- this is hand crafted. I use HTML as the design language. I’ve never looked at some of the newer languages, but what I’m doing works for us. We come up quickly when you search on Google for ‘daylilies’.

The site has hundreds of colorful pictures and offers gift certificates and special offers which are heavily discounted and displayed prominently on the website. There are over 4000 internal links for ease of navigation.

“The website changes every day, literally,” Mel says. “I was working on improving some pages on my ground cover plants this morning, and I hope to finish them tonight. Speaking of updating, you wouldn’t believe how terrible it was when we were a catalog nursery. We could be as long as 15 months behind in what we said on paper. Now, when some one comes in from the field and tells me Dark Star is sold out, I can update our site at lunch when I’m eating a sandwich. No printing bills, no mailing bills. It is a true revolution. And because of the fact that I have taken to the manipulations necessary to run the site, it is fairly enjoyable — whereas the catalog was always a terrible yoke around my neck.”

Bristol still has his microscopes from his academic days, and does a little dissecting and occasionally learns interesting things about daylilies. But that is not his primary interest.

“If we had a more significant income from this,” he muses, “or if I could figure out how to delegate better, I might spend more time doing that. But I never wanted to do anything else, really, than grow them. I haven’t pursued that route. It didn’t answer who I really was.”

He has, however, hybridized some new daylilies. To establish a new variety you breed it, describe it, name it, and pay $15 to the American Hemerocallis Society. This is common among specialists who want to create new and more attractive varieties. Many buyers are affluent collectors who want to get new varieties and are willing to pay well for them.

“The cheapest daylily out there is probably $3.50,” Mel says, “but there are varieties out there one hundred times as expensive. They are expensive only the first year, of course. Once it is introduced and more are bred, the price comes down. We have a lot of the older varieties here at Bloomingfields Farm. To get the new ones is costly. We like to buy at the $20 range, rather than the $350 range.”

“Cross pollinating is very easy,” he continues. “If I want to cross this flower to this one, I simply pick the one flower I will use as the male and brush the anther of its stamen against the stigma of the pistil. That places grains of pollen at the tip of the stigma, which will cause these pollen grains to grow down the style and fertilize the ovules at the bottom of the flower. I need to do it before 10:00 o’clock in the morning because the distance that little pollen tube has to grow is 5 or 6 inches. If it starts after 10:00 the tube won’t make it and the flower will fall off before it gets fertilized.”

Hybridizers breed for various traits, but common ones are spectacular beauty and a longer blooming season. The way that you have a longer blooming season is either to breed for a large number of buds, or work with the occasional daylily which is inde- terminate, meaning new buds will form on existing flower stalks. Those are called ‘bud builders’.

Bristol has been particularly interested in breeding varieties which can be used for creative landscaping.

“Interest in the possibilities for quite low day- lilies for use as ground covers,” he says. “Here are some of my hybrids. All the rest of the plants here are clones, but these are grown from seed. I know what their parents are, and it is my job during the next year to determine which of these I should allow to survive and propagate and get a name. I have some exciting ones coming along but they won’t be blooming for another year.”

Asked if he would like to expand the business if he could, Mel hesitates.

“I don’t know if I would expand if we had more business,” he finally says. “I shouldn’t expand, but horticulture has a way of begging to. It is easy to have new ideas and give yourself too much to do. But I’m 70 years old now, so maybe that’s up to my 5 children. We’re exploring that situation now, and we’re finding basically that the children don’t want to take over the daylily business. They worked here a little growing up, some more than others. One is a doctor, one a lawyer. Two are working in informa- tion systems and one is an industrial designer. So I don’t know exactly what is going to happen.

“There will be a conservation easement on the whole property so it can’t be developed,” he continues. “In an ideal world you would have a couple of kids who would like to come take over what you are doing. But our kids don’t see it that way. I’ve had a won- derful life for myself and continue to. It’s my dream to have one of the kids want to continue. But that’s not how it is. I have three grandkids. The older two I can’t see being interested. The third is six months old so maybe there is hope there!”

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Study Shows Soil Health a Complex Matter

by Brian Luton

Stones Throw Farm is a Northeast Organic Farming Association – Farmers Pledge producer. It grows specialty vegetables, small fruits, herbs, flowers, log grown mushrooms, and raises free range chickens and pigs in Zone 5b just south of Syracuse, New York in South Onondaga.

The pastures are used for pasture, compost, cover crops, mineral amendments and soil conservation. Grazing practices are a key component in our long-term soil health program and vegetable rotation. Our produce is marketed at the Central New York Regional Market and through our Growers Season CSA Program.

In 2006 we were awarded a Northeast SARE – Farmer / Grower Grant titled “Evaluated Farm Feasible Microbiological Applications and Soil Health Response”. Through this project we explored the efficacy of various management practices and soil applications on Soil Health Assessment scores as determined by the comprehensive sampling methodology developed by the Cornell Soil Health Program Work Team. The analysis was performed by the Cornell Soil Health Program Work Team and included baseline and annual sampling.

A major premise of these applications is the recognition that soil microorganisms are very important in agricultural soils and various types of composts and compost tea applications contribute positively to soil microbiological functions. Microbiological function is incredibly important as almost every chemical transformation taking place in soil involves active contributions from soil microorganisms. In particular, they play a key role in soil fertility as a result of their involvement in the nutrient cycling of carbon and nitrogen. Soil microorganisms are responsible for the decomposition of organic matter entering the soil and therefore in the recycling of nutrients in soil. Soil microorganisms are also involved in the diverse processes that dictate aggregate stability, water infiltration and holding capacity, and generally Soil Health.

It was our intention to use the sampling as a means to quantify and determine which applications had the most profound affects on soil health. From our experience it was clear that the integration of the components of the soil health assessment program results in a larger than the sum of its parts approach to soil health. It was our impression that two years of applications and sampling would be able to yield the data. It was our impression that two years of application of farm scale technologies and farm forest “waste” products, and are based upon locally available resources and infrastructure, and therefore in the recycling of nutrients in soil. Soil microorganisms are also involved in the diverse processes that dictate aggregate stability, water infiltration and holding capacity, and generally Soil Health.

One of many Cornell Soil Health Test Reports received and analyzed for this project and included as an example of the report format. At the top of each report you’ll find logistical information that identifies the farm, field, history, soil type, date sampled, etc. The report is then broken down into a number of different components. In the vertical field on the far left you’ll notice Physical, Biological, or Chemical headings. These headings reflect the three fundamental “spheres of influence” on soil function. In the first column from the left you’ll find the primary Indicators. These Indicators are grouped based upon the “sphere of influence” that they pertain to. Each Indicator is related to an individual analysis performed by the CSHPWT and together these analyses constitute a suite of tests that examine a soils influence” that they pertain to. Each Indicator is related to an individual analysis performed by the CSHPWT and together these analyses constitute a suite of tests that examine a soil’s health and soil building practices the rating system enables growers to easily identify areas in assessment of soil health and function that may need to be addressed. The Relative Rating column diagrammatically displays your soils percentile score in the context of all other soils in the database. The Rating was developed to allow easy interpretation of results and is color, and number coded (3 – High / 0 – Low). A higher rating represents a better indicator of soil function while a lower rating is indicative of a possible Constraint. The Constraint column reflects this and further assists the “farmer / grower” in assessing areas of soil health and function that may need to be addressed. The Relative Rating column diagrammatically displays your soils percentile score in the context of all other soils in the database. The bottom of the report your soils receives an Overall Quality Score and rating based upon an interpretation of all factors. It is important to note that the scoring system was developed not to rate one soil as “better” or “worse” than another but to enable growers to holistically evaluate their soils health. Using available knowledge of soil health and soil building practices the rating system enables growers to easily identify areas of constraint and develop a plan to address them. The comprehensive nature of the reports allows growers to evaluate the multitude of influences that affect soil health and ultimately crop growth. A complete description of the CSHPWT reports can be found on their website at http://www.hort.cornell.edu/soilhealth/
The following is a description of the Soil Health Analysis portion of our project and is intended to provide a glimpse of how our farm utilized the Soil Health Assessments and leads to a discussion of how we intend to adopt and adapt farming practices that are functional and sustainable.

**Soil Health Analysis**

The Soil Health Analysis completed by the Cornell Soil Health Program Work Team (CSHPWT) is a truly comprehensive and functional tool by which farmers can evaluate the implications of management practices on a diverse and interconnected array of soil health parameters. These soil health parameters are broken into three primary groups associated with soil health: Physical, Chemical, and Biological.

The CSHPWT has developed a sampling protocol that explores the soil’s relative health and condition based on a number of indicators. Each indicator is assigned a value, constraint, and a percentile score that takes into account assessments of similar agricultural soils across the state and/or region. Samples include an overall rating and percentile score.

This sampling methodology is far more comprehensive, complete, and functional than the standard soil chemical analysis that our farm has submitted in the past.

The ratings category of the sampling report forms is color coded in red, yellow, and green. This traffic light pattern color coding roughly indicates areas of constraint or sufficiency in terms of soil function.

We learned a number of things based upon the results from this sampling approach.

First and foremost we were able to easily identify areas of concern with respect to soil function. The ability to identify relative constraints on soil function allows us to develop a comprehensive management plan that will address those areas.

For instance, on our farm we have come to recognize that subsurface hardness that is likely the result of years of moldboard plowing and disking is a primary constraint that has not beenameliorated by our recent management practices. This came as a surprise because we are on fairly well drained ground and have always accustomedly considered good drainage to be an indicator of good subsurface conditions. Even though there were changes to other indicator areas associated with the sampling, there was no significant change to subsurface compactness levels based upon the applications and cover cropping involved in this project. This would suggest that our management practices must look towards additional changes to address this fundamental constraint on soil function.

Per our curiosity, we sampled an adjacent field with identical soil type that had been under vegetable production, and we hoped to address this by utilizing a deep till this spring or when field moisture conditions allow. We will also look to further reduce the usage of a rototiller and disc as a bed preparation tool. We will also attempt to design a rotation that incorporates deep rooted cover crops such as red clover on a semi-annual basis.

The mechanical fracturing of this subsurface layer that we hope to accomplish by utilizing a deep till must be also met by these other changes. We recognize that achieving true soil health will mean implementing an array of complimentary management decisions and cannot likely be achieved by any one practice in isolation. To this end, the CSHPWT sampling suite is a very functional tool for allowing farmers to assess needs and opportunities in soil health management.

**Adoption**

Based upon the findings of this project we will continue to incorporate amendments such as compost, high carbon compost and compost tea into our vegetable and cover crop rotation. We will do so with the knowledge that soil health improvements and maintenance is dependent upon a diversity of inputs and cultural practices.

Utilizing the CSHPWT Soil Health Assessment has enabled us to recognize soil assets and soil limitations. This knowledge can help to create a better more functional farm plan that accounts for the many factors influencing soil health.

We will utilize the direct experiences and observations gained from this project to make applications of soil amendments a functional sustainable part of our farming. This is a result of closely monitoring the impacts on time, resources, and the soil of various application procedures and amendment types.

The following general practices are what we have determined to be the most important considerations for utilization of soil amendments. By describing these in general terms it is believed the practices will be easily incorporated by farms with varied situations and resources.

- Apply Organic Matter and Microbial Stimulants as a matter of course.
- View Organic Matter and Microbial Stimulants not as short term fertility tools but long term soil building tools.
- Consider the economics and logistics of managing compost, mulch and other sources on a case-by-case basis.
- Explore farm and regional assets, such as Compost / Potential Compost Sources, wood chip sources.
- Consider the impact of applications on field traffic, adjust application procedures, equipment, and/or field layout to reduce field traffic associated with applications.
- Identify short term farm assets such as existing equipment and utilize this equipment when and where appropriate.
- Consider applications and tillage practices as a part of your rotation and identify windows of opportunity.
- Soil and/or cover cropped fields are best able to weather the impact of field traffic. Consider applying materials to cover cropped fields in the season before cash cropping. Applying materials in the presence of cash cropping may prove to be more economical; it would be feasible to utilize curser and less fully finished composts(s) for a larger and more economical equipment.
- Consider the limitations of amendments on overall soil health and make cultural changes manage, influence, or traffic, etc. that complement your amendment practices.
- Spend time on your hands and knees looking at this soil.
- Familiarize yourself with the Cornell Soil Health Program Work Team – Soil Health Assessments.
- Consider and sampling to identify key areas of limitation and adopt appropriate practices.

**Further information:**

A complete report for this project can be viewed at: [www.stonethrowfarm.biz](http://www.stonethrowfarm.biz)

Information pertaining to the Cornell Soil Health Program Work Team can be found at: [http://www.hort.cornell.edu/soilhealth/](http://www.hort.cornell.edu/soilhealth/)

**50** It should be noted that the CSHPWT is embarking on a project with the NY Farm Viability Institute in 2008 that will partially subsidize the cost of sampling for participating farmers.

Information on the Northeast SARE Program can be found at: [http://www.uvm.edu/~nesare](http://www.uvm.edu/~nesare)

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**Sweet Potatoes & Nitrogen Needs**

by Lori Schreier and James Warren

Fertile Fields Farm

After successfully growing a small crop of sweet potatoes in our sandy loam in southern west NH, we began to plan a larger crop for our local area’s market. While it is possible to grow sweet potatoes in many areas in New England, being quite near the Connecticut River gave us extra assurance of a longer frost-free season in the fall.

When reviewing the literature on sweet potatoes and nitrogen fertilizer application, we discovered a large variation in the recommendations. As organic growers we were seeking healthy sustainable practices so we developed a research project to examine different nitrogen application levels. With the help of Carl Majewski, ([UNH Cooperative Extension Cheshire County](http://www.coe.unh.edu/cheshire)), we wrote a SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education) grant proposal that turned our 2007 growing season into a meticulous research project. After consulting with Becky Grube ([UNH Cooperative Extension Durham](http://www.coe.unh.edu/durham)) about her variety and taste trials, we chose the short season variety, Beauregard for our experiment, which requires a length of time similar to winter squash, (90-100 days), has a good marketable yield, and good flavor.

Although we have the advantage of a frost protective micro-climate in fall, we also seem to get less rain than the surrounding area, and in the summer of 2007 we had a severe drought that showed its impact on our un-irrigated project. However, a few things still became clear. Even though we could not see the full effects of the fertilizer releases, it was obvious that even the test beds without any added soybean meal (our fertilizer of choice) showed amounts of slow release organic N and no added phosphorous grew fine crops of sweet potatoes. There was no statistically significant difference in yield on the beds with different levels of fertilizer (either minimal compost only or compost with 60 lbs. N/acre or 120 lbs. N/acre). Another finding was that the sweet potatoes grown on the driest, sandiest soil, while having the lower yields, gave the highest brix reading (test for sweetness) both before and after the curing process.

Not everyone has the room for these massive sprawling vines or the sandy loam that they prefer, but it became clear to us that sweet potatoes can be grown successfully in New England. With proper curing and storage conditions these hearty nutritious roots can make a valuable addition to your own and your customer’s tables.
Crops, Dairy, Livestock, Equine Program Coordinator
Field tour of test plots (28 mixtures), species identification, grazing management, fencing.

Grazing 101
Saturday, August 9: 8:00-9:30 am
Darrell L. Emmick, State Grazing Land Management Specialist, USDA – NRCS, NY
Robert DeClaue, NYSGLCI Area Grazing Lands Management Specialist
Grazing is an art based on science. In this presentation you will learn the core principles of forage growth patterns, plant-animal interaction, essential nutrient partitioning, and appropriate application of prescribed grazing in line with enterprise objectives, livestock behavior, dietary requirements, and natural resource potential & limitations.

Advanced Pastured Poultry Feeds and Feeding
Saturday, August 9: 10:00-11:30 am
James Hayes, Co-owner of Sap Bush Hollow Farm Janine will discuss nutrient requirements and both laying and broiler chickens. Procurement of feed stuffs will also be covered.

Finishing Meat Animals on Pasture
Saturday, August 9: 8:00-9:30 am
Sam Comstock, UVM Extension Livestock Specialist
Learn how animals’ requirements for nutrients change as they grow and approach finishing, and how these requirements relate to forage quality and quantity. This workshop will cover the type of animals you raise to your forage and to your markets.

Principles of Dairy Nutrition on Pasture
Saturday, August 9: 8:00-9:30 am
Kathy Soder, Animal Scientist, USDA-ARS P answers Systems & Watershed Management Research Unit
Learn how to improve nutrition of your dairy herd through pasture and herd management, and strategic supplementation. Topics to be included: supplementing cows to complement pasture quality and quantity, improved pasture management strategies, and research results on grazing behavior, supplementation, and pasture forage mixtures.

Behavior Based Animal Management
Saturday, August 9: 10:00-11:30 am
Darrell L. Emmick, State Grazing Land Management Specialist with USDA – NRCS in NY.
Darrell will discuss the principles of foraging behavior and diet selection and share some behavior-based management strategies.

Multi-species Grazing
Saturday, August 9: 1:00-2:30 pm
Topics will include: fencing & water for cows, goats, sheep, pigs & poultry; designs of chicken tractors, egg-mobiles & pig-erators; mixed group & leader follower grazing; how each type of animal grazes; pasture management & the best ways to manage pastures to keep livestock & pastures healthy & productive.

The Economic Benefits of Intensive Grazing
Saturday, August 9: 1:00-2:30 pm
Edward Malbry, Executive Director of the Northeast Organic Dairy Farmers Alliance
Faye Benson, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Cortland County

This workshop will show the economic benefits for livestock farmers of growing productive pasture and intensively grazing it.

The Grazing School was organized by Mass Grass, a state-wide grazing group of Massachusetts livestock farmers, leaders and educators from agricultural organizations, including UMass Extension and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. For more information about Mass Grass or the Grazing School workshops, visit www.massgrass.org, or contact Kate Rossiter, NOFA/MA Organic Dairy Coordinator, (413) 498-2721, or krossiter@nofamass.org.

Reminders:
Attention: Farmers and Crafters who would like to sell at Saturday’s Farmer’s Market. Sell your farm/craft products at our market on Saturday, from 3-6 pm. Cost is $20.00/space if registered, otherwise $40.00. Tables will be $15, or you can bring your own. You may sell raw product without liability insurance, but for processed goods, you must file a copy of your product liability insurance in advance. Sorry, this is a UMass stipulation. For more information, please contact Tricia Cooper at 617-558-3322 or triciaannecooper@gmail.com.

Please help us spread the word about the Summer Conference! Contact us at 978-355-2853 or nofa@nofamass.org if you would like us to send you registration forms to share with your neighbors or posters to hang in your community. Advertisers, exhibitors and sponsors help pay for the conference, so leads on that front are also welcome.

Apply for Farming Education Funds: NOFA offers registration funding for adults and teens. Apply early as funds are granted on a first come first served basis. Contact Deb Pouech, 860-684-0551, npo@herbsandhoney.com for more information about this and other ways to save on registration.

See you soon!!!
A Method for Making Sharp, Distinct Mounded Raised Beds with Hand Tools Only

by Rob Freeman

A problem that hand tool farmers have faced for years is how to actually deal with Mother Earth, since we have decided not to crush and beat and chop and cut her into submission with roaring machines, such as plow disks and harrows attached to monstrously tractors. It is an existential, philosophical crisis that one faces when confronted with the brutal equations of Energy Returned on Energy Invested (EROEI) and the frightening fact that on average it takes 10 calories of oil to make one calorie of food.

Stricken with the reality of one’s existence depending on oil wells, you find yourself looking at stumpy, clumpy sod, grass clinging desperately to soil for very life, for it’s own place in the sun. And here you are, with a shovel and a wheelbarrow, determined to separate the patches of grass and their root-clumps from the life giving soil, so you can colonize a piece of God’s Green Earth for the use of Man.

It takes determination and patience and persistence above all to be a principled hand tool farmer. The one allowable exception to the hand tool rule is that you can use a pickup truck to bring manure to your farm. But no machines should ever tread on your growing spaces, not even your feet if possible. Why? The first reason is that machines crush the soil structure and destroy the microbial soil web. Soils under mechanized cultivation become homogenized, and seem to dry out quicker and wear out more quickly, requiring more frequent amendments. The second reason is that machines require up-front investment and continuous fueling and maintenance, driving overproduction and “biting off more than you can chew.” Thus you have to sell X amount of your harvest just to break even, and the existence of the Industrial business farmer depends on, of all things, the price of fuel! The sorry history of business farming has millions of sad tales of debt, ruin and even suicide of the farmer depending on, of all things, the price of fuel!

The ethic of hand tool farming is to reverse these economics – to minimize expense, to completely self capitalize, to tap into the waste stream for soil and fertilizer (e.g. horse manure and spoiled hay of local horse farms), to feed oneself and one’s family before thinking of selling any of the harvest, and to enjoy what you are doing without the pressure of having to sell X amount of the harvest just to break even. Ultimately the goal of the hand tool farming movement is to set the example and popularize our model of food production creating an existential, philosophical crisis that one faces when confronted with the brutal equations of Energy Returned on Energy Invested (EROEI) and the frightening fact that on average it takes 10 calories of oil to make one calorie of food. The trick is, of course, the dryer drum. The dryer drum acts as a “mold.” Soil is interesting stuff; it’s certainly a solid, but in some ways it can act like a liquid or at least a gel. If you just try to mound it with a shovel, it won’t pile up very high, or very neatly. But if you pile it up inside a dryer drum, when you pull the drum off it does keep a lot of its height and a lot of its shape – a lot more than without using a mold.

Then you take the dryer drum and pull it off, leaving a mound of sifted dirt. You can repeat this procedure down a row, so you have a straight line of mounds of sifted dirt with cleared land around it, so you have a rectangle about 2.5 feet wide and as long as you please. Then take a rake and rake the mounds together, and flatten the whole thing out just a little bit. Now you have a beautiful mounded raised bed!

Then clear land and sift more soil in the area around the dryer drum to give it some space on both sides, and to start advancing clearing land down the row. In my case I have multiple dryer drums so I filled a second one with sifted soil next to the first one.

The dryer drum molded raised bed will be easy to work with. It’s borders will be clear, and you will be able to reach into it without having to step on the growing space. The soil will be loose so weeds will pull out easy, and root crops will be able to sink down. The only disadvantage to this design is that it is time consuming and requires persistence. But the bulk of the work is the first time in building it, and you’ll have years of great yields with minimal maintenance and minimal expense. If anyone reading this feels discouraged at the thought of colonizing a piece of God’s Green earth with mere hand tools, or if you need a dryer drum, drop me a line at freeez14@netzero.net.

This is the finished product – two rows, one planted with onions and mulched with hay.
Inside Organics

IFOAM’s Drive to Ditch Its Basic Standards Stirs Up A Global Fight Over Organic Values

by Roger Blobaum


The organic community’s market expansion vs. organic values debate has heated up worldwide over a determined effort by the International Federation of Organic Movements (IFOAM) to ditch the basic standards developed over 30 years as the gold standard for organic.

The proposal to replace the IFOAM basic standards with a Benchmark for Standards was hit hard by IFOAM members and organic stakeholder critics from 32 countries in comments filed early last summer. Alarmed reviewers contended the proposed benchmark blurs the difference between organic and conventional, fails to meet consumer expectations, and threatens to turn global standard setting into a race to the bottom.

The response is reminiscent of the flood of comments in 1998 that forced the U.S. Department of Agriculture to withdraw its proposed organic rule and rewrite it. First round comments submitted to IFOAM by 72 organizations and individuals cover more than 170 pages and, with few exceptions, strongly oppose the benchmark proposal. The opponents include respected U.S. institutions, organizations, and organic community leaders.

The push by trade expansion proponents inside IFOAM to ditch the basic standards went largely unnoticed here at first. Lack of attention was due to the high level of confidence built over many years that IFOAM could always be counted on to defend organic values and that it was a trusted caretaker of the standards developed over many years by the global organic community.

If this were less serious it probably would be written off as more quixotic IFOAM politics. But it threatens to undermine the global organic sector’s credibility in defining and measuring the true impact the basic standards have on global standard setting. Both the European Union’s organic regulations and the CODEX organic guidelines reflect the high level of confidence given by the basic standards. They are valued by governments and the organic community alike as a model for standards development in countries with emerging organic sectors.

What would it take to be certified organic under IFOAM’s proposed Benchmark for Standards? Apparently, not much. That is the view expressed by many concerned IFOAM members and organic stakeholders.

Strong Opposition

One of the U.S. heavyweights submitting comments was the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), which operates the largest USDA-accredited state government certification program. WSDA was most disappointed by the proposed benchmark’s failure to draw a clear line between organic and conventional agriculture. Specifically, it noted, the proposal lacks a required conversion period, allows synthetic fertilizers, fails to prohibit many toxic pesticides, allows certified organic crops to be produced in countries where government standards, and threatens to turn global standard setting into a race to the bottom.

A long list of issues was submitted by Jim Riddle, past chair of the National Organic Standards Board. In addition to those raised by WSDA, Riddle stated that the proposed benchmark would allow animals to be rotated between organic and conventional management with no restrictions, allow the use of cloned animals or their progeny, and eliminate recordkeeping requirements needed to document compliance during conversion and split production.

Annie Kirschenschmidt, former member of the IFOAM world board, urged IFOAM to abandon its benchmark campaign. She praised appreciation for IFOAM’s efforts to create more market access and to grow organic worldwide. “However, to approach accessibility through reducing standards to the lowest common denominator is a weak, unworkable approach,” she stated. “It does not serve IFOAM or the organic world we envision.”

With rampant organic fraud, global warming, depletion of fossil fuels, and other pressing problems, she noted, organic is in a critical period when strong leadership from IFOAM is needed. “Joining the race to the ‘organic standards bottom,’” she contended, “will not fulfill that need . . .”

Brian Baker, organic materials expert and former IFOAM standards committee member, contended IFOAM’s attempt to define organic by referencing the principles of organic agriculture is flawed. Baker, like many others, noted that the proposed benchmark fails to clearly distinguish between organic and non-organic systems. “The benchmark document presented,” he added, “makes it appear as if there is very little difference between the two.”

The IOAS World Board contends the benchmark initiative implements a motion adopted by its members in 2005 in Adelaide, Australia. However several critics, including the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI), contend the motion was changed by board members after the Adelaide meeting to make market access the dominant priority and to downplay organic integrity and consumer expectations.

“OMRI protests the unconstitutional revision of the motion . . . as amended by the motion of the Soil Association and the Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA),” the IFOAM member stated. “The Standards Committee should prepare a draft that is based on the motion that was actually approved . . .”

‘Race to the Bottom’ Claim Denied

IFOAM is defensive about claims that the benchmark proposal would undermine organic integrity and lead to a “race to the bottom.” The benchmark approach, it asserted, would simultaneously facilitate trade, accommodate all serious organic certification bodies, and uphold the integrity of organic agriculture.

Big losers if the proposed benchmark is adopted will be the more than 40 certifiers accredited by the International Organic Accreditation Service (IOAS) to the IFOAM basic standards. These Accredited Certified Bodies (ACBs) operate in more than 75 countries, harmonize trade globally through a multilateral agreement (MLA), and certify much of the organic food moving in world trade.

Biokontroll, a Hungarian ACB, complained that IFOAM’s focus seems to be on finding the minimum common level of national regulations. “We think this approach is lacking the basic organic values and considerations that are important for the consumer,” the Biocontrol statement said. “In this way we do not see the relevance of accreditation and the MLA signed by the ACBs that was based on the trust in each other’s high-quality work.”

The IOAS also urged IFOAM to abandon its benchmark proposal. It noted that the basic standards are a reference point for policymakers, standards setters throughout the world, protect organic production from the influence of special interests, and help ensure that regulatory standards remain true to the heart of the organic movement. If approved, it noted in its comments, most, if not all, government standards would be higher than the IFOAM benchmarks.

“Governments and others will be able to justify practices that have never before been acceptable in organic agriculture on the basis that they are permitted by the IFOAM Benchmark for Standards,” the IOAS stated. “Organic agriculture may well be more widespread as a result, but will it be principled?”

NOC Calls Proposal ‘Wrong-Headed’

After IFOAM failed to accept most changes proposed in the first round, the National Organic Coalition (NOC) weighed in with comments in the second and final round. NOC contended the benchmark will open the organic system to greater inconsistencies of interpretation, lead to additional reciprocity confusion, spark consumer backlash, and slow growth of the organic market. “While we appreciate the intent of this revision process,” NOC noted, “we believe this approach is wrong-headed and will have extremely negative consequences for organic integrity around the world.”

Several influential U.S. consumer organizations banded together on the IFOAM board, including ORGANIC, a coalition of scientists, food and water watch, and National Cooperative Grocers Association.

The cutoff date for stakeholder participation in this process has passed and further action is limited to IFOAM board members only. A final decision is expected at the 2008 IFOAM General Assembly in June in Modena, Italy.

Midwest organic farmers may be tempted to shrug and say, “Well, it’s fine some are concerned about IFOAM and its global standards but that really doesn’t involve me because the NOP guarantees our standards”. Certifiers active in the region, including ICS and OCIA, would disagree because of concern that these proposals could lead to a “race to the bottom.” The benchmark standard will ease pressure on government standard setters everywhere and lead to a race to the bottom.

Farmers producing organic soybeans and grains would soon be up against even cheaper imports produced in countries where government standards, no longer under pressure from the private organic sector to meet IFOAM’s 30-year-old standards, are lowered to gain export market access. And, finally, the consumers who support organic farmers and high standards, what about them? As a defender of consumer expectations like the Organic Consumers Association has warned in its comments, “When the rapid entry of powerful corporate interests into the organic market is forcing a race to the bottom, this search by IFOAM for the lowest common denominator is irresponsible . . .”

The only option left to non-IFOAM members opposing the proposed benchmark is to appeal directly to OMRI, MOSA, OCIA, Equal Exchange, the Organic Consumers Association, and other IFOAM members eligible to vote on the proposal and on IFOAM world board candidates. The time has come to ditch this proposal once and for all. And it also might be a good time to think about ditching the IFOAM board as well. (For a list of IFOAM members, signing off included the Center for Food Safety, Beyond Pesticides, MOSES, Union of Concerned Scientists, Food and Water Watch, and National Cooperative Grocers Association.

Roger Blobaum is an agricultural consultant providing professional services to organic and sustainable agriculture organizations and institutions. Comments on this analysis can be directed to Roger Blobaum at rjblobaum@gmail.com

Inside Organics
Syndrome offers both and, in my humble opinion, is the gold standard guide for regaining health and well-being for everyone who suffers from any chronic condition -- no matter how it manifests.

Dr. Natasha Campbell-McBride and her husband, Peter, were told 13 or so years ago that then 3 year old son Chandler fit into an autistic spectrum diagnosis. They became proponents of PEAT, Parents for the Early Intervention of Autism in Children and engaged in Intensive Behavioral Intervention Program, ABA to help their son. Although immersively helpful, they soon realized that behavioral modification was not enough so she returned to University pursuing a postgraduate degree in Human Nutrition. She studied and experimented with various diets and supplements, finally finding the ones that allowed her child to recover. He is now a healthy teenager enjoying his life.

With the understanding that an “autistic child needs very special nutritional management, a major part of their gut is sterile and the first exposal to the micro flora that will establish in their gut comes from the micro flora in the mother’s vagina. The same population usually dominates in all the areas of the body, so if she has abnormal gut flora -- or in some cases if the father has abnormal gut flora -- it is passed on to the baby. Even nursing by a mother with abnormal vaginal flora can lead to the establishment of a balanced flora because of the toxins in the breast milk. Formulas except those in Nourishing Traditions, are advised at all as never establish a healthy gut.

The interior of the gut is the size of a tennis court and is covered with about 4 and 1/2 lbs of 500 species of bacteria, viruses and yeasts. Wonderful life-supporting “probiotic” strains of bacteria, beneficial viruses and yeasts exist with some of the most virulent and pathogenic strains of each of these types of organisms. As long as the beneficial types are in abundance, the others do not cause harm.

Unfortunately, the beneficial strains are more susceptible to antibiotics, birth control pills, steroids, pharmaceutical medicines, environmental toxins, the Standard American Diet and stress. When they die off, the virulent strains of bacteria, viruses and yeasts come over causing the demise of the enterocytes, the cells that line the gut wall. This leads to leaky gut, the condition that allows:

1) the development of food allergies as now partially digested foods can enter the bloodstream becoming allergens.
2) yeast, viruses and yeasts to travel over to the brain -- causing the demise of the enterocytes, the cells that line the gut wall.

Leaky Gut is a term of art that has been defined in several ways. Natasha presents this information in a way that will appeal to both lay folks and health care practition- ers. One of the reviews on the back states, “The book contains basic information for the beginning as well as in-depth information for those at an advanced level.” She has simple diagrams to illustrate her discussion and thoughtfully divides the book into manageable chapters to give the reader a chance to digest a concept before introducing the next one.

Chapter 3 is titled, “Immune System” and discusses the role the gut plays in our overall health and how GAP children and adults have a compromised immune system. If a balanced gut flora is not established in the first 20 days of life, a baby is left immune compromised. The health implications of that reality are far reaching.

Chapter 4, “What Can Damage Gut Flora?” follows with a detailed discussion of the various substances that wipe out the beneficial flora. When we under- stand our dysbiotic flora we begin to appreciate the way in life in this culture destroy the micro organisms within us that support our health and well being, we can understand why we have an epidemic of chronic diseases and behavioral problems. These are not genetic in the sense that it is in our genes but “genetic” in the sense that generations are passing along the genes for poisonous ingredients that wipe out the beneficial gut flora.

A couple of years after his book, a paper was published that changed the definition of celiac disease to the one accepted today, a gluten intolerance. Dr. Haas’ work was almost forgotten until, in 1985, Elaine Gottschall sought his help in treatment of her young daughter’s severe ulcerative colitis. Following Dr. Haas’ advice, she began a gluten-free diet. After some time she went on to write, “Breaking the Vicious Cycle”. Natasha honors both of these pioneers in this work.

Her brilliance is in how she takes the SCD to a new level by incorporating the use of probiotics. The SCD eliminates the food that feed the abnormal gut flora resulting in resolution of digestive symptoms. Natasha describes how Natasha calls a therapeutic probiotic (she and her husband created and market a product called Big-Kult) in increasing doses supports the reestablishment of the healthy flora. Cod liver oil for vita- min A and some other simple supplements can be included. Eventually, the gut wall can become leaky and bad flora back in changing good care of the enterocytes. The body is no longer being filled up with toxins from the abnormal flora and ultimately begins to heal. Leaky gut can begin to heal with it, food intolerances. Foods can once again be digested properly, absorbed and assimilated to nourish the body and mind. And the best chelator of heavy metals such as lead and mercury are the beneficial bacteria.

A recent article in the Boston Globe, Diary of a Celiac, describe one woman’s diagnosis of Celiac Disease as it is defined today (not Dr. Haas’ definition) of her struggle with food. It describes how she faces either eating out or going to friends’ homes. It is believed that one in 133 people have the “gene” for celiac disease but do not have a compromised immune system. Food allergies/intolerances result from the leaky gut caused by the toxins from the abnormal gut flora. No one is genetically predeter- mined to suffer but it is only those born in increasing numbers with the abnormal flora.

Natasha offers a way back to health unlike the glu- ten free/casein free diet promoted for celiac disease and autistic spectrum disorder which is a life sen-...
tence of “label reading” and fear of relapse. And, I might add, is a windfall for the food industry as they now have a whole new line of “gluten-free” car- bohydrate products to market. This is simple: one needs to become a farmer, a food-cookbook writer, and develop all the skills as everything needs to be prepared from scratch, patience as it does take time to completely restore intestinal health, and a therapeutic probiotic. Reclaiming our food from the food industry is part of what this book is about. The other part is relaying how the gut works and how to welcome back the beneficial bacteria, viruses and yeasts. With my soil, I have experienced how the addition of compost year after year to my soil is building soil macro organisms. This is the same thing… the right bacteria, viruses and yeasts will keep in check the pathogenic strains. Balance will follow – balance of body and mind.

Michael Pollan writes in his book, In Defense of Food, “…wherever in the world people gave up their traditional way of eating and adopted the Western diet, there soon followed a predictable series of Western diseases, including obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular ailments, and cancer. They called these the Western diseases and, though the precise causal mechanisms were (and remain) uncertain, these ob- servers had little doubt these chronic diseases shared a common etiology: the western diet. I would ex- pand Pollan’s Western diet to the Western lifestyle which includes the oversee and abuse of pharma- ceuticals, toxins and stress, and add that we are unable to treat these chronic diseases and are unable to recovering from chronic diseases and food poisoning with GMOs. The hopefulness that I feel for the lives of my customers is due to what we are doing with the whole food and to the work we do in educating about organic farming while doing better outreach to poor and underserved populations."

Thank you Natasha! Closing the Food Gap

Resetting the Table in the Land of Plenty by Mark Winne published by Beacon Press Copyright 2008 $23.95 hardcover, 199 pages review by Julie Rawson

This book by Mark Winne, a person who has been in the Sustainable Food Systems movement for 35 years, is well researched, well documented, and thoughtfully crafted. Mark started his professional career in Maine in a food coop, moved to the Natick Gap, and finally Resetting America’s Table. He breaks the book into 3 parts. Part 1 is History, with chapters on Re-storing America’s Food Systems and quite probably directly hazardous to everyone involved and their move from an emergency feeding alterna- tive to becoming a way of life for many underserved folks. His analysis of the growing gap between rich and poor in this country and the shrinking of the middle class includes a harsh look at our public policy which has held a consistent disregard for the issues of the poor. The chapter on the alarming increase of obesity and diabetes amongst the poor, juxtaposed against the local organic foods which is embraced by well off suburbanites, was disturbing for me. I questioned whether I am doing enough for humanity when most of my customers are very well off and can afford to pay the high prices that I find necessary to charge to stay in business as a farmer. This issue nags us in NOFA/Mass also as we investigate more and more ways to bring food to the people,missions, educating about organic farming while doing better outreach to poor and underserved populations."

Some of these appealing examples of programs that Mark feels have worked - like the Farmers Market Coupon Program, some community run or organized super markets, outreaching community gardening projects all over the country, Community Supported Agriculture projects that serve affluent and poor populations together, and positive governmental initiatives. Some of our NOFA chapters have taken on the Community Food Security initiative in various, and often successful, ways. This book could serve as a manual for all of us as we meet this challenge as farmers and food producers, not as a must read for all NOFA leadership. I applaud Mark Winne for a well-researched, very human look at the food system and how to help farmers meet the needs of the poor for the past 40 years. For CT residents, there is a tremendous amount of demographic information, particularly in the city of Hartford.

Real Medicine Real Health

by Dr. Arden Andersen published by Holographic Health Press, Weynes- ville, NC 28786 www.holographichealth.com Copyright 2004, 2006 $24.95, 262 pages review by Julie Rawson

I had heard of Arden Andersen for a few years, but became quite knowledgeable about his work this past winter. Son Dan had spent 3 days with him at the 2007 Acres Conference, attending his Biological Agriculture projects that serve affluent and poor populations together, and positive governmental initiatives. Some of our NOFA chapters have taken on the Community Food Security initiative in various, and often successful, ways. This book could serve as a manual for all of us as we meet this challenge as farmers and food producers, not as a must read for all NOFA leadership. I applaud Mark Winne for a well-researched, very human look at the food system and how to help farmers meet the needs of the poor for the past 40 years. For CT residents, there is a tremendous amount of demographic information, particularly in the city of Hartford. Real Medicine Real Health is not exactly what I expected. I assumed that he would talk about the role of food, and nutrient dense food, which is his spe- cialty. Instead he talked, when he got down to the details of how to improve one’s health, about appropriate nutrients, food sensitivity testing, chelation techniques and personal detoxification strategies. Arden Andersen has quite strong feelings about the traditional medical establishment -- and the tradi- tional agricultural establishment for that matter. None of this is new to NOFA members, however. It seems this book has been written more for folks who are first coming to alternative health care, farm- ing and lifestyle. But it never hurts to be reminded of these natural principles. I will abbreviate them here.

- Nutrition is the fuel that maintains, drives, detoxi- fies, and eliminates.
- Nutrition includes differentiating the source and quality of proteins, carbohydrates, and fats and their varying effects on health.
- Human disease, illness and performance are all manifestations of nutritional imbalances/deficien- cies/excesses.
- Nutritional composition of food is directly cor- related to nutritional integrity of the soil upon which it was grown.
- Every functional aspect of the human body is di- rectly correlated to nutrition.
- Drugs, chemio, poisons, radiation will never repair organ damage or injury.
- Nutrition has the capacity to detoxify, correct and regenerate every environmental disaster that has mankind has caused.
- Patients have more options for their healthcare than those of which they are typically made aware.
- Science is pliable, in flux, and evolves.

Ardens has a rather refreshing approach, and one that is quite hopeful, be it regarding stopping global warming, or (for those organic farmers and plant pathologists) or detoxification of our selves and our planet. The first part of his book expands on the above principles.

The central part of his book discusses systems, ill- nesses and treatment options. The following topics are discussed: thyroid, sex hormones, post partum depression, women’s health, addiction, diabetes, and some of the more modern or current intestinal issues, childhood illnesses such as colic, ear infections, asthma, bronchiitis, tonsillitis, acne, and inflammatory bowel diseases. A helpful guide are cardiovascular disorders, Alzheimer’s disease, MS, ALS, Parkinson’s, dementia, neurovascular issues, injury medicine, chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, cancer and dophilopathies illnesses.

Dr. Andersen feels that food sensitivities (often due to leakti and gut) are related to far more chronic illnesses than we should be first considered in most illnesses/diseases. He also feels that the “healing crisis” is not an es- sential part of the changes in the modern world, IV vitamin and mineral therapy is used in conjunction with chelation for toxic substance removal.

As one who swears by detox baths, I was happy to find this recipe included – 1-2 cups apple cider vin- egar, or 1-2 cups Epsom salts, or ½ - 1 cup baking soda, or ½ cup of vinegar and 1-2 cup of water or Bathe daily and alternate treatments for 20-30 min- utes in hot water.

According to a study done by the Ministry of Agri- culture, Fisheries and Foods and the Royal Society of Chemistry, UK comparing nutrient levels in foods in 1960 and again in 1991, the following statistics are true:

Vegetables lost: 76% copper content, 49% sodium, 24% calcium, 27% iron, 24% magnesium, 16% potassium. Fruits lost: 19% copper content, 29% sodium, 24% calcium, 27% iron, 24% magnesium, 16% potassium. Potatoes lost: 19% copper content, 29% sodium, 16% calcium, 24% iron, 15% magnesium, 22% potassium.

Andersen lays a lot of the poor health that we suffer as a culture at this time on agricultural and industrial poisons and heavy metals. Throughout the book he delineates appropriate chelation protocol.

According to Andersen, there have been several short term studies by independent researchers (mostly outside of the US) and several covert studies at universities in different parts of the process of GMOS are harmful to our immune systems and quite probably directly hazardous to our health. He also spends a fair amount of space discussing immunizations and autism.

As a person who grows up around lots of organic chemi- cals in the 50s and 60s, I have suffered their ill effects throughout my life with mild chemical sensitivities, goiter and a host of manageable but mildly debilitating symptoms. The hopefulness that I gained from this book, specifically with regards to a safe chelation protocol and avoidance of trigger foods was well worth the time I spent reading this book. Additionally I find it to be a valuable refer- ence book.

I look forward to Arden Andersen’s keynote at the NOFA Summer Conference.
Vermont
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New Jersey: Individual: $35, Farm/Family/Organizational $50, Business/Organization $100, Low Income: $15*
Contact: P.O Box 886, Pennington, NJ 08534-0886, (609) 737-6848 or join at www.nofanj.org

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Erich V. Bremer, c/o NJ Dept. of Agriculture, PO Box 330, Trenton, NJ 08625, (609) 984-4154 (fax)

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Contact: Mayra Richter, NOFA-NY, PO Box 880, Cobleskill, NY 12043, Voice (607) 652-2290, email: office@nofany.org www.nofany.org

Rhode Island: Student: $20, Individual: $25, Farm: $35, Business $50
Contact: Membership, NOFA RI, c/o Abbie Barber POB 86 Shannock, R.I. 02814  (401) 949-1596, abbe@nofany.org

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Calendar

Saturday, June 7: The Role of the Horse in the Farm Organism, with Mac Mead, Pfeiffer Center, Chestnut Ridge, NY, for more info: 845-352-5020 x20, info@pfeiffercenter.org, www.pfeiffercenter.org.

Monday, June 9: On Farm Workshops for Farmers, North Haven, CT, for more info: visit www.ctnofa.org or call 203 888-5146

Sunday, June 22: CT NOFA Farm Tour to Holbrook Farm in Bethel, New Pond Farm in Reledger, and The Hickories in Ridgefield, for more info visit www.ctnofa.org, or call 203-888-5146.

Friday, June 27 - Saturday, June 28: Organic Beekeeping Workshop, Metta Earth Institute, Lincoln, Vermont, for more info: Ross Conrad, 802-453-8111

Monday, June 30: On Farm Workshops for Farmers, New Milford, CT, for more info: visit www.ctnofa.org or call 203 888-5146

Sunday, July 13: On Farm Workshop and Feast for Everyone, Ledyard, CT, for more info: visit www.ctnofa.org or call 203 888-5146

Friday, August 8 – Sunday, August 10: NOFA Vermont Summer Conference, U/Mass, Amherst, MA, for more info: 978-355-2853

Saturday, August 23: Red Fire Farm’s 8th Annual Tomato Festival, Granby, MA, for more info: 413-467-SOIL, www.redfirefarm.com

Friday, August 29 – Saturday, August 30: Organic Beekeeping Workshop, Metta Earth Institute, Lincoln, Vermont, for more info: Ross Conrad, 802-453-8111

Sunday, September 14: Taste! Organic Connecticut, Topmost Herb Farm in Coventry, for more info: visit www.ctnofa.org or call 203 888-5146

Saturday, September 20 - Sunday, September 21: Tenth Annual North Quabbin Garlic and Arts Festival, Orange, MA, for more info: www.garlicandarts.org, db@dbsedsosfoofardarity.org, (978) 544-9023

Friday, September 26 – Sunday, September 28: 2nd Annual Northeast Animal Power Field Days, Tunbridge Fair Grounds, Tunbridge, VT, for more info: www.animalpowerfielddays.org, or Carl Russell and Lisa McCrory, info@animalpowerfielddays.org, or 203-234-5524


New Jersey: Individual: $35, Farm/Organizational $50, Business/Organization $100, Low Income: $15*
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The Natural Farmer
Summer, 2008
Melissa Greenawalt-Yelle helps a buyer at the Local Foods Plymouth table. The Plymouth, NH group lists local farm products for sale on a website and arranges for buyers to pick them up at the Plymouth farmers market. This issue contains news, features, and an article about organic growing in the Northeast, plus a special supplement on Online Marketing of Organic Products.