36th Annual NOFA Summer Conference
August 13 - 15
by Mindy Harris, NOFA Summer Conference Publicity Coordinator

Some call it professional development. Some call it time to hang out with organic friends. Some call it a family vacation. Whether you come to discover something new, meet your soulmate, share your values, or move your business to the next level – you’ll find something wonderful at the 36th Annual NOFA Summer Conference. About 1600 participants will all converge on UMass Amherst from August 13-15th to celebrate farms, food and family. This year promises to be an exciting one – with two wonderful keynote speakers, Sally Fallon Morell, founder of the Weston A. Price Foundation, and Dr. Fernando Funes, a researcher at the Pasture and Forage Institute in Havana, Cuba, and Secretary of Organic Agriculture Group, with the Cuban Association of Agronomists and Foresters.

Sally Fallon Morell has keynoted for NOFA at its Summer Conference once before, and has been very active in supporting the NOFA/Massachusetts Raw Milk Network campaign. Sally’s lifelong interest in the subject of nutrition began in the early 1970s when she read Nutrition and Physical Degeneration by Weston A. Price. Fallon Morell applied the principles of the Price research to the feeding of her own children, and proved for herself that a diet rich in animal fats, and containing the protective factors in old fashioned foodstuffs like cod liver oil, liver and eggs, make for sturdy cheerful children with a high immunity to illness. Fallon Morell is the author of the bestselling book, Nourishing Traditions: The Cookbook that Challenges Politically Correct Nutrition and the Diet Dictocrats. Sally will be delivering her keynote address on Friday night, August 13th, and will be leading a number of workshops during the conference. On Saturday Sally will be leading “The Oiling of America: Cholesterol Myths” from 8-9:30 am, “Nourishing Traditional Diets,” from 10-11:30, and “Principles of Healthy Traditional Diets” from 1-2:30 pm. On Sunday, Sally will be leading “A Campaign for Real Milk” from 8-9:30 am, “How to Change Your Diet for the Better,” from 10-11:30, and “Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner” from 1-2:30 pm.

Sally Fallon Morell will join the NOFA/Massachusetts Raw Milk Network at a pre-conference symposium along with Pete Kennedy, President of the Farm to Consumer Legal Defense Fund. The 2010 Northeast Raw Milk Symposium will be an opportunity for raw milk farmers, consumers and advocates to come together to learn and discuss the issues around access to unpasteurized milk, and to strategize about how to work together to defend and expand our rights. Sally Fallon Morell and Pete Kennedy have both written and spoken extensively about raw milk issues around the United States and internationally. The Raw Milk Symposium will take place on Friday, August 13, from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon, in the Cape Cod Lounge at UMass Amherst, and is open to the public. A nominal additional charge for the symposium will be $20 for NOFA members and $25 for non-members.

The second keynote speaker, Dr. Fernando Funes Sr., is widely known as the father of the Cuban organic agricultural movement. His organization, The Organic Agriculture Group, was awarded the Right Livelihood Award, commonly known as the ‘Alternative Nobel Prize.’ Dr. Fernando Funes is a researcher at the Pasture and Forage Institute (IPPF) in Havana, and secretary of the Organic Agriculture Group (GAO) of the Cuban Association of Agronomists and Foresters (ACTAF). Dr. Funes’ lifelong research reflects a strong commitment to what has proven to be a global model of sustainable agriculture.

Because Dr. Funes comes to the U.S. with a very unique story, it is worth considering the political context for his research on Cuban agriculture. Cuba is seen by many as a kind of global laboratory for the sustainable agriculture movement. Following the 1989 collapse of the Soviet Union, imports shrank by 75% and Cuba entered what is called the “Special Period.” Suddenly no products were available – without know-how, training or oil. Because commercial agriculture at the time was reliant upon industrial pesticides, fertilizers and petroleum to operate agricultural machinery, almost all agricultural activities in the country suddenly came to a halt. Farmers could not feed their livestock. There was no grain available, so animals perished. Tractors could not be driven. Buses, cars and other means of transportation stopped. Products could no longer be transported from place to place internally. Suddenly Cuban citizens and farmers were desperate to find solutions so that the population could survive.

People began picking up manual equipment, yoking oxen together, and plowing fields by hand. Every possible slice of urban landscape came under cultivation, as folks had to immediately find ways of feeding themselves. Citizens began planting vegetables in their backyards, on their patios, in any space available – without know-how, training or agricultural experience. Doctors, lawyers, teachers – everyone, from all walks of life – suddenly couldn’t buy food, or get to work. Bicycles were imported from China, and survival strategies were far-reaching, across many dimensions of human life. Many researchers believe that due to ever-diminishing (continued on page 47)

Inside This Issue
Features
Natural Beekeeping 9
2010 Northeast Raw Milk Symposium 10
NOFA/Mass Late Blight Report 46
Obituary: Alvin Filsinger 48
Help USDA Conservation Programs Work 49
Sacred Expressions: Jack & Julie Tribune 51
Mycorrhizae and the Living Soil 52
Eco Friendly Agriculture: Who Speaks? 52

Supplement on Farms & Regulation
Your Money or Your Life 11
Red Fire Farm & the Regulatory Gauntlet 17
Small Farms Stagger Under Regulations 23
My Goat Cheese Giveaway 27
The Farm Internship Comundrum 28
Connecticut Passes Pickle Bill 29
Lessons from the Food Safety Front 31
Robinson Family Swiss Start-up Hassles 34
Raw Milk Advocates Gather 38
Laws, Regulations, and NOFA 45

Departments
Letters to the Editor 2
Editorial 2
NOFA Exchange 4
News Notes 5
Book Reviews 48
NOFA Contact People 54
NOFA Membership 55
Calendar 55
Letters to the Editor

Jack: I read your article in TNF on soy, and was concerned not only about the effects on animals and humans, but also about the direct human consumption of soy products. Many of my friends drink only soy milk, and I enjoy Tofu-iti “cream” cheese, as well as soy nuts. As I understand your article, these are not only not good for us, they can cause harm. The chart of other foods containing phytoestrogens was distressing, too. Should I spread the alarm? I have grown soybeans and eaten them raw. I am here to report that fact (at 84), so I guess I did not consume enough toxins!! Interesting article! I would appreciate your input on this. -- Esther Braun, Bedford, MA

Jack Kittredge and Julie Rawson
411 Sheldon Rd., Barré, MA 01005
978-355-2853, fax: (978) 355-4046
tnf@nofa.org
ISSN 1077-2294
Copyright 2010,
Northeast Organic Farming Association, Inc

Small Farms and Government Regulation

by Jack Kittredge

Government regulation is a tricky topic. Virtually everyone supports and even depends on some level of regulatory intervention. Yet most of us bristle at certain rules as intrusive, oppressive or stifling.

Most organic farmers, for instance, would like to see tough regulation of GMOs in agriculture. We are divided on the topic of the National Organic Program itself, some supporting national certification and others rejecting it and opting for self- or private group-certification.

Very few farmers, however, are not constrained by some local, state, or federal regulations about how they do business. This issue of The Natural Farmer takes a look at some of these regulations from the farmer’s point of view. We tell the story of how unreasonable application of federal labor law and state farm employee housing regulations almost destroyed a thriving organic vegetable farm giving work to dozens of people. We look at how out-of-date plumbing codes added tens of thousands of dollars of expense to a struggling organic dairy trying to start making cheese. You will hear how the government is hounding consenting adults for the crime of wanting to produce and drink unpasteurized milk, or how USDA slaughterhouse inspectors and HACCP plans make it difficult to process animals from small farms. We will also consider the “food safety” legislation currently in Congress, discussing existing amendments and the likely impact of that elephant when it enters the room.

But not everything on the small farm regulatory front is bad news. There have been advances in a number of states. Vermont has recently made it possible for farm operators to sell unpasteurized milk, deliver up to 40 gallons of raw milk daily to customers, and register “working” dogs who are exempt from leash laws. Washington state has just passed an experimental law allowing small farms to promote farm internships without running afoul of the state’s labor regulations. This issue tells the story of Connecticut farmers’ successful fight for a brand new “Pickle Bill” allowing this value added product to be made without benefit of a $30,000 commercial kitchen.

We hope these articles illuminate the struggles (and successes) which small farmers are engaged in to stay viable. It is practically impossible to compete financially with industrial farming methods on raw plant or animal products. Economies of scale, subsidies, and vertical integration pretty well shut that door. In places like the Northeast many farmers are finding direct sales via CSAs, farm stands and farmer’s markets can make farming sustainable. But where customers are not right at hand, or the product itself is among the growing number of those deemed “potentially hazardous” by public health officials, or when value is added by processing, the farmer’s survival is more and more in the hands of various local, state and federal regulators. As citizens, we all ultimately make these rules. After reading this issue, consider which ones make sense to you and which seem silly or oppressive. A few calls or letters to legislators can make a big difference!

The Natural Farmer

The Natural Farmer is a quarterly membership journal of the Northeast Organic Farming Association.

We plan a year in advance so those who want to write on a topic can have a lot of lead time. The next 3 issues will be:

Fall 2010: Organic Farming and Money
Winter 2010 - 2011: Organic Farming and Co-ops
Spring 2011: Organic Tree Fruit

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

Moving or missed an issue? The Natural Farmer will not be forwarded by the post office, so you need to make sure your address is up-to-date if you move. Those who regularly send us a subscription will receive up-dates if you

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

Jack Kittredge and Julie Rawson
411 Sheldon Rd., Barré, MA 01005
978-355-2853, fax: (978) 355-4046
tnf@nofa.org
ISSN 1077-2294
Copyright 2010,
Northeast Organic Farming Association, Inc
Thanks, Esther. I don't know enough myself to tell you to avoid soy. But there are certainly knowledgeable people and groups out there who I respect (Weston A. Price Foundation is one group I like) who are sounding the alarm. I think, as most things in our environment these days, soy is so new as a major food, that we should be cautious about it and use it in moderation. I will continue to report whatever I think is credible on this as it comes to my attention. -- Jack

To the Editor: A few years ago, we stayed on an organic farm in Tuscany, Italy, where the farmer grew many acres of fava beans. While Italians do eat fava beans in many dishes, his crops were for cattle feed. He said he was mystified that American farmers don't grow them as well—they would be quite suitable for large parts of our growing area, they are nitrogen fixers, good for the soil, and excellent feed.

I don't think I saw any mention of fava beans in your recent issue on alternative forage crops. Any comments? -- Leslie Gensburg, E. Burke, VT

Boy, Leslie. I don't have any. Seems like a good question. Let me reprint your letter and see if anyone has any ideas to illuminate this! -- Jack

To the Editor: This publication of the Natural Farmer is awesome. I read it three times. The whole thing. It was incredible. I can't wait for it to come because there is always something I can use. It was like that all the way through this issue. -- Charlie Dance

Dear Charlie: Thanks. Glad you liked it. We've gotten more reaction to this issue on Alternative Organic Animal Feeds than any previous one. Glad we hit the mark this time! -- Jack

To the Editor: Somehow in the recent issue of TNF there percolates an air of optimism, an encouraging background melody. Could it be that we humans might in the end make some decisions that really are sensible and beneficial? I am reminded of a man who has saved and stored away in his cellar and attic and garage a great many things, and now sees that he must go through it all and toss much of it out. An unpleasant business it frequently is to retrace our steps and reverse our earlier wrong decisions, but necessary. It is one of the few sure signs of intelligence. It turns out that much of our great grandparents and great, great grandparents did, was wise. -- David Ellis, Portsmouth, RI

Dear David: Right you are on that! – Jack

Dear Readers: I also received a lengthy letter from Basil Tangredi taking me to task for my warnings on soy and suggesting I go to PubMed (website for the National Library of Medicine database of millions of scientific articles) and search “soy health,” where I will find 1418 entries, of which 313 are review articles. He then politely disputed a number of points in my article. I had hoped to print his letter, but it was far longer than space permits in this already long issue. Anyone interested in his letter can get a copy by emailing me at <tnf@nofa.org> and asking me to attach it to a return Email. -- Jack

Please help us thank these Friends of Organic Farming for their generous support!
Are you and your spouse looking for an opportunity to live on a historic farm in the country? That farm (350 years of continuous ownership, now a 501(c)(3) Public Charity) has 150 acres (100 forestry designation) - 30 miles west of Boston and is on the National Register of Historic Places. No livestock. Housing provided with competitive salary. Duties: 40 hour week between both persons, maintenance of historic buildings (carpentry, painting, minor electrical and plumbing skills required), housekeeping, gardening and assist with educational tour groups. Vegetable garden space, small barn & chicken coop available. Send resumes to: bmfacaretaker@aol.com; 401-333-1235

Fully transportable, 80 hp, self-propelled compost turner for sale – excellent condition. Turns windrows 8.5 ft wide by 4.5 ft tall - 500 to 800 cu yd/hour operating capacity. New hydraulic pump and drum motor. Includes 16 ft trailer, spare hydraulic wheel motor, and and extra set of flails. Additional specifications and a photo can be seen at www.compost.com. Steven, 802-425-5556

3 pt. hitch disc, some new blades, 6 ft. wide - $400. Ferguson 9 – 3 pt. hitch cultivator, BO20, 7 shanks with 2 springs per shank, $400. H. Ronald Bash, 463 Middle Rd., Bayport, NY 11705, 631-472-0530

FARM FOR SALE - Little Falls, NY consisting of 82 acres. The property is a geographically and ecologically varied land form consisting of excellent soils, rolling topography, sheltered ravines, maturing forest with frontage on West Canada Creek and paved town road. Land meets standards for organic certification. For details contact Doug Bowne at doug@bowne.info, or 315-866-1403.

Unusual housing opportunity for unusual person: greatly reduced rent in return for “farm” chores - care of pond, bees, chickens, some gardens, grass cutting, snow removal, minor repairs. Rent negotiable with lease. Absolutely no smokers. New Haven area. (203) 230-1080 and leave best time to reach you

FOR SALE
Udderly Woolly Acres
Tom and Joan Kemble
20 acres: organic market gardens, woods, pastures, 2 barns, 1820 house
Glastonbury CT (near Hartford)
860 633-4503 or 860 796-8746


607-592-2801 cumminsnsery.com 607-227-6147
News
Notes
compiled by Jack Kittredge

Washington Farm Bill Allows Experimental Small Farm Internships
A bill signed into law by Washington Gov. Chris Gregoire establishes a pilot project in San Juan County to allow farms with gross sales of less than $250,000 annually to create internship programs for future farmers who are not enrolled in classes to work on farms throughout the state without running ahead of regulations regarding minimum wage, industrial insurance, and other provisions of the state’s Department of Labor & Industries.
In order to qualify for the program, farmers with gross annual sales of less than $250,000 must submit a written application to the state’s Department of Labor and Industries for certification and include the nature of work and how it will provide the intern with vocational knowledge and skills.
source: The Island Gardian, March 23, 2010

US Isolated at Codex Meeting on GM Labeling
The United States, at a meeting of Codex Alimentarius (the United Nations food standards agency) argued for an international labeling standard which would not “suggest or imply that GM/GE foods are in any way different from other foods,” and refused to agree to comprise language that would not “suggest or imply that GM/GE foods are in any way different from other foods.”

The United States, at a meeting of Codex Alimentarius (the United Nations food standards agency) argued for an international labeling standard which would not “suggest or imply that GM/GE foods are in any way different from other foods,” and refused to agree to comprise language that would not “suggest or imply that GM/GE foods are in any way different from other foods.”


Organic Food Sales Grow by 5.1% in 2009
While total U.S. food sales grew by only 1.6% in 2009, organic food sales grew by 5.1%.
source: Organic Trade Association’s 2010 Organic Industry Survey

Supreme Court Question Ban of Biotech Alfalfa
On April 27, U.S. Supreme Court justices sharply questioned a lower court’s decision that has prohibited biotech giant Monsanto Co. from selling genetically engineered alfalfa seeds. A federal judge

Roundup-Resistant Weeds Growing Problem
Roundup — originally made by Monsanto but now sold also by others under the generic name glyphosate — has been little short of a miracle chemical for farmers. It kills a broad spectrum of weeds, is easy to work with, and breaks down quickly. It has been so successful that crops have been genetically engineered to resist it, allowing farmers to freely spray the herbicide without endangering the crop.

But the National Research Council, which advises the federal government on scientific matters, sounded a warning in April, saying that the emergence of resistant weeds jeopardized the substantial benefits that genetically engineered crops were providing to farmers and the environment.

The first resistant species to pose a serious threat to agriculture was spotted in a Delaware soybean field in 2000. Since then, the problem has spread, with 10 resistant species in at least 22 states infesting millions of acres, predominantly soybeans, cotton and corn. Monsanto, which once argued that resistance would not become a major problem, now cautions against exaggerating its impact. “It’s a serious issue, but it’s manageable,” said Rick Cole, who manages weed resistance issues in the United States for the company.

So far, weed scientists estimate that the total amount of United States farmland afflicted by Roundup-resistant weeds is relatively small — seven million to 10 million acres, according to Ian Heap, director of the International Survey of Herbicide Resistant Weeds, which is financed by the agricultural chemical industry. There are roughly 170 million acres planted with corn, soybeans and cotton, the crops most affected.

source: NY Times, May 3, 2010

Foreigners Buying Up Farmland
Foreign buyers have purchased 49 million acres of farmland in poor countries in the last two years, an area three times the size of Ireland. The land grab is most pronounced in northern Africa and parts of South America.

Half World’s Wealth is Oil
The oil reserves of OPEC nations represent about half the wealth in the world at current oil prices.

Monsanto Study of Milk Dismisses Own Findings
A Monsanto-funded study by scientists at Cornell University measured the concentrations of heart-healthy fatty acids in 292 samples of conventional rbST and organic whole milk. The study was needed, according to the authors, to clear up “confusion” among consumers over nutritional differences between conventional, rbST, and organic milk. The team found significant differences in the two key fatty acids that are higher in organic milk — conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) and omega 3 fatty acids. CLA levels were 23% higher in the organic milk compared to conventional and rbST milk, and omega 3 levels were 63% higher. The authors dismissed the differences as not nutritionally relevant. In fact, this study actually confirms what several other studies have found — organic milk contains significantly higher concentrations of health-promoting fatty acids, especially during the times of the year when cows are feeding on lush pastures.


Organic Fresh Produce Captures 11.4% of Market in 2009
In the last decade, the market share of fresh organic produce has grown from 3% to 11.4%, leading “The Packer” (May 3, 2010, page C1) to write — “Talk all you want about the explosion of locally grown produce and the meteoric rise of microwaveable packages for fresh produce. But, as far as produce trends go, the steady ascension of the organic category remains among the most bankable.”

source: Organic Trade Association’s “2010 Organic Industry Survey.”

Roundup-Resistant Weeds Growing Problem
Roundup — originally made by Monsanto but now also sold by others under the generic name glyphosate — has been little short of a miracle chemical for farmers. It kills a broad spectrum of weeds, is easy to work with, and breaks down quickly. It has been so successful that crops have been genetically engineered to resist it, allowing farmers to freely spray the herbicide without endangering the crop.

But the National Research Council, which advises the federal government on scientific matters, sounded a warning in April, saying that the emergence of resistant weeds jeopardized the substantial benefits that genetically engineered crops were providing to farmers and the environment.

The first resistant species to pose a serious threat to agriculture was spotted in a Delaware soybean field in 2000. Since then, the problem has spread, with 10 resistant species in at least 22 states infesting millions of acres, predominantly soybeans, cotton and corn. Monsanto, which once argued that resistance would not become a major problem, now cautions against exaggerating its impact. “It’s a serious issue, but it’s manageable,” said Rick Cole, who manages weed resistance issues in the United States for the company.

So far, weed scientists estimate that the total amount of United States farmland afflicted by Roundup-resistant weeds is relatively small — seven million to 10 million acres, according to Ian Heap, director of the International Survey of Herbicide Resistant Weeds, which is financed by the agricultural chemical industry. There are roughly 170 million acres planted with corn, soybeans and cotton, the crops most affected.

Organic Fresh Produce Captures 11.4% of Market in 2009
In the last decade, the market share of fresh organic produce has grown from 3% to 11.4%, leading “The Packer” (May 3, 2010, page C1) to write — “Talk all you want about the explosion of locally grown produce and the meteoric rise of microwaveable packages for fresh produce. But, as far as produce trends go, the steady ascension of the organic category remains among the most bankable.”

source: Organic Trade Association’s “2010 Organic Industry Survey.”

Organic Food Sales Grow by 5.1% in 2009
While total U.S. food sales grew by only 1.6% in 2009, organic food sales grew by 5.1%.
source: Organic Trade Association’s 2010 Organic Industry Survey

Supreme Court Question Ban of Biotech Alfalfa
On April 27, U.S. Supreme Court justices sharply questioned a lower court’s decision that has prohibited biotech giant Monsanto Co. from selling genetically engineered alfalfa seeds. A federal judge
in San Francisco barred the planting of genetically engineered alfalfa nationwide until the government could adequately study the crop’s potential impact on organic and conventional varieties. Monsanto is arguing that the ban was too broad and was based on the assumption that the company’s products were harmful. Opponents of the use of genetically engineered seeds say they can contaminate conventional crops, but Monsanto says such cross-pollination is unlikely.

Several justices appeared skeptical that the lower court had the authority to fully ban the sale of the product because of the pending environmental review. Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. questioned why the court issued the injunction instead of simply remanding the matter back to the USDA. Justice Antonin Scalia appeared even more wary, questioning the idea that genetically modified crops could contaminate other crops. “This isn’t the contamination of the New York City water supply,” he said. “This isn’t the end of the world, it really isn’t.” Justice Stephen G. Breyer did not take part in the case because his brother, U.S. District Judge Charles Breyer in San Francisco, issued the initial ruling against Monsanto.

Alfalfa, which is used for livestock feed and can be planted in spring or fall, is a major crop grown on about 22 million acres in the U.S., Monsanto said in court papers. Monsanto’s alfalfa is made from genetic material from bacteria that makes the crop resistant to the popular weed killer Roundup. A decision is expected before late June. source: Associated Press, April 27, 2010

“Pesticide Stew” in Beeswax and Pollen Triggers National Attention

At a March 25, 2010 session during the annual meeting of the American Chemical Society, a team of USDA-funded scientists reported finding a veritable “stew” of pesticides in bee hives, pollen, and beeswax. Three out of five pollen and wax samples from 23 states included at least one residue of a systemic pesticide. 121 different pesticides were found in 887 samples. The average sample of beeswax contained 8 pesticidal residues and/or pesticide metabolites and one sample contained 39.

The finding of so many pesticides in beeswax is no surprise given what the bees were carrying back into the hive. The scientists also measured pesticides in the pollen collected by bees for transport back to the hive. Seven pesticides were found, on average, in each of 350 pollen samples, and one had 31 pesticide contaminations. Out of 887 samples of beeswax, pollen, and beeswax themselves, only 16 (1.8%) had no detectable pesticide residues. source: Associated Press, March 24, 2010., Science News, March 21, 2010.

Genetically Modified Soy Linked to Sterility, Infant Mortality

Russian biologist Alexey V. Surov and his colleagues set out to discover if Monsanto’s genetically modified (GM) soy, grown on 91% of US soybean fields, leads to problems in growth or reproduction. After feeding hamsters for two years over three generations, those on the GM diet, and especially the group on the maximum GM soy diet, showed devastating results. By the third generation, most GM soy-fed hamsters lost the ability to have babies. They also suffered slower growth, and a high mortality rate among the pups. The study, jointly conducted by Surov’s Institute of Ecology and Evolution of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the National Association for Gene Security, is expected to be published in July 2010.

Surov’s hamsters are just the latest animals to suffer from reproductive disorders after consuming GMOs. In 2005, Irina Ermakova, also with the Russian National Academy of Sciences, reported that more than half the babies from mother rats fed GM soy died within three weeks. This was also five times higher than the 10% death rate of the non-GMO soy group. The babies in the GM group were also smaller and could not reproduce.

An Austrian government study published in November 2008 showed that the more GM corn was fed to mice, the fewer the babies they had, and the smaller the babies were. Central Iowa Farmer Jerry Rosman also had trouble with pigs and cows becoming sterile. Some of his pigs even had false pregnancies or gave birth to bags of water. After months of investigations and testing, he finally traced the problem to GM corn feed. Every time a newspaper, magazine, or TV show reported Jerry’s problems, he would receive calls from more farmers complaining of livestock sterility on their farm, linked to GM corn. Researchers at Baylor College of Medicine accidentally discovered that rats raised on corn cob bedding “neither breed nor exhibit reproductive behavior.” Tests on the corn material revealed two compounds that stopped the sexual cycle in females “at concentrations approximately two-hundredfold lower than classical phytoestrogens.” One compound also curtailed male sexual behavior and both substances contributed to the growth of breast and prostate cancer cell cultures. Researchers found that the amount of the substances varied with GM corn varieties. The crushed corn cob used at Baylor was likely shipped from central Iowa, near the farm of Jerry Rosman and others complaining of sterile livestock. source: Huffington Post, April 20, 2010

In 4 in 10 Americans to Have Cancer

41% of Americans will be diagnosed with cancer at some time during their life and 21% will die from this disease. source: President’s Cancer Panel, 2008-2009 Annual Report.

Wisconsin Raw Milk Activist Wins Important Court Victory

The state of Wisconsin’s motion to compel Max Kane, a raw milk activist, to reveal the identities of farmers and consumers involved in private transactions was denied yesterday by Judge Michael Rosenborough. The judge had the option of ruling Max Kane in contempt of court for his silence, but instead allowed the case proceed to the appellate court.

Incidental sales of raw milk from the farm are legal in Wisconsin, however a new, strict interpretation of the law by DATCP amounts to a virtual ban on sales. Last year, the agency decided that an incidental sale is a one-time sale, meaning that if a dairy were to sell the milk to the same customer twice they would be breaking the law. Today’s victory will allow Max’s case to be heard in an appellate court. He is currently working on his appellate brief with legal counsel. Ultimately, Max hopes to obtain a Supreme Court verdict on the civil liberty of unregulated farm-to-consumer direct trade.

source: Weston A. Price Foundation press release

Monsanto Develops Tearless Onion

The seed company has unveiled a tearless onion dubbed the “EverMild,” modeled after the famous Vidalia sweet onion from Georgia. Monsanto says the onion is neither organic nor genetically modified, claiming it has been on the market for over a dozen years. The “EverMild” onion is a cross-pollinating different plant breeds, and complex computer models, to arrive at the right proprietary blend of sweetness. “Our focus has been more on what makes something a successful product for growers, things like [crop] yield or disease resistance,” explains Monsanto spokeswoman Danielle Stuart. “We’re looking at things with a more consumer-focused point of view now, at things that are more interesting to the consumer’s sensory experience.”

“The trait is a little bit tricky to develop because you can’t just eat onion after onion,” explains Scott Hendrick, a Monsanto breeder based in Madison, Wisconsin. “We can sample a few, but pretty soon you’ve ruined your palate for the rest of the day. So, we do rely on a lab screening technique that we’ve come up with to tell us which onions would match this profile.” The EverMild is a “long-day” onion that grows best in a more northern climate. It is harvested in September and sold through March, thus positioning as a winter stand-in for the Vidalia, which is only available from April to September. Like the Vidalia, the trademarked EverMild will have its own intellectual property protections. Hendricks says farmers using EverMild seeds must conform to growing conditions set out by Monsanto, and samples from every yield must be tested and approved for sweetness in order to carry the EverMild label.

source: River Front Times, February 17, 2010

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

Thanks USDA!

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

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

Join us on Facebook! www.facebook.com/Horizon

©2010 Horizon Photo by Simon Russell
German conglomerate Bayer CropScience should pay a dozen Arkansas farmers nearly $50 million for allowing a genetically altered strain of rice to escape into the commercial market, damaging rice prices in 2006, a jury ruled Thursday. An attorney for the farmers, Scott Powell, said the jury decided on the judgment after less than two hours of deliberations Thursday afternoon in Lonoke County. The farmers claimed an experimental rice strain developed by Bayer called Liberty Link was allowed to make its way into the stream of commercially marketed rice. Liberty Link was developed to withstand a popular herbicide that kills weeds in the fields. The suit claimed that rice prices fell after the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced in August 2006 that trace amounts of Liberty Link rice were found in U.S. long-grain rice stocks. The case was the fourth to go to trial among dozens filed by rice-belt farmers against Bayer CropScience, a subsidiary of the German chemical giant that makes aspirin. Bayer faced judgments of $4.5 million so far in the three cases it had lost before Thursday. The amount awarded Thursday far exceeds a $1 million judgment returned against Bayer by a Woodruff County jury in March. source: the Associated Press, April 16, 2010

Final Organic Dairy Pasture Rule Effective for New Operations June 17, Enforced on All by June 2011

According to these regulations, animals must graze for a minimum of 120 days annually, and obtain a minimum of 30% dry matter intake (DMI) from pasture over the grazing season. The producer and certifier jointly will determine a regional grazing plan for the operation. The plan must be contributory to soil health and carbon-undermines-soil-health

Whole Foods Stops Sale of Raw Milk

Whole Foods Market has discontinued the sale of raw milk and raw milk products, except for raw milk cheese.

In a statement the firm explained: “The basis for the decision is two-fold: 1) the realities of the very high additional costs for liability insurance for both Whole Foods Market and producers because of the potential risks from selling unpasteurized milk and milk products and 2) the many unique state regulations governing the sale of raw milk, making it a challenge for us to create a raw milk standard, as a national company, to satisfy all stakeholders and continue sales. In recognition of the passionate support for raw milk by a number of our customers, for the next couple months we will provide the contact information of raw milk suppliers for those who wish to continue to purchase raw milk and are looking for another resource. We also highly appreciate the services of the farmers who have supplied raw milk to our stores and wish them much success.”

source, March 31, 2010 Email from Whole Foods Market

Man Convicted for Misrepresenting Products as Organic

A cooperative investigation between USDA and Texas authorities has resulted in the successful prosecution of a Texas man for misrepresenting non-organic products as organic. Basilio Coronado, a partner in Select-Corn Bean and Pea Inc., operating out of Brownfield, Texas, was convicted February 26, 2010 of fraudulently selling products as organic. Coronado was sentenced to 24 months in federal prison, three years of supervised release and to pay $523,692.08 in restitution. He is barred from participating in any USDA or other agriculture programs for five years. The three counts concerned the 2004 and 2005 time frames when Coronado knowingly misrepresented and sold over 3.3 million pounds of conventional milo (grain sorghum), 396,120 pounds of conventional pinto beans, and 60,410 pounds of conventional garbanzo beans. Coronado pleaded guilty in Nov. 2009.

source, iatforum, March 16, 2010

Amending with Compost Plus

Generally, when growing in Fort Vee® or Fort Light®, plants will have ample nutrients for healthy growth until the media is filled with roots. At the point of root fill, plants should be up-potted or transplanted. When it is not feasible to up-pot, amend the media with Compost Plus®, our container and transplant booster mix. Apply ½ inch to the surface of the container by broadcasting, even through dense foliage, and water in. Compost Plus® should be added before complete root fill of the media. Do not wait to see evidence of stress in the plant before amending.

New Research: Synthetic Nitrogen Destroys Soil Carbon

‘Fertilizer is good for the father and bad for the son;’ – Dutch saying

Scientists have assumed for decades that synthetic nitrogen does one good deed for the environment: it helps build carbon in soil. The case for synthetic N and carbon goes like this. Dousing farm fields with synthetic nitrogen makes plants grow bigger and faster. As plants grow, they pull carbon dioxide from the air. Some of the plant is harvested as crop, but the rest—the residue—stays in the field and ultimately becomes soil. In this way, some of the carbon gobbles up by those N-enhanced plants stays in the ground and out of the atmosphere.

But that logic has come under fierce challenge from a team of University of Illinois researchers who argue that the net effect of synthetic nitrogen use is to reduce soil’s organic matter content. Why? Because, they posit, nitrogen fertilizer stimulates soil microbes, which feast on organic matter. Over time, the impact of this enhanced microbial appetite outweighs the benefits of more crop residues. And their analysis gets more alarming. Synthetic nitrogen use, they argue, creates a kind of treadmill effect. As organic matter dissipates, soil’s ability to store organic nitrogen declines. A large amount of nitrogen then leaches away, fouling ground water in the form of nitrates, and entering the atmosphere as nitrous oxide (N2O), a greenhouse gas with some 300 times the heat-trapping power of carbon dioxide. In turn, with its ability to store organic nitrogen compromised, only one thing can help heavily fertilized farmland keep crumbling monster yields: more additions of synthetic N. If the Illinois team is correct, synthetic nitrogen’s effect on carbon sequestration swings from being an important ecological advantage to perhaps its gravest liability. Not only would nitrogen fertilizer be contributing to climate change in a way not previously taken into account, but it would also be undermining the long-term productivity of the soil.


---

We speak organic.
Monsanto Faked Indian Brinjal Data

The debate on genetically modified (GM) brinjal variety continues to generate heat. Former managing director of Monsanto India, Tiruvadi Jagadisan, is the latest to join the critics of BT brinjal, perhaps the first industry insider to do so. Jagadisan, who worked with Monsanto for nearly two decades, including eight years as the managing director of India operations, said the company “used to fake scientific data” submitted to government regulatory agencies to get commercial approvals for its products in India.

He said government regulatory agencies with which the company used to deal in the 1980s simply depended on data supplied by the company while giving approvals to herbicides. “The Central Insecticide Board was supposed to give these approvals based on the location and crop-specific data from India. But it simply accepted foreign data supplied by Monsanto. They did not even have a test tube to validate the data and, at times, the data itself was faked,” Jagadisan said.

Asked to comment on Jagadisan’s allegations, a Monsanto spokesperson said: “We have full faith in the Indian regulatory system, which has its checks and measures in place to ensure accuracy and authenticity of data furnished to them.” On approval of GM crops, the spokesperson said the regulatory process was stringent and “no biotech crops are allowed in the market until they undergo extensive and rigid crop safety assessments, following strict scientific protocols”.

Source: http://indiatoday.intoday.in/site/story/300/375920/story/Monsanto-%27faked%27+data+for+approvals+claims+its+ex-chief.html

US Food Waste Increasing

An estimated 40% of all food produced in America is discarded. According to a report from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, each person in the US puts 1400 calories of food in the garbage daily. This waste figure has increased 50% since 1974. Some occurs at the household level.

Source: Pediatrics, online May 17, 2010

ADHD in Kids Tied to Organophosphate Pesticides

Children exposed to organophosphate pesticides have a higher risk of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), according to a new study. Researchers tracked the pesticides’ breakdown products in kids’ urine and found those with high levels were almost twice as likely to develop ADHD as those with undetectable levels. The findings are based on data from the general U.S. population, meaning that exposure to the pesticides could be harmful even at levels commonly found in children’s environment.

“There is growing concern that these pesticides may be related to ADHD,” said Marc Weisskopf of the Harvard School of Public Health, who worked on the study. “What this paper specifically highlights is that this may be true even at low concentrations.” Organophosphates were originally developed for chemical warfare, and they are known to be toxic to the nervous system. Weisskopf and colleagues’ sample included 1,139 children between 8 and 15 years. They interviewed the children’s mothers, or another caretaker, and found that about one in ten met the criteria for ADHD, which jibes with estimates for the general population. After accounting for factors such as gender, age and race, they found the odds of having ADHD rose with the level of pesticide breakdown products.


High Fructose Corn Syrup Linked to Diseases

Teams at Princeton and Duke have found that high fructose corn syrup leads to large weight gains in rats, compared to table sugar. It also leads to abnormal increases in body fat, rising triglycerides, and scarring of the liver. Americans each consume 60 pounds of the sweetener every year.

Source: The Organic and Non-GMO Report, May, 2010

GE Transgenes Found Not to Degrade

Scientists in Canada found the Roundup Ready corn transgene in numerous soil-dwelling animals, demonstrating that GE transgenes don’t degrade significantly in the food web. The transgene was found in all animals tested, including arthropods, nematodes, insects and earthworms. These findings suggest that the transgenes can transfer to non-GE plants and humans from GE-contaminated soil.

Source: www.agronomy-journal.org

Offering Natural Fertilizers, Soil Amendments, and Environmentally Compatible Pest Controls

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

Visit us on the Web: www.norganics.com or call for the location of your nearest wholesale distributor

Visit us on the Web: www.norganics.com or call for the location of your nearest wholesale distributor

Offering Natural Fertilizers, Soil Amendments, and Environmentally Compatible Pest Controls

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

Visit us on the Web: www.norganics.com or call for the location of your nearest wholesale distributor

Learn More About Our More Than 100 Years of Experience

Visit us on the Web: www.norganics.com or call for the location of your nearest wholesale distributor

Learn More About Our More Than 100 Years of Experience

Visit us on the Web: www.norganics.com or call for the location of your nearest wholesale distributor

Learn More About Our More Than 100 Years of Experience

Visit us on the Web: www.norganics.com or call for the location of your nearest wholesale distributor

Learn More About Our More Than 100 Years of Experience

Visit us on the Web: www.norganics.com or call for the location of your nearest wholesale distributor

Learn More About Our More Than 100 Years of Experience
Shifting the Paradigm...Toward More Natural Beekeeping
by Christy Hememen

Remember when bees weren’t in the news? When they were just a normal part of daily life on the farm? Then they were, lazily buzzing in and out of their hives, doing their bee thing... virtually ignored by beekeepers until time to rob the hives for honey...

What’s happened? What changed that we now have problems with acronyms like CCD, which stands for Colony Collapse Disorder, and documentaries about this mysterious bee disease that scientists can’t even study effectively because the primary symptom of the problem is that the bees just disappear?

Bees lived for millions of years with no help or intervention from beekeepers, and now beekeepers can barely keep their bees alive. What on earth have we done?

Think back over our short agricultural history for just a second... and yep, a second is about all the longer it takes to realize...

We’ve been on the fast track to “Bigger, Better, Fast-er, More” for awhile now. We’ve “improved” some things in agriculture to such an extent that the use of chemicals is now considered normal, even required. We’ve created an entire industrial food system that depends upon them.

And now there’s some sort of problem with honey-bees. Everybody’s heard that - but nobody knows what it is, or why. Science is looking for the cause of course, but some folks might be tempted to say that the reason(s) is (are) obvious.

One cause may be that the use of pesticides both inside and outside the conventional beehive has grown commonplace over the course of the last twenty-five years. So we may have reached the tipping point where the accumulated chemical treatments are making bees sick.

Another aspect of agriculture that began to change as the “Bigger is Better” mindset began to take hold has seriously affected the diversity of farming. Enter monocropping... which allows us to be very efficient and to grow huge expanses of one crop! Efficient in its way, yes, but this situation creates a nutritional “desert” for bees, since outside the short timeframe during which the one crop is in bloom, there is nothing for the bees to eat!

In this way the monoculture method of farming helps to foster the migratory pollination industry. If bees couldn’t live somewhere year round, then we had to “bring the bees to the trees”... and this took us a step further from nature’s original plan when we started trucking bees, locked in boxes, across the country to pollinate such crops as the almond trees.

So now perhaps, with Colony Collapse Disorder, the bees are warning us - acting as the canary in the coal mine. Organic farming shows us that our systems and methods work best when they emulate nature, and when we work against these natural systems we encounter devastating problems!

The top bar system

The top bar hive beekeeping system does some things that help us to return to a more natural system of keeping bees... making it possible to promote healthier bees by working with those systems, instead of against them.

The primary feature of a top bar hive is that it permits the bees to make all their own natural wax, with no so-called “assistance” in the form of sheets of milled foundation wax. This is important for three reasons:

1. It allows bees to make the cells in the honeycomb in the size that is best for the purpose they will use it for. These comb-based honeycomb figures into many of the workings of the hive - even down to the length of time it takes a worker honeybee to be born!

2. It allows bees to make the honeycombs themselves in the shape they prefer - a gentle curve known as a “catenary curve”.

3. It allows bees to make the honeycombs in the shape they prefer - a gentle curve known as a “catenary curve”.

Conventional foundation wax sheet to hang in racks in a super.

It’s also important because -- do you remember those pesticides we mentioned a minute ago that have been used in bee hives? Those chemicals are what we call “wax-soluble”. This means they dissolve into the bees’ wax honeycomb. And not only do bees live on this wax, but they store their honey in the wax comb cells, and they raise the baby bees there! So when those chemicals dissolve into the wax, they affect everything the bees do. Disconcertingly, these toxins also survive being melted down and re-milled into new foundation - so that even brand new foundation, just purchased, contains detectable levels of these poisons. We have made the inside of a beehive a chemical catch-all!

Demand for farm-fresh, unpasteurized milk has grown dramatically in recent years, as has the level of crackdowns on farmers’ rights to sell it, and consumers’ rights to purchase it. Laws are inconsistently implemented and enforced, false public safety claims are manipulated to scare people, and efforts are made to marginalize consumers who prefer raw milk. Yet the virtue of raw milk continue to be extolled by those who drink it, evidence of its health benefits is mounting, and the public outcry to demand that our food freedom be protected is growing by the day.

The 2010 Northeast Raw Milk Symposium will be an opportunity for raw milk farmers, consumers and advocates to come together to learn and discuss the issues around access to unpasteurized milk, and to strategize about how to work together to defend and expand our rights. The Symposium will feature talks and opportunities for dialogue with two of the leading voices in the field of raw milk, Sally Fallon Mored and Peter Kennedy. Both have written and spoken extensively on raw milk issues around the United States and internationally.

Sally Fallon Mored, MA, will talk about the health issues around raw milk. Sally is the president of The Weston A. Price Foundation and founder of A Campaign for Real Milk (www.realmilk.com). She is the author of Nourishing Traditions: The Cookbook that Challenges Politically Correct Nutrition and the Diet Dictocrats (with Mary G. Enig, PhD), a well-researched, thought-provoking guide to traditional foods. Sally also is a journalist, chef, nutrition researcher, homemaker, and community activist. Her four healthy children were raised on whole foods including butter, cream, eggs and meat.

Peter Kennedy, Esq., will talk about legal and rights issues around raw milk. Pete is president of the Farm to Consumer Legal Defense Fund, an organization devoted to defending the rights of farmers to sell what they produce, and of consumers to have access to those products. He is also an attorney and works primarily on the right of farmers to distribute raw milk and raw milk products directly to consumers. He has represented or assisted in the representation of dairy farmers facing possible state enforcement action in Florida, Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan and Indiana. He has helped farmers get started in the business of distributing raw milk and raw milk products in many other states. He is currently working with others to challenge the federal ban on the interstate shipment of raw milk for human consumption.

The Symposium will also feature a panel discussion of raw milk farmers and advocates from around the region, which will offer an opportunity for participants to hear about specific issues around access to raw milk in New England. This discussion will give attendees a chance to brainstorm ideas for how to work together to share resources and ideas around broadening and preserving access to raw milk.

2010 Northeast Raw Milk Symposium
Friday, August 13, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon
UMass Campus, Amherst, Massachusetts, Cape Cod Lounge, Student Union
Open to the public, admission $20 for NOFA members, $25 for non-members

Saranac Valley Farms
Seed Potatoes
-NYS Certified - Certified Organic
by NOFA-NY Certified Organic, LLC.
3489 State Rte 3 PO Box 183, Saranac, NY 12981
www.saranacvalleyfarms.com 518-293-8298

Peter Kennedy, Esq., will talk about legal and rights issues around raw milk. Pete is president of the Farm to Consumer Legal Defense Fund, an organization devoted to defending the rights of farmers to sell what they produce, and of consumers to have access to those products. He is also an attorney and works primarily on the right of farmers to distribute raw milk and raw milk products directly to consumers. He has represented or assisted in the representation of dairy farmers facing possible state enforcement action in Florida, Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan and Indiana. He has helped farmers get started in the business of distributing raw milk and raw milk products in many other states. He is currently working with others to challenge the federal ban on the interstate shipment of raw milk for human consumption.

The Symposium will also feature a Panel Discussion of raw milk farmers and advocates from around the region, which will offer an opportunity for participants to hear about specific issues around access to raw milk in New England. This discussion will give attendees a chance to brainstorm ideas for how to work together to share resources and ideas around broadening and preserving access to raw milk.
Late Blight Survey: Results Point to Need for Further Research

By Rebekah L. Fraser

Defining late blight
Phytophthora infestans is a destructive parasitic fungus that causes late blight in tomatoes, potatoes and other solanaceous plants.

Several varieties of late blight exist; among them are mating types and strains. The late blight in the Northeast has one mating type, which needs live tissue to survive. Other Phytophthora have two mating types and can survive in the soil. In 2008, strain US-8 developed in potatoes and didn’t touch tomatoes. In 2009, strains US-14 and US-19 (both single-mating types) attacked both potatoes and tomatoes with equal virulence.

Late blight lesions produce white fuzz on the underside of leaves. Phytophthora’s reproduction cycle is rapid. When the spores land, it germinates, penetrates the leaf and allows the fungus to move through it. The fungus infests stem, foliage and fruit. On the stem, it looks like a canker. On the fruit, it’s a hard lesion with rings of concentric growth. On the leaves, it produces white fuzz on the underside of the leaf.

Several growers have noticed differences in the blight season by burning it, freezing it or feeding it to livestock. The effects of this rapidly-moving fungus can be devastating. Hazzard suggests the following:

- Destroy infected tissue before the new growing season by burning it, freezing it or feeding it to livestock.
- Several methods in concert work to protect crops from late blight. T h e  N a t u r a l  F a r m e r  S u m m e r,  2 0 1 0
- Buy certified disease-free potato seed (but there is a 1 percent tolerance for late blight, so look at the seed).
- At the start of the season, scout and destroy volunteer potatoes.
- Allow 90% of growing fields to lie fallow in 2010. Grow tomatoes without using any greenhouses, since spores do not carry Phytophthora.
- Let greenhouse temperatures drop to freezing. Greenhouse growers who battled late blight in 2009 and keep their greenhouses warm over the winter to grow green can allow spores to survive the winter and re-infect solanaceous crops in 2010.
- Plant resistant varieties of potato, such as Legend (Territorial Seed Co.); Mountain Magic and Plum Regal (Johnny’s); Violet; Sunripe and NC3320 (Organic Seed Alliance); Matt’s Wild; Fertile; and Fantasso.
- Plant resistant varieties of potato, such as Kennebec, Sebago, Allegany and Chiefian.
- In greenhouses, focus on ventilation and keeping humidity down.
- Listen to or read reports about late blight, available from cooperative extension programs throughout the country.

Hazzard emphasizes the importance of taking action to protect the crop before infection. Choose the right inputs and apply them properly.

Before applying any crop treatment, farmers should make sure they properly combine the different fertility practices that had an impact on crop loss. Necrotic evidence about effects of fertility management practices on disease susceptibility was presented at the workshop and described in the article below. Seeking greater consistency in answering these questions, NOFA/Mass has begun a collaboration with the Real Food Campaign on a research project investigating the link between fertility practices and late blight. The project can be followed as the growing season assesses the impact of nutrient density fertility protocols on crop yields and disease resistance. You can learn more about the project by contacting me: ben.grosscup@nofamass.org, 413-549-1568.

The Natural Farmer

Phytophthora is a destructive parasitic fungus that causes late blight in tomatoes, potatoes and other solanaceous plants.

Despite challenges with late blight, 2009 was the best tomato production year in Fisher’s 12-year history. At the NOFA/Mass Conference, Fisher shared the methods he used in 2009 to create high yields on his organic farm.

Because Fisher utilizes a one-year-out rotation for his fields, his tomato fields lay fallow in 2008. During that period, Fisher overwintered with a grass legume and sod, which he plowed down in summer and followed with a six-week bare fallow period. During that time the ground was open to germinate as many weed seeds as possible. Fisher tilled the weeds under for weed control. In August, he composted with sheep manure and inoculated with minerals and various biological inputs to address nutrient shortfalls. Finally, he planted a fall cover crop of oats and peas.

In the spring of 2009, Fisher applied another round of pre-seed fertilizers and integrated biologicals into his custom dry blend based on soil testing and lab analysis. Fisher used biologicals and minerals. Lancaster Ag products comes out of the greenhouse; they reported an average of 15 percent tolerance for late blight, so look at the seed.

Seventy-one percent of respondents sprayed nothing for late blight in tomatoes grown outside. Mulch resulted in lower losses than other mulches. According to NOFA/Mass information and a free subscription, please visit www.nofamass.org/reference/lateblight.php.

The author is a freelance writer based in Massachusetts. This article originally appears in the April 2010 edition of Growing: Fruit, Nut & Vegetable Production and is reprinted with permission. For more information about the survey, please visit www.growingmagazine.com

Fisher was one of 327 respondents to the survey put out by NOFA/Mass in the fall of 2009. While it is not a scientific study, the survey begins to answer some of your questions about methods growers can use to prevent or treat late blight in tomatoes.

On the survey, NOFA asked questions about soil fertility, growing methods, pruning, mulching and treatments.

According to respondents, late blight losses on tomatoes grown outside were significantly higher than losses of crops grown in greenhouses. According to survey results, mulching resolved in somewhat lower incidence of loss than bare ground, and black plastic mulch resulted in lower losses than other mulches. More intense pruning seemed associated with lower loss due to late blight both inside and outside.

Seventy-one percent of respondents sprayed nothing on their tomatoes. Thirty-seven growers applied copper applications. The survey procedure was a 1 percent tolerance for late blight, so look at the seed. Fisher indicated an oxidized product in the field for 10 percent to see if it would do anything to the soil. T h e  N a t u r a l  F a r m e r  S u m m e r,  2 0 1 0

Before applying any crop treatment, farmers should make sure they properly combine the different fertility practices that had an impact on crop loss. Necrotic evidence about effects of fertility management practices on disease susceptibility was presented at the workshop and described in the article below. Seeking greater consistency in answering these questions, NOFA/Mass has begun a collaboration with the Real Food Campaign on a research project investigating the link between fertility practices and late blight. The project can be followed as the growing season assesses the impact of nutrient density fertility protocols on crop yields and disease resistance. You can learn more about the project by contacting me: ben.grosscup@nofamass.org, 413-549-1568.

Fisher was one of 327 respondents to the survey put out by NOFA/Mass in the fall of 2009. While it is not a scientific study, the survey begins to answer some of your questions about methods growers can use to prevent or treat late blight in tomatoes.

On the survey, NOFA asked questions about soil fertility, growing methods, pruning, mulching and treatments.

According to respondents, late blight losses on tomatoes grown outside were significantly higher than losses of crops grown in greenhouses. According to survey results, mulching resolved in somewhat lower incidence of loss than bare ground, and black plastic mulch resulted in lower losses than other mulches. More intense pruning seemed associated with lower loss due to late blight both inside and outside.

Seventy-one percent of respondents sprayed nothing on their tomatoes. Thirty-seven growers applied copper applications. The survey procedure was a 1 percent tolerance for late blight, so look at the seed. Fisher indicated an oxidized product in the field for 10 percent to see if it would do anything to the soil. T h e  N a t u r a l  F a r m e r  S u m m e r,  2 0 1 0

Before applying any crop treatment, farmers should make sure they properly combine the different fertility practices that had an impact on crop loss. Necrotic evidence about effects of fertility management practices on disease susceptibility was presented at the workshop and described in the article below. Seeking greater consistency in answering these questions, NOFA/Mass has begun a collaboration with the Real Food Campaign on a research project investigating the link between fertility practices and late blight. The project can be followed as the growing season assesses the impact of nutrient density fertility protocols on crop yields and disease resistance. You can learn more about the project by contacting me: ben.grosscup@nofamass.org, 413-549-1568.
by Jocelyn Engman

"For the relief of the suffering ... our economy proposes, not health, but vast 'cures' that further centralize power and increase profit ... and these of course are followed by more regulating laws and agencies to see that our health is protected, our free-don preserved, and our money well spent." Wendell Berry, The Unsettling of America

I met Wendell Berry in the spring of 2007, when he participated on a panel discussion hosted by the Leopold Center in Ames, Iowa. Wendell Berry wrote ‘The Unsettling of America’, a powerful book about culture and agriculture in America that is as relevant today as it was 30 years ago.

One of the questions for the Leopold panel: “How do we help young farmers get into sustainable agriculture these days? How do young farmers make a living from farming without going the conventional route?”


Amen! When I investigate potential value-added agriculture ventures, it seems that everywhere I turn, I run into government regulations that will cost much time, effort, and money. My husband and I have experienced regulations first hand when making herb-infused oils for our herb company, Pickle Creek Herbal.

In order to produce our oils, we have to rent a commercial kitchen and apply for an annual permit (which comes with annual fees and an annual inspection). People have been making these oils for centuries without problems, and in fact the basil oils that we infuse into our culinary products have natural antimicrobial properties. But in this century, and this country, our herb-infused oils are considered ‘potentially hazardous.’

Now, regulations are hitting even closer to home. The FDA is looking into regulating alternative medicine, including all vitamins, herbs, supplements, and other natural substances used as health promoters. I do not want to be classified as a drug dealer for growing thyme in my backyard! I also don’t want to see alternative medicine struggle or lose momentum under the heavy money, time, and energy drain of complying with the FDA.

Alternative medicine is both a vital supplement and a vital substitute for allopathic medicine, and we need it to stay in good health!

Are food and farm regulations really keeping the consumer safe? Are they really about consumer safety at all? As a consumer, I think that consumer safety is a good idea. But, what’s interesting is that even while the FDA wants to regulate alternative medicine, it also wants to allow irradiated food to be sold without being labeled as such. It wants to do this even though irradiation is banned in much of the world and is prohibited in organic production.

And then there are GMOs: Why is it illegal to label products as GMO free? I ask this not only as a consumer but also as a chemist who has studied the biochemical reactions within the human body. We’re messing with genetic material, the most powerful memory machine on earth, the source of life itself. In a world that cries for regulations to keep our consumer safe, why aren’t we just a little more cautious when it comes to GMOs?

Unfortunately, many small, local farmers have been put out of business in the name of consumer safety. More often than not, the government is standing in the way of small, local producers. Meanwhile, big corporations (the ones with influence in Washington) are the last to be touched. Aspartame, pesticides, confined animal feeding operations - these are health hazards that we apparently can live with.

In fact, sometimes gargantuan agricultural corporations can influence lawmakers to specifically put niche producers out of business. For example, Monsanto is currently lobbying the FDA and Federal Trade Commission, claiming that consumers are being duped into believing that milk from rBGH (recombinant bovine growth hormone) cows is somehow inferior, and so it should become illegal for smaller producers to label their milk as ‘rBGH-free.’

Will it soon be illegal to label milk as rBGH-free? And if it does become illegal, who will benefit most from its being so?

Mad Cow Disease

Even if you’re a vegetarian and mad cow disease is the last thing on your mind, continue reading to find out your government’s true position on American health.

Mad cow disease is bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), a fatal, neurodegenerative disease of cattle. BSE is caused by misfolded proteins called prions. Once a prion is transmitted, it invades the brain and spreads exponentially, usually causing death within a few months. BSE has gained attention because in Britain more than 150 people have died of a disease with similar neurological symptoms: variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD).

Since many of the vCJD patients had consumed tainted beef, BSE is assumed to be the mechanism by which all affected individuals contracted vCJD.

Mad cow disease incidence also appears to correlate with slaughtering practices that mixed nervous system tissue with hamburger and other beef. Just in case you were wondering, three cases of mad cow disease have been found in the United States: one in 2003, one in 2005, and one in 2006.

If BSE can lead to death in humans, it makes sense for us to keep it out of our food system. And we have the power to do this. There is a test for mad cow disease that can be performed when the cow is slaughtered and thus can prevent contaminated meat from ever reaching the market. Creekstone Farms Premium Beef of Kansas wanted to test all of their cows for BSE.

Unfortunately, according to the May 29, 2007, article from The Associated Press, ‘U.S. Government Fights to Keep Meatpackers From Testing All Slaughtered Cattle for Mad Cow,’ the Bush administration has said it will fight to keep meatpackers from testing all their animals. Larger meat companies fear that if we allow smaller producers to start testing meat, they, too, might have to perform the expensive tests on their larger herds. In addition, they worry that widespread testing could lead to a false positive (not to mention a true positive) that would harm the meat industry. Thus, this simple test that can protect human life is being fought in the name of economics.

The story gets even better (worse, actually). The USDA says that we do need to do something to protect American consumers from animal diseases. Its solution is the National Animal Identification Program...
System (NAIS). Under this system, which is currently voluntary but is scheduled to become mandatory in 2008, every single livestock animal in the United States will be identified, tagged, tracked, logged, and reported to the government.

Everyone, from factory farms to small farms that sell direct to local consumers to homesteaders who raise their own meat, will have to register their property as farm premises and obtain a Premise ID, tag all their animals, and submit all the paperwork and fees.

Who's behind NAIS? It’s not small farmers. NAIS will result in many small farms going out of business. That’s 48 hours of detriments to small family farms. Small, traditional-style farmers, who have genetically diverse animals of different ages on their farms, will be required to have an ID for each and every animal. The result is that the cost of farming will greatly increase for small farmers. NAIS is economically skewed to help big corporate farms (by opening up the export markets to them) at the detriment of small family farms.

This system might be livable if it really did protect consumers by cutting down on animal disease, but notice that NAIS does nothing to stop disease or contamination from entering the food supply. The goal of NAIS is to provide 48-hour trace back to the farm of origin in the case of problems. That’s 48 hours after the problem is detected.

The USDA is championing a system that would allow contaminated BSE beef to circulate in the food system and infect unwitting consumers, even though there’s a simple test that could stop BSE meat from ever passing through the slaughterhouse door. And the USDA is championing yet another system that will result in many small farms going out of business. The USDA is playing both producer and consumer.

Let’s stand up against NAIS and demand that labeling such as ‘GMO free’ or ‘BGH free’ be protected as a natural right of both producer and consumer.

Let’s let the FDA out of complementary and alternative medicine.

Let’s ask the USDA to play fair: If we must subsidize farming, let’s do it in a way that builds rather than destroys consumer health. Surely we can afford to re-allocate some of the money spent to subsidize conventional grains so that we can nourish the poorest food on the planet, to something a little healthier, such as fresh produce.

Better yet, let’s not subsidize corporate farming at all. Let’s get rid of the farm bill.

Let’s also stop relying on a government that appears to have little motivation to protect consumer health. As long as a government entity has the power to regulate, there will be a corporate entity with the money and the political clout to form a government entity. Perhaps it’s time for us to move beyond consumer safety and into consumer responsibility.

Beyond raising your voice against our current food and farming regulations, there’s an easier way for you to have your say about the issues surrounding our current food system: Buy Local. When you buy direct from farmers, you know exactly who you’re supporting. You know what kind of farming practices they’re supporting, and you know that you’re buying food from a person who cares more about the quality than the quantity of her produce. In short, you know that you’re buying from a person who cares as much about your health as he cares about your money.

As a small farmer, my goal is to produce the absolute best tasting, most nutritious food that I can produce - to nourish the soil so that I can nourish the lives of my customers. Many of my local farmer friends have the same goals. If you care about the quality of your food and health, these are the people you should buy from.

Every time that you buy from your small, local producer, you’re making it a little easier for smaller, family farms to survive. Given the amount of human effort that goes into producing high-quality produce, we’re all getting a phenomenal deal at our local farmer’s market.

A CSA farmer friend of mine once joked that if you add up all the time that goes into organic gardening, she makes $3.50 an hour. She’s probably closer to the truth than any of us realizes. Sometimes I pay the farmer’s market vendors a little more than what they’re asking, just because I know the only thing standing between them and quitting is a love for what they do — and how long will that love last as regulations and other economic roadblocks continue to close down on them?

Small, family farming is the last place where I want to see economics win over the essential task of caring for land and community. Wendell Berry argued that our culture has already lost so much with the decline of the small, family farm. Let’s not lose any more small farmers.

Ultimately it is us and our decisions that must regulate our food system through the free market. In my mind there’s only one way to be safe about food: either produce it or know who does. To truly know that our food is safe, we need to support instead of strangle our local producers. Let’s get out of their way!

Author Jocelyn Engman and her husband Tim live on a 10-acre farm outside of Fairfield, IA, where they run Pickle Creek Herbals. http://www.picklecreekherbal.com creating herb-infused olive oils & vinegars, soups & salads, jellies & teas. Her mailing address is: 1341 Sproule Ave, Brighton, IA 52240. This article first ran in the Savvy Vegetarian at www.savvyvegetarian.com.
Now is the Time to Grow your Business at Natural Products Expo East

We Invite You to Join Us

The 4th Annual Organic Summit will take place October 13, 2010 at the Seaport Hotel in Boston, MA.

Register by July 1, 2010 using promo code NOFA and receive $100 off the registration fee of $595.

For more information visit www.theorganicsummit.com

Admission to Natural Products Expo East/Organic Products Expo, BioFach America/All Things Organic is included with registration to the 2010 Organic Summit.

Produced by New Hope Natural Media
ADVANCING ECO-AGRICULTURE

Connecting the Missing Links for Full Potential Agriculture

- Providing biologically balanced nutrition
  the key to healthy, nutrient rich food production
- Stimulating plant health to naturally
  resist pest attack.
- Maximizing genetic potential and productivity

MICRONIZED

Mineral Chelates

for Foliar and Drip Application

440-632-1012
15266 HAYES RD., MIDDLEFIELD, OH 44062

THE ANSWER™

...to your seed search

Seed Corn • Alfalfa • Clover • Grasses
Peas • SUDANGRASS • Cover Crops
Summer Forages • Specialty Brassicas

American Organic

Your Full Line Non-GMO Seed Source

VALUE PLUS®
Nutritionally Enhanced Seed Corn
10% protein • 9% fat

866.471.9465
www.american-organic.com
request@american-organic.com
PO Box 385, Warren, IL 61087

Protecting What You Value Most

Agribusiness Insurance Solutions

Enduring relationships with our clients have resulted in a
mutual respect that lies at the heart of how we do business.

Local Offices Throughout
the Northeast.

For an Agent Near You Call:
1-800-The-Farm
(1-800-843-3276)
or visit
www.FarmFamily.com

Greenleaf Foundation

Making Small Grants to non-profit organizations that
promote organic farming and
gardening and community
development throughout
New England.

For more information please
contact:

Greenleaf Foundation
c/o LWC
230 Congress St
Boston, MA 02110
(617) 622-2260
You can’t fake this.
Only pure organic goodness from family farms. Taste the difference. For you. For your family. For the planet.

Get free yogurt and green goods. Check out MyStonyfieldRewards.com.
Red Fire Farm: Running the Regulatory Gauntlet

by Jack Kittredge

If there is anyone who was born to farm, it is Ryan Voiland. He was already a local legend in Massachusetts 20 years ago as the kid who ran his own farm stand while he was in middle school!

Ryan started by picking wild berries and selling them at a little stand on his parents’ land in Montague. Looking to add to his selection of items, he planted a garden and started growing vegetables.

“My parents were always very supportive and helped out,” he says. “I would Email them instructions about what to plant, when.”

Being devoutly organic, Voiland had to pick his way at Cornell. He found that professors had quite variable philosophies about farming practices.

“Some were very old school,” he says, “and would not hear of organic. Others had very open minds and recognized organic as a legitimate production strategy.”

By keeping the business going during college Ryan had a financial track record that stood him in good stead. He used it to demonstrate to the Farm Service Agency that he was a good risk. Graduating from Cornell in 2000, with the agency’s help the next year he bought a 50 acre farm in Granby, Massachusetts, in the middle of the state’s best growing region — the Pioneer Valley. Selling off the farm’s development rights made the deal a little more manageable.

Sarah and Ryan Voiland show off their produce in front of their farmstand.

Helping Our Community
Eat Healthy
Food For 32 Years.

Local, Organic Produce  Meat & Cheese
Bakery Specialties   Deli, eat in or take out
Supplements & Body Care Items

“Eat as though our livelihoods depended on it”

FRANKLIN COMMUNITY CO-OPERATIVE

Green Fields Market
McCusker’s Market

One Co-op.... Two Stores...

Green Fields Market
144 Main St.
Greenfield
Mon-Fri 8-8
Sat 9-6, Sun 10-5
(413) 773-9567

McCusker’s Market
3 State Street,
Shelburne Falls
Open Daily
7 a.m. to 7 p.m.
(413) 625-9411
www.franklincommunity.coop
He chose the name “Red Fire Farm” in memory of a devastating 1922 fire that had destroyed the house and barn. He also liked the name because “New Red Fire” is his favorite red leaf lettuce.

In 2005 Voiland, a lifelong vegetarian, met Sarah Ingraham through a vegetarian dating website. Sarah was farming in Stafford Springs, Connecticut, and they traded ideas and advice.

“We talked about farming a lot,” Sarah recalls. “Then Ryan brought down a spader machine he had and used it on my farm. He stayed and helped me with my market. Finally I switched my CSA over to another manager and came up here to work for Red Fire in 2007. We got married last year.”

About 20 acres of the Granby farm’s land are suitable for vegetable production, with the rest better for pasture. So over the years Ryan has rented another 70 to 75 acres in various spots around Granby on which he now produces vegetables.

“These fields here are all of the Merrimack soil type,” he says, “which is pretty good stuff. The vegetables do well on it. Maybe it’s a little on the sandy side. The fields are easy to get on early in the year, and drain well. But maybe they don’t hold water quite as well as a Hadley loam. So we irrigate.”

Voiland worries about the permanence of his operation, being so dependent on rented land.

“Development has slowed down,” he admits, “but there are still houses being built. Belchertown, which is right next to us, is the fastest growing town in Massachusetts. That town is just out of control. Granby isn’t developing that fast. But twenty years ago much of this was still farmland. We need more land than we own here, and we can’t be sure it will be available to us.”

As a result of that worry Ryan recently bought a farm in Montague, 45 minutes due north.

“It is Hadley loam,” he says, “right on the Connecticut River. But it has been farmed to death. The organic matter there is about 2%, whereas these soils haven’t been as heavily farmed and the organic content is more like 4 to 5%. We’ll probably work it so we do some of our earlier crops down here on the lighter soils, and the later ones up there.”

Red Fire Farm markets about 70% of their produce via a CSA that goes 20 weeks from the beginning of June to the end of October. In 2009 they had 960 shares. In 2010 it is over 1000. Some members pick up at the farm, but most of the shares are taken to distribution points in the Pioneer Valley and the Greater Boston area.

The farm also sells wholesale to natural food stores and restaurants, farmers markets in Springfield and Boston, and at on-farm stands in Granby and Montague. The plan is to do the pick your own crops and the farm stand and greenhouses in Granby, but starting in 2012 to do about 75% of the field production at the Montague farm.

The Voilands also do a winter share during January, February and March, every other week. It’s root vegetables and salad greens, mostly. And they have a November and December CSA. April & May is the only time of year they aren’t doing a CSA.

“It’s nice to have one time when you can just focus on growing,” sighs Ryan. “The whole crew can focus on planting. Not that we aren’t harvesting then. We’re wholesaling salad mix and harvesting cucumbers. And our tomatoes are ready May 15. But we don’t have the quantities of the early stuff that would be needed for a CSA. It’s tricky because that’s the time we turn our greenhouses over to tomatoes and starts for the field. We have one house still devoted to a spring succession of salad mix. But it’s a tiny amount compared to what we had during the winter.”

Nature’s Best Organic Feeds™ has formulated a complete line of nutritionally based organic products with the ideal balance of vitamins and minerals.

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

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

As a result of that worry Ryan recently bought a farm in Montague, 45 minutes due north.

“It is Hadley loam,” he says, “right on the Connecticut River. But it has been farmed to death. The organic matter there is about 2%, whereas these soils haven’t been as heavily farmed and the organic content is more like 4 to 5%. We’ll probably work it so we do some of our earlier crops down here on the lighter soils, and the later ones up there.”

Red Fire Farm markets about 70% of their produce via a CSA that goes 20 weeks from the beginning of June to the end of October. In 2009 they had 960 shares. In 2010 it is over 1000. Some members pick up at the farm, but most of the shares are taken to distribution points in the Pioneer Valley and the Greater Boston area.

The farm also sells wholesale to natural food stores and restaurants, farmers markets in Springfield and Boston, and at on-farm stands in Granby and Montague. The plan is to do the pick your own crops and the farm stand and greenhouses in Granby, but starting in 2012 to do about 75% of the field production at the Montague farm.

The Voilands also do a winter share during January, February and March, every other week. It’s root vegetables and salad greens, mostly. And they have a November and December CSA. April & May is the only time of year they aren’t doing a CSA.

“It’s nice to have one time when you can just focus on growing,” sighs Ryan. “The whole crew can focus on planting. Not that we aren’t harvesting then. We’re wholesaling salad mix and harvesting cucumbers. And our tomatoes are ready May 15. But we don’t have the quantities of the early stuff that would be needed for a CSA. It’s tricky because that’s the time we turn our greenhouses over to tomatoes and starts for the field. We have one house still devoted to a spring succession of salad mix. But it’s a tiny amount compared to what we had during the winter.”

Nature’s Best Organic Feeds™ has formulated a complete line of nutritionally based organic products with the ideal balance of vitamins and minerals.

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

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

As a result of that worry Ryan recently bought a farm in Montague, 45 minutes due north.

“It is Hadley loam,” he says, “right on the Connecticut River. But it has been farmed to death. The organic matter there is about 2%, whereas these soils haven’t been as heavily farmed and the organic content is more like 4 to 5%. We’ll probably work it so we do some of our earlier crops down here on the lighter soils, and the later ones up there.”

Red Fire Farm markets about 70% of their produce via a CSA that goes 20 weeks from the beginning of June to the end of October. In 2009 they had 960 shares. In 2010 it is over 1000. Some members pick up at the farm, but most of the shares are taken to distribution points in the Pioneer Valley and the Greater Boston area.

The farm also sells wholesale to natural food stores and restaurants, farmers markets in Springfield and Boston, and at on-farm stands in Granby and Montague. The plan is to do the pick your own crops and the farm stand and greenhouses in Granby, but starting in 2012 to do about 75% of the field production at the Montague farm.

The Voilands also do a winter share during January, February and March, every other week. It’s root vegetables and salad greens, mostly. And they have a November and December CSA. April & May is the only time of year they aren’t doing a CSA.

“It’s nice to have one time when you can just focus on growing,” sighs Ryan. “The whole crew can focus on planting. Not that we aren’t harvesting then. We’re wholesaling salad mix and harvesting cucumbers. And our tomatoes are ready May 15. But we don’t have the quantities of the early stuff that would be needed for a CSA. It’s tricky because that’s the time we turn our greenhouses over to tomatoes and starts for the field. We have one house still devoted to a spring succession of salad mix. But it’s a tiny amount compared to what we had during the winter.”

Nature’s Best Organic Feeds™ has formulated a complete line of nutritionally based organic products with the ideal balance of vitamins and minerals.

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

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

As a result of that worry Ryan recently bought a farm in Montague, 45 minutes due north.

“It is Hadley loam,” he says, “right on the Connecticut River. But it has been farmed to death. The organic matter there is about 2%, whereas these soils haven’t been as heavily farmed and the organic content is more like 4 to 5%. We’ll probably work it so we do some of our earlier crops down here on the lighter soils, and the later ones up there.”

Red Fire Farm markets about 70% of their produce via a CSA that goes 20 weeks from the beginning of June to the end of October. In 2009 they had 960 shares. In 2010 it is over 1000. Some members pick up at the farm, but most of the shares are taken to distribution points in the Pioneer Valley and the Greater Boston area.

The farm also sells wholesale to natural food stores and restaurants, farmers markets in Springfield and Boston, and at on-farm stands in Granby and Montague. The plan is to do the pick your own crops and the farm stand and greenhouses in Granby, but starting in 2012 to do about 75% of the field production at the Montague farm.

The Voilands also do a winter share during January, February and March, every other week. It’s root vegetables and salad greens, mostly. And they have a November and December CSA. April & May is the only time of year they aren’t doing a CSA.

“It’s nice to have one time when you can just focus on growing,” sighs Ryan. “The whole crew can focus on planting. Not that we aren’t harvesting then. We’re wholesaling salad mix and harvesting cucumbers. And our tomatoes are ready May 15. But we don’t have the quantities of the early stuff that would be needed for a CSA. It’s tricky because that’s the time we turn our greenhouses over to tomatoes and starts for the field. We have one house still devoted to a spring succession of salad mix. But it’s a tiny amount compared to what we had during the winter.”

Nature’s Best Organic Feeds™ has formulated a complete line of nutritionally based organic products with the ideal balance of vitamins and minerals.

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

When organic feeds are a way of life on your farm, trust Nature’s Best. To learn how your farm can benefit from Nature’s Best feed, call us today at 800-767-4537 or visit www.organicfeeds.com.
With so much production happening, of course, Ryan and Sarah need a lot of help. By mid June they have some 30 people on the payroll. Many of the area farms producing at this scale hire foreign workers under the H-2A program. They work hard and are reliable.

“We have thought about going with an H-2A crew,” Voiland says. “Most of them come back every year and learn the job and are very efficient. But we still think it is valuable to allow an entry place for American young people with an enthusiasm for farming. So pretty much all our crew is recent college graduates. In fact, we’re one of the few farms around of our size who hire an almost exclusively American crew.

“The nature of these workers,” he continues, “is that they are moving on in their lives and may only work one or two seasons. So that means we are always bringing in and training a new batch of people.”

Despite the inherent inefficiencies of this labor source, Ryan and Sarah feel it is important to give this opportunity to kids to see if they really want to be farmers. It also somewhat changes the culture of the farm.

Worker housing is an example. Not a lot of rental housing is available in Granby, and the farm came with an old house built after the 1922 fire. It has 6 bedrooms and three full bathrooms. The Voilands have made it available to some of their core workers, who have brought in their own furniture and run it cooperatively much like students jointly occupying an off-campus house. One even preferred to live off on his own and, in the spring of 2009, built a yurt on some of the farm’s back land.

This turned out to be a bad move.

“Someone rode by on a horse and saw it,” Sarah sighs, “and they called up the town and reported it.”

“The building inspector told us it was illegal to camp on your own land,” Ryan adds. “There are a lot of farms that have cabins, yurts, and tents for workers. But our understanding now is that all of that is illegal. Even if you just want to sleep out under the stars, I think that is illegal.

“But once the issue was raised,” he continues, “the town people – the building inspector, the board of health, the fire department – began looking into which state regulations would govern our workers staying here. They hadn’t had anyone before in Granby who was providing housing for workers.

Once the local officials contacted the state Department of Public Health, the regulatory machinery was set in motion. The decision came down that the house on Red Fire Farm needed to be either a rooming house or a ‘farm labor camp’. Since rooming houses are not permitted in Granby under the town bylaws, that left the only option being a farm labor camp – a facility rigorously inspected by the state.

“If you are housing two or more farm workers,” Sarah explains, “you can’t just have them live in a house. It becomes a farm labor camp.”

This regulation was initially designed to protect migrant workers -- who couldn’t speak much English and didn’t know much about their rights -- from substandard housing conditions. Now it was going to be applied to a farmhouse where young workers were living much as they had in college. So the state Department of Public Health sent their own inspector, along with the local ones, to see if the farmhouse measured up.

“I remember one meeting when at least six or seven different officials were each doing an inspection,” sighs Ryan. “They hadn’t warned us exactly when they would come. They looked at the yurt, but they decided they wanted to look at the house, too. People were living here, but they went through people’s rooms, looked around, and left telling us they would confer and decide what to do.

“It turns out they wanted us to come in compliance with the labor camp standards within a month,” he continues. “That would be June, right in the middle

**Healthy Living Soil**

**Earthworm Coconuts (Eggs)**

Earthworms are important for soil fertility and sustaining agriculture. They play an important role in the creation of healthy, productive soils. Basically, earthworms feeding and burrowing activities incorporate organic amendments into the soil, enhancing decomposition, humus formation, nutrient cycling, and soil structure development. Earthworm burrows persist as macro pores which provide low resistance channels for root growth, water infiltration, and gas exchange. These incredible earthworms are a vital component in the living biosystem that is healthy “living” soil.

Studies show that worms hatched in a new environment are able to adapt better than transporting and releasing live worms. Thus, we recommend using earthworm cocoons if you need to increase the worm population in your garden or farm. Please see our website for more information:

www.bwenfarms.com
of the growing season. We couldn’t afford to hire people for all this so we’d have to do much of it ourselves. But we also have to farm! If they had given us a winter, and time to schedule the costs, that would have made more sense.”

Once you become a farm labor camp, you have to apply every year and the state inspects you every year. Before, the farmhouse was kind of a private household where people do their own thing. They would all do jobs to keep the place clean. Now, as a farm labor camp, Ryan and Sarah had to be much more involved than the landlord of a building normally is. Daily maintenance has to be done, and the owners have to make sure it happens.

“We’re not big believers in bleach,” Sarah says. “But for labor camp rules they want you to do a daily bleaching of the shower floor, to rinse all your dishes in bleach. They wanted designated male and female bathrooms in the house. Luckily we have three, so we could do that. They are single bathrooms, without multiple stalls, so it didn’t make much sense to me. We had to put up fly strips, hand washing signs, and signs for exiting in case of fire. We had to have a 24-unit first aid kit stocked and ready, and throw out all our chipped dishes. The bedding has to be washed each week – that is our responsibility although it is people’s personal belongings.

“The beds have to be off the floor by a certain number of inches,” she continues. “People can’t use futons. The house didn’t have screen doors. We had to install those. We didn’t have a house number on the house. It was on our sign but not the house. They made us put one up. Some of our upstairs rooms don’t have vented heat, so we had to put electric heaters in all the bedrooms. You can’t have pets in the kitchen. Now if your pets are inside, they go where they want, including the kitchen. So essentially you can’t have them in the house. To me it seems ridiculous to have a law saying you can’t have a pet indoors. There is one spot at the back of the house that has persistent poison ivy. We’re not willing, as organic farmers, to use RoundUp. Even though we cut it back regularly, each year it seems to come back. They have given us grief over that, even though it is not near a door or where anyone walks.”

“Most of these aren’t bad things to have,” Ryan says, “but I feel imposed upon to have to do all those right away in the middle of the growing season. We’ve done a lot of immediate repairs and upgrades to address their immediate concerns, and it has cost us $20,000 to $30,000.

“One of the issues,” he continues, “is that the people who actually live here felt pretty infringed upon. Their personal spaces were getting invaded by inspectors every couple of weeks throughout last year. There was one inspector or another coming through their bedrooms and checking the entire household. It is still going on. The town’s inspectors were here yesterday.”

As if dealing with the local and state inspectors about worker housing was not enough, in July, 2009, the feds came knocking.

“We had a supposedly unrelated visit from the federal Department of Labor,” recalls Ryan. “They just showed up and knocked at the door, declaring they were going to do an audit of our business – payroll, housing, OSHA regulations, you name it.”

The federal inspectors did the exact same housing inspection that the state did, which struck the Vollands as redundant.

“I don’t understand,” says Sarah, “if the state was already doing that, why the feds had to as well.
The Natural Farmer

Summer, 2010

But they aren’t good at communicating. They just came and did their inspections. They did manage to communicate that they wanted us to pay a $5000 fine for being in violation of their rules – rules we didn’t even know about.”

“There was no effort to work out a timetable,” adds Ryan. “Or give us a reasonable chance to do this anytime but in the middle of the growing season. It would be much fairer to farms to say: ‘We found these problems. You need to fix them by such and such time. If you do, you’re all set. If you don’t, we’ll impose a fine.’ Instead they said: ‘Here are the violations, and here is the fine for them.’”

The federal labor law people also had a problem with the system of people only having their own water bottles out in the field. They wanted the farm to have big jugs and disposable paper cups, despite the fact that the Red Fire crews all had their own bottles and preferred them.

In addition to the housing inspection the feds did, they also did a complete audit of the farm’s books, going back three years.

Sarah and Ryan had a pay structure that worked well for them. They paid their hourly workers a straight wage, which exceeded the minimum required by law. But, like most farms, they spend a lot in the beginning of the year and make money at the end. So, for what they call the ‘core crew’ positions, they had people getting a regular salary throughout the season, and then getting a bonus at the end – sort of like profit sharing. They based the bonus on the employee’s pay rate, and felt people were being compensated pretty well with the year. This wasn’t satisfactory to the Department of Labor, however.

“Apparently,” explains Sarah, “if you pay some workers a salary instead of an hourly wage, you have to meet the minimum salary law. The federal people told me the minimum salary was $455 per week for full time people. We hadn’t been paying people told me the minimum salary was $455 per week for full time people. We hadn’t been paying that much in the initial payments, but if you take that much in the slow workers.

“I talked to a couple of other farms about what they did,” Sarah says, “and based our system on that, without looking at the law. I guess I should have checked the law (laughs). With the piece rate people you are supposed to keep track of what time they started and what time they finished, to see if they are actually making minimum wage over the time they worked. We hadn’t been doing that. If they don’t make minimum wage doing piecework, you have to pay them the minimum anyway. So there is no reason to do piecework. The record keeping alone is more work than it is worth.”

Finally, she continues, “we were counting housing as part of the staff’s compensation. They didn’t have to pay us rent and we were giving them money for a food fund, too. But if you do that, and it is not a payment visible to the government, then you will have problems. It won’t get counted as compensation towards the minimum wage.”

“They want to tax that income,” adds Ryan. “So they want you to pay it and then take it back as rent. We didn’t charge for rent for several years and we ended up having to pay several thousand dollars in back wages to some people.”

When this regulatory hammer fell on the V oilands they had also tried employing people on piecework to harvest strawberries. They thought they could hire high school kids and others they wouldn’t normally hire and give them the chance to work hard and make a lot of money while not losing money on the slow workers.

“They weren’t allowed to count the bonuses.”

“They had also tried employing people on piecework to harvest strawberries. They thought they could hire high school kids and others they wouldn’t normally hire and give them the chance to work hard and make a lot of money while not losing money on the slow workers. “I think our Congressmen, John Olver, was one of the more helpful ones,” says Ryan. “Kerry’s office was pretty lukewarm. Brad Mitchell from the Massachusetts Farm bureau has been pretty helpful. He helped draft some letters and talked to some of these people personally, I think. I talked with Phil, the executive director at CISA, and he talked to Scott Soares at the Department of Agricultural Resources. There may have been some pressure from them, although they don’t really have any direct authority here. This is all under the Department of Public Health. Eventually DPH asked for a plan and we submitted a timeline. That worked well for us. It was very helpful. They agreed to let us make many of the changes over the winter. They didn’t give us a fine or anything. The feds are worse. They are stricter, harder to talk to, and fined us right away.”

Although she never thought of it before in the Red Fire Farm situation, Sarah has some experience with farm labor camps. As a student she was active in an advocacy group for farm workers’ rights. They traveled around New York visiting different farms with migrant labor camps.

“There were situations,” she recalls, “you wouldn’t want to be in – like 8 people in one room or two stoves for 50 people to cook on. I can understand the reasons for this kind of regulation. You have people coming in to them who have language problems, don’t understand their rights and can’t advocate for themselves. I don’t want those protections weakened, or changed so people can bend them. But you don’t need those regulations for smaller farms employing college kids.

“When I was doing the whole student farm-worker advocacy,” she continues, “I was pretty adamant about how things ought to be. Now that I’m working on a farm I see it differently. Like, I don’t really think there should be overtime for farm workers.”

“If we had that,” Ryan adds, “we wouldn’t have any reason to do piecework. The record keeping alone is more work than it is worth.”

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 & available by mail order”

(Visit our website or call for details)

www.realpickles.com
(413)774-2600
Greenfield, MA

“You never think of it before in the Red Fire Farm situation, Sarah has some experience with farm labor camps. As a student she was active in an advocacy group for farm workers’ rights. They traveled around New York visiting different farms with migrant labor camps.”

“Trends were situations,” she recalls, “you wouldn’t want to be in – like 8 people in one room or two stoves for 50 people to cook on. I can understand the reasons for this kind of regulation. You have people coming in to them who have language problems, don’t understand their rights and can’t advocate for themselves. I don’t want those protections weakened, or changed so people can bend them. But you don’t need those regulations for smaller farms employing college kids.

“When I was doing the whole student farm-worker advocacy,” she continues, “I was pretty adamant about how things ought to be. Now that I’m working on a farm I see it differently. Like, I don’t really think there should be overtime for farm workers.”

“If we had that,” Ryan adds, “we wouldn’t have any reason to do piecework. The record keeping alone is more work than it is worth.”

Although she never thought of it before in the Red Fire Farm situation, Sarah has some experience with farm labor camps. As a student she was active in an advocacy group for farm workers’ rights. They traveled around New York visiting different farms with migrant labor camps.

“There were situations,” she recalls, “you wouldn’t want to be in – like 8 people in one room or two stoves for 50 people to cook on. I can understand the reasons for this kind of regulation. You have people coming in to them who have language problems, don’t understand their rights and can’t advocate for themselves. I don’t want those protections weakened, or changed so people can bend them. But you don’t need those regulations for smaller farms employing college kids.

“When I was doing the whole student farm-worker advocacy,” she continues, “I was pretty adamant about how things ought to be. Now that I’m working on a farm I see it differently. Like, I don’t really think there should be overtime for farm workers.”

“If we had that,” Ryan adds, “we wouldn’t have any reason to do piecework. The record keeping alone is more work than it is worth.”

Although she never thought of it before in the Red Fire Farm situation, Sarah has some experience with farm labor camps. As a student she was active in an advocacy group for farm workers’ rights. They traveled around New York visiting different farms with migrant labor camps.

“There were situations,” she recalls, “you wouldn’t want to be in – like 8 people in one room or two stoves for 50 people to cook on. I can understand the reasons for this kind of regulation. You have people coming in to them who have language problems, don’t understand their rights and can’t advocate for themselves. I don’t want those protections weakened, or changed so people can bend them. But you don’t need those regulations for smaller farms employing college kids.

“When I was doing the whole student farm-worker advocacy,” she continues, “I was pretty adamant about how things ought to be. Now that I’m working on a farm I see it differently. Like, I don’t really think there should be overtime for farm workers.”

“If we had that,” Ryan adds, “we wouldn’t have any reason to do piecework. The record keeping alone is more work than it is worth.”
Your Gateway to Nutritional Dense Food

Use these tools for quick, easy, leaf-sap analysis. Make informed decisions and get better quality.

- Refractometer – Brix shows the level of complexity (via photosynthesis) of simple ions. Should be > 12° Brix
- pH Tester – indicates the balance of nutrients. Helps identify missing elements. Ideal is 6.4 pH
- Electrical Conductivity (EC) Tester – indicates the level of simple ion uptake. Ideal range is 5 - 10 mS

Find out how to grow nutrient dense food Ask for a free catalog of all our supplies:
- Refractometers
- Plant Tissue (Sap) Tests
- Penetrometers
- Plant Nutrient (Soil) Tests
- PSM's
- Computing Tools

PIKE AGRI-LAB SUPPLIES, INC.
154 Claybrook Rd • PO Box 67 • Jv, Maine 04439 Ph: 866-745-3247 or 207-897-9267 Fax 207-897-9268 Email: info@pikeagri.com • Web: www.pikeagri.com

Biological farming & composting supplies since 1977.

The toll this regulatory nightmare has taken on the Voilands is significant both in time and money. For a good portion of the 2009 growing season Sarah was spending a third of her time working on it.

“We mostly have been trying to figure this out ourselves,” Ryan says. “We don’t know of any attorney with familiarity with these rules. And it is pretty expensive to get a lawyer. We are concerned about cutting our losses and not spending more than we had to on this situation.”

But the couple is also concerned that other farms not have to go through a similar process. Red Fire Farm had been operating for 9 years before learning of these regulations. They know that other farms are equally oblivious.

“It would be really useful,” says Sarah, “if, when people start a farm business, they automatically got something simple outlining what you need to do to be in compliance. We had no idea there were all these laws. We’ve made every effort we can to comply with both of the agencies. We’re trying to do everything we can to strictly obey the law, but it is hard because they are complex laws — reams of pages. They should give you a sense of what the laws are, so that you don’t discover in the middle of the season that your workers all have to leave and you can’t harvest your crops.

“But the way it is now,” she continues, “If I were advising a new farm setting up, I would not advise them to go to the state to try to learn all the laws — unless they want a lot of headaches.”

Ryan agrees: “Stay under the radar if you can! If any of this had happened during the first four years I was in business here, it would have put the farm out of business. We just didn’t have the resources to deal with it all.”

The following are two letters Ryan wrote to state and federal regulators which give an idea of his state of mind last summer and fall.

“I this letter addresses the state’s application of Farm Labor Camp regulations (105 CMR 420.000) to the housing situation at Red Fire Farm. A small-scale diversified farm like ours must be able to provide housing for crew members in order to be economically viable. When state officials became aware that we had crew members living on the farm, they had two regulatory options: to treat us as a rooming house, which is not allowed under two bylaws in Griswold, or as a Farm Labor Camp. We believe that current Farm Labor Camp regulations are inappropriate for a farm such as ours and a burden on our business. Smaller scale agriculture needs a legal place to stand.

Many other farms in our area bring in dozens of seasonal laborers from other countries every summer. We agree that regulation is necessary to protect incoming migrant workers from exploitation, however, these heavily detailed regulations that make sense in a bunk-house or dormitory are impractical and incongruous at the scale we operate. Our farmhouses houses eight people in private rooms with two living room areas, a kitchen, a pantry, 3 full bathrooms and two porches. Our employees treat the farmhouse as a home. For example, the people in the house bring their own beds, furniture, cookware and linens. We provide basic chores as a private household. Requiring the farm to provide all these things under 105 CMR 420.000 is unnecessary.

For smaller farms like ours that focus on employing local people and Americans interested in pursuing careers in organic agriculture, regulations like these are an intrusion of privacy and a burden on the viability of the farm. Our farmhouses provides all the basic necessities of any private household. It also meets all of the major requirements of 105 CMR 420.000. However, the cost of compliance with all of the details of Farm Labor Camp regulations would cause a serious strain on our resources. These kinds of requirements weigh down small farm operations disproportionately. We do not have extra money in the budget or people on the payroll to cover additional time and money expenses without drawing heavily into resources that need to be spent on the farm business, especially during the busiest time of the year.”

Tyrone to MDPH on June 8, 2009

“Red Fire Farm would like to request a hearing in regard to the civil penalties notification sent 10/15/09. Red Fire Farm has cooperated fully with the department on this investigation thus far, and Red Fire Farm is prepared to fix all concerns raised by the department going forward. However, we do not feel that the severity of the alleged violations warrants the assessment of a civil money penalty.

Particularly in light of the fact that this summer rep- resents the first ever audit of Red Fire Farm by the Department of Labor or any similar agencies.

In regard to the housing and farm yard Red Fire Farm has conducted maintenance of the farm infrastructure with a careful eye to improvement over the years, including an investment of over $100,000 in the house including the roof (removal of asbestos shingles and replacement with asphalt shingles just this spring), plumbing system (com- pletely replaced in winter of 08/09), electrical system (all knob and tube wiring replaced during winter of 07/08 plus installation of additional light and plug fixtures in many of rooms), insulation (installed in attic during 08), bathroom (totally remodeled in addition to the plumbing last winter) during the past two years. As you can see we have been systematically”

“...we feel that it is unfair to assess a penalty for minor concerns without first giving the farm time to bud for and conduct upgrades in the specified areas.

Other concerns that the Department of Labor has cited about Red Fire Farm are similarly minor and or hard to predict as concerns. Red Fire Farm is prepared to address these concerns going forward, however, we feel that a financial penalty is not warranted and will not accomplish anything toward fixing the concerns other than to pull financial resources away from funding solutions.

Red Fire Farm has always conducted business in a fair and open way. We strive to make the world a better place by conducting environmentally responsible, organic, and local food production in order to feed our members and customers. We also provide a multitude of jobs and local identification that most people would consider a critical accomplishment, especially given the high and increasing unemployment rate in our region. We have clear communication with our employees about their housing and compensa- tion options. Our customers (members) and most of the general community of citizens consider our ded- ication to the important job of providing quality food to be heroic in nature. We work extremely hard to overcome the obstacles that the weather, pests, and field markets often bring to our fields and crops. As the managers of this operation we do appreciate the importance of making sure the work environment is safe and fair for all who work at the farm. If you were to survey the employees of this operation they would agree that we run a fair and honest farm operation. As such we find it insulting to be targeted as some kind of criminals with the imposition of civil penalties and threatening letters from your agency.”

INVERNESS FARM

“Growing Traditional Grains with Nature in a Sustainable Way” We deliver

Robert L. Crowe
113 Vandusenfield Rd.
518-673-2455
Canajoharie, NY 13317

The Good Earth

When The Cold Things Grow

Edible Flowering Plants
Gorgeous & Unusual Annuals, Perennials
Flowering Shrubs
Gill’s Gardens

Certified Organic Vegetable–Harb

www.thesunripped.com
Like so many things, agriculture in the U.S. is being squeezed in the middle. The result is consolidation of larger farms into giant operations on one end of the spectrum, and a growing number of small farms on the other, thanks largely to specialty grower entrepreneurs, often pursuing direct-to-consumer enterprises. With these changes have come new governmental regulations, imposed in the name of health and safety. More and more small farmers are finding that, while those regulations may be reasonable for the large operations, they are overly burdensome when applied to their farms.

Indiana farmer Greg Gunthorp has one of what is a small and dwindling number of on-farm USDA inspected slaughterhouses left in the country. They raise and process about 60,000 birds a year, and a thousand pigs. “It’s not really enough to justify having our own slaughter house,” he says, “but there just aren’t other options nearby.”

Being USDA inspected means having an inspector at the 2,000-square foot plant every minute that they’re in operation. In the four years that they have been in business, Gunthorp says they’ve had at least 30 different inspectors. This is particularly challenging for a small operation like his, he says, because “each inspector has a slightly different interpretation of the rules, each one wants to see us do something a little differently than the last one.”

“Ninety percent of them are either reasonable or apathetic,” he says, “but the other 10% cause all of our headaches.” While large plants have staff people whose sole job is to work with the inspector, his plant has only three or four people working at a time, so when an inspector demands attention from someone, that reduces staff and productivity by 25% or more. The amount of paperwork is overwhelming, he says. “And the inspectors’ higher-ups don’t seem to think they’re doing their jobs unless they’re stirring something up, and there’s no recourse when I feel like they’re being unreasonable, because their response is always that I’m saying we should be more lenient about food safety.”

Also challenging about the inspections process is the scheduling, says Gunthorp. “The USDA sets the dates and times when we can get an inspector, and their shift is only eight hours – beyond that is $60 an hour per inspector. If I have ten hours of chickens to process in a week, I have to either pay for their overtime or deal with having to set up and then clean the entire facility twice.”

Since the USDA adopted HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) plans as their standard model for regulating processors “it has become our responsibility as processors, based on sound science and reasonable judgment, to process our products safely. It has moved so much of the process beyond the ability of the inspectors to monitor, though, that they couldn’t even inspect the whole plant if they wanted to. I don’t know how they’re managing at the large plants.”

“It took us 14 months to even get someone from USDA to come out to look at the plant before we could start up,” says Gunthorp. “That lets you know how important small processors are for them.”

“I’m not arguing that there shouldn’t be an inspection system,” continues Gunthorp, “but there are only 200 poultry processors left in the whole country and about 900 processors of red meat. We need to have changes if little ones are going to be able to survive. The regulations themselves aren’t out of control – it’s the interpretation and lack of continuity in interpretation, and a few rogue inspectors who make it so difficult. They need a realistic appeals process so that if small plants win a certain number of appeals, that inspector is no longer eligible to go to that plant.”

In addition, the regulations tend not to be scalable, so the same demands are imposed upon all processors, regardless of size. An expensive piece of equipment required for monitoring refrigeration, for example, would be out of reach for a small operation, even if it could afford the inspector time and shifts.

“Small Farms Staggering Under the Weight of Government Regulations” by Winton Pitcoff
example, is affordable for a huge slaughterhouse with warehouses full of meat, but not for a small plant with a walk-in cooler designed for 2,000 pounds of beef. Discussions about requirements for ammonia carcass washes on the kill floor of slaughterhouses have concerned small plants as well, because of the very expensive measures that would have to be taken to ensure worker safety when operating such equipment.

Federal regulations allow farmers to process up to 20,000 head of poultry per year without inspection, requiring only that the practice be sanitary and unadulterated. The meat may be sold to end users—retail customers or institutions like schools, hotels or restaurants. More than half of the states add additional regulations, though, and some have eliminated on-farm processing altogether.

What’s challenging, though, says Joel Salatin of Polyface Farm in Virginia, is that “even the states that are maintaining some degree of liberty in this regard are wildly disparate in what they consider ‘sanitary and unadulterated,’” particularly in what kind of facilities they will allow. Salatin’s open-air processing plant was initially rejected as unsanitary, “but when we had a lab test showing our chickens were twenty-five times cleaner than supermarket birds, they approved us.”

There’s lots of room for creativity if farmers are willing to challenge authority, says Salatin. A farmer in Ohio managed to convince the state that the plastic walls in his hoop-house processing plant met the standards for “impermeable walls,” says Salatin, and another farmer in Washington noted that the regulations for those impermeable walls didn’t say how high they had to be, so he erected eight-inch high walls of impermeable material around his otherwise open-air facility. That plant, too, was eventually approved. “It’s important for farmers to realize that even though a bureaucrat says ‘you can’t do that’ doesn’t mean there isn’t some very creative simple way around that, as long as you can show that your process is clean and safe.”

On-farm poultry processing also adds the extra burden of multi-agency regulations at many farms, with agriculture departments overseeing the processing and then environmental regulators setting standards for handling of waste water—often as much as five gallons per bird.

By and large, most farmers respond to the principle of food safety regulation seems to be “bring it on”– small scale producers are ready to stand by their product’s safety. What they expect from regulators is a system that monitors their outcomes more than the process—there is more than one way to produce a safe product, after all—and reasonable limits on the amount of time, energy and resources that they
“Over regulation isn’t the only challenge facing small slaughterhouses,” says Lauren Gwin of the Niche Meat Processor Assistance Network, “but the additional testing requirements are economically burdensome for an industry that is already struggling. You have to be safe and have to have ways to demonstrate safety, but we do think that some of the requirements, particularly some that have been proposed recently, are over-burdensome and not necessary.”

The proposal she is referring to is one from the USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) that would create substantial new testing requirements for all meat processors. For example, a plant making hot dogs and processing them according to a regulator’s standards would, under the proposed regulations, have to run additional testing at critical control points during production to validate that the mandated standards are, in fact, that they are meant to do. Extensive research went into developing these protocols, Gwin points out, and each step was tested and re-tested to ensure its effectiveness.

To then ask the plants to essentially re-prove that effectiveness during production is unnecessary and very expensive, and the Network’s response to the proposal says that “Many small establishments around the country have stated that they will either stop processing under inspection or close entirely if this proposal were to be adopted due to the cost estimates for compliance.” According to the American Association of Meat Processors, the initial cost could be as much as $12,000 per product line and then $3,600 a year to maintain.

“It’s really unfortunate how much subjectivity goes into the inspections process,” says Gwin. Inspectors range from helpful to overwhelmingly bureaucratic, she says, and even though she feels that the central FSIS office is aware that this is a problem, the system is set up, for each process in a plant someone has to verify that it was monitored, and someone has to review the reports of the monitoring.

The proposed FSIS regulations “would be a huge burden on small and mid-sized slaughterhouses, without a real increase in food safety” agrees Kate Fitzgerald, Senior Policy Associate at the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition.

Beyond Meat

The burdens of overregulation on small farms extend well beyond meat processing. “The idea seems to be to eliminate all local food and only allow foods made in factories,” says Morse Pitts, who owns Windfall Farms in New York where he grows green year-round. “But that’s where all of the problems come from.”

Ideally, says Pitts, there would be no regulations dictating how he raises, processes and produces his greens, because when you sell your products to customers face to face, as he does at the New York City Greenmarket, and people understand where it’s coming from, there’s no need. Direct sales and that level of interaction with customers actually adds a built-in level of safety, he points out, in that track batches of his produce would be far simpler than for a processor that ships widely, if there were ever a need to recall an item. And safety comes more instinctually for a small farmer, he points out, because their lives and work are so interconnected. “This is the food I eat and I’m washing it with the water I drink. That’s not true of someone running a big food factory.”

His current method of triple-submerging his greens not only cleans the produce, but helps keep it fresh for market day, he says. Regulations that would require greens be washed in a certified kitchen would mean many small farms out of business, he says, because of the cost of such a facility.

Pitts recalls a regulator speaking at a conference just ten years ago saying “basic sanitation is all that’s needed”. Now, he says, greens fresh, and laments the fact that government agencies have felt the need to continually prescribe what they mean by “basic sanitation,” rather than allow farmers to devise reasonable practices on their own.

When problems with food do come to light the small producers tend to be in the crosshairs of regulators, but it’s the bigger operations that are disproportionately the culprits. A recent Consumer’s Union report tested salad mixes – the kind packed in plastic bags or containers and sold in grocery stores as ‘pre washed’ – and found contamination levels at lower than acceptable standards in 36% of the samples for coliform and 23% for enterococcus.

Regulations that put unnecessary burdens on farms haven’t come only from the federal government. Brad Mitchell, Director of Government Affairs at the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation, says that farmers in that state are dealing with local boards of health making regulations that don’t make sense for agriculture. Some are passing measures to limit the number of animals people can have per acre, for instance, without regard for the site or management practices. Others are putting restricting on farmers markets that have nothing to do with public health issues. “We don’t want to be controlling how we grow food,” says Mitchell, “Agribusiness depends on some public health regulations for its survival.” But, he pointed out, there are no checks and balances on what these boards of health can do – no requirement...
that their regulations go through a public process or be vetted by the attorney general like state laws and local zoning boards, promoting the adoption of such checks and balances.

Local zoning boards have also stepped clumsily into regulating farms, says Mitchell. He cites one example of a small farmer planning a vegetable garden operation on a 3.5 acre plot. The town’s zoning board wanted require her to have a sewage sludge disposal permit and a sewage car parking area, which was entirely cost prohibitive for a farm that size. The application of residential building, plumbing and sanitation codes to on-farm production facilities has also been a problem for farmers.

Many Massachusetts towns have passed right-to-farm bylaws that have alleviated some of the conflicts that have arisen between farmers and their neighbors. Complaints about noise from farming operations are common, said Pete Westover, who has worked with many towns in drafting and passing their bylaws, and having such laws in place “gives farmers a little more confidence to stand up to these conflicts, without just giving up in frustration.” The laws are creating more local support and local information about what farming practices are supposed to be like.” Still, some towns in Massachusetts, as well as other states around the country, have even gone so far as to outlaw owning chickens, citing noise and sanitation.

Change Coming – But For Whom?

Under the current administration the USDA is working in coordination with the FDA on produce food safety issues, says Fitzgerald, and there have been site visits by both agencies to a wide range of farms — big and small, diversified, etc. – in what she says is a “good faith effort to try to increase understanding on the part of the FDA.”

“But the backdrop is that the FDA is going to be the lead agency in terms of food safety,” she says, “and historically they haven’t understood agriculture orshown much interest in understanding agriculture. They’ve just approached farms as if they were pharmaceutical factories.”

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition is participating in the process as the food safety bill is making its way through Congress, says Fitzgerald, in an effort to help make the outcome more favorable for small farms. “Our approach is that it’s best for the government to take an education and training approach rather than just giving up in frustration. The laws are creating more local support and local information about what farming practices are supposed to be like.”

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition is participating in the process as the food safety bill is making its way through Congress, says Fitzgerald, in an effort to help make the outcome more favorable for small farms. “Our approach is that it’s best for the government to take an education and training approach rather than just giving up in frustration. The laws are creating more local support and local information about what farming practices are supposed to be like.”

The Coalition is also pushing for open, public rule-making on the issue of risk. The proposed legislation is based largely upon the 2002 bioterrorism law, but that template poses quite a mismatch for food safety, “The FDA should be required to define more clearly different levels of risk for different activities,” says Fitzgerald. “The law needs to distinguish between a small farmer growing broccoli for a farmers’ market and a large-scale greens producer shipping all over the country. We’ve learned enough to know what many seem like a well-intentioned and well-designed program in Washington, DC can be capricious and expensive in the field, and knock small producers out of business.”

Regulators do seem to understand that the rules can be more burdensome for small-scale producers, says Judith McGeary, Executive Director of the Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance, “but they don’t seem to grasp that those small same farms actually pose less of a risk.” We’re not saying that small and local is always safe and that industrial production is always evil, we’re just talking about the levels of risk and the scale of any potential problem. “While to small processors it may seem like those with no risk, regulators have to be educated about the fact that fewer steps in the production process, fresher products, and less transportation actually means fewer chances for contamination of foods. Small producers are naturally more attentive to safety issues, many people point out, since a single illness from contamination could devastate a small business in ways that it simply wouldn’t for a large company.

“Regulators like OSHA (the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, which oversees workplace safety) recognize that there are differences and should be exemptions for small businesses. Why shouldn’t food regulators recognize the same thing for small farms?” asks McGeary.

The biggest hypocrisy of the food safety movement, says McGeary, “is a desire to try to increase uniformity and practices that remove all risk from food. “We don’t know what happens over the long term if people eat food based on GMO crops, or reduced nutrient foods grown from certain methods, or foods with hormones and antibiotics in them, but the food industry has no problem subjecting us all to that level of risk.”

“There will always be people who get sick from food,” says McGeary. “The idea that any measure that means that no one gets sick is absurd. From a public policy perspective, no other regulations are designed to cover every single person from every angle – environmental regulations, worker safety – it’s all based on risk. We have to determine how much these regulations will slow the growth of local, safe, healthy food.” The challenge, of course, is that:”

Another very real issue is whether or not the FDA and USDA can even afford to implement and enforce more stringent regulations, since the agencies are stretched thin already. The risk of new regulations, then, becomes one of staffing – might the agencies be willing to pay a little more.” There are certainly consumers for whom safety means inexpensively, irradiated food from a massive facility, but the number who want local and specialized products is growing, she adds.

Salatin points out promising trends within the community of people that value fresh, local, healthy food, primarily the fact that it has grown to encompass more than the farmers and small businesses that buy into the liberal political spectrum. “Culturally the movement has grown out of the liberal background in which the government is considered to be the answer,” he says, “but now that more conservatives are getting interested their tendency to oppose over-regulation could ultimately strengthen the movement. “We’re not going to turn around the public policy issues start not being able to get what they’ve been getting,” he says.
My Goat Cheese Giveaway

by John Coles

How my troubles with the law began

In January 2005, Virginia began to require permits for all mammalian milk (including goat milk), except for one species, Homo sapiens. Is someone going to make cheese from mouse milk?

For a farm to comply with this regulation and the required operations it would cost approximately $50,000. The pasteurizer alone would cost $10,000. Our cheese operation is very small. When selling directly to the final consumer (not through restaurants or stores), at a farm store or farmers market, a home kitchen is all that is needed.

An Unwarranted Attack on a Wholesome Product

Most of the cheese that I make is a fresh soft cheese from our raw goats’ milk. I don’t believe in pasteurizing milk to drink or to make it into cheese or other cultured milk products. The reason is that it is nutritionally superior with the natural enzymes and lactic acid bacteria intact. Adding a culture to pasteurized milk does replace the missing bacteria. I consider the pasteurization process an adulteration of my product. As an artisan cheesemaker, I believe in working with nature and keeping my cheese as natural and whole as possible. Most of my customers want my cheese because it is not pasteurized.

Farmers Need to Become Schooled in the Law to Survive

Our farmers’ market begins in April, so we had 3 months to decide how we were going to make our cheese available to our customers and not get into trouble with the Virginia Department of Agriculture. Fortunately, the Virginia Secretary of Agriculture (a former legislative delegate friendly to our cause) stated in writing that we could legally give our cheese away.

This is the fifth year that we have been giving away the cheese. We do accept donations that are not for the cheese (this is very important and why it works), but, in our case, donations are for lobbying on small farm issues and court costs. We have been in and out of court since 1980 and are currently in court on a NAIS (National Animal Identification System) related issue. Other farmers giving away their cheese would have different reasons for accepting donations, but never tie the donations to the cheese.

Other Farmers are Joining Us in the Great Raw Cheese Give Away

Caleb Russell, son of Kathryn Russell of Majesty Farm is giving away fresh cow milk cheese at The Charlottesville City Market, the same market where I am a vendor. This is his first year. He accepts donations, but stated in writing that contact us if you have any questions.

Unfortunately, thanks to the cow dairy lobby, Virginia does not allow exemptions to the permitting law for selling directly to the final consumer. We need a two-tiered regulatory system. One-size-fits-all regulations preclude the existence of the small farm. If your farmers market takes a percentage of your sales be sure you are not just giving away cheese. You can keep the peace with your market manager if you are selling fruits, vegetables, etc. By the way, you can make sales and report a stall fee.

Don’t be intimidated by the authorities. Unless raw milk and milk products are controlled substances in your state, you can legally give it away. Feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

The Natural Farmer Summer, 2010
The Farm Intern Conundrum
by Twilight Greenaway

At any given point over the last several years, David Retsky of County Line Harvest, on the line between California’s Marin and Sonoma Counties, has hosted between one and three interns on his farm. Interns have staffed booths at farmers markets, supported his core crew of farm laborers, and they’ve had the opportunity to learn about the inner workings of the business. In return, he’s provided them with room and board and $300 per week. “It’s a resume builder and they get to find out if they really like agriculture,” says Retsky. “It’s been a win-win.” A win-win, that is, until he had a visit from a California Division of Labor Standards Enforcement (DLSE) official. The DLSE audited County Line and fined Retsky $18,000 for payroll violations. Now he turns down all of the two to three requests he gets a week from young people hoping to come to the farm. A number of small-scale farms have been fined for similar offenses, and there’s a growing consensus among farmers that interns—who, by nature, are compensated in nontraditional ways, with some combination of education, food, housing, and payment—aren’t worth the risk.

Internships have a long-standing role on organic farms—and for good reason. Labor is generally the biggest expense for these farmers, who rely on eliminating synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. Internships and apprenticeships are also seen as crucial in the development of new farmers. In Washington state, a law was recently passed allowing farms with gross sales of less than $250,000 a year to create internship programs; it was said to be helping “continue the legacy of Washington’s farmers for generations to come.”

Such a law could be transformative in California, where the options for new farmers looking to get real work experience are slim and farming education programs are often seen as costly and competitive by comparison. The nine-month apprenticeship program at the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems at UC Santa Cruz, for instance, costs $4,800 and accepts 35–40 students each year. Retsky gained his experience over the years as an intern and apprentice on multiple farms, and worries about what this shift could mean for the larger sustainable food landscape. “Interns who come here learn a sense of responsibility and a work ethic,” he says. “I was a kid from Beverly Hills—I didn’t even know that a carrot grew in the ground! I was raised to use my brain and not my hands and I needed to learn how to work. That’s the case with a lot of kids today.”

Alternatives
David Little of Little Organic Farm, in Marin County, California, has hosted many interns on his farm over the years, but has recently taken a precautionary measure. Since internships established through a church or nonprofit fall within the law, Little now hires interns through Multinational Exchange for Sustainable Agriculture (MESA), a program that connects young farmers from outside the U.S. to training and cultural exchange opportunities here. Little pays MESA $975 every month; MESA pays the interns and provides orientations, administrative infrastructure, and insurance. It costs David nearly twice as much as he was paying interns before, but he says it’s worth the peace of mind. When he gets other requests from young people within the U.S., he says, “I tell them to call the state and voice their opinions.” Little believes the recent focus on small farms has created a “climate of fear” in California, and he suspects that corporate agriculture interests may have advocated for increased enforcement of the laws. He was among a number of Marin County farmers who met with labor officials in April to discuss the issue. The Farm Bureau lawyer at the forum referred to this change as “leveling the playing field,” he says, “the good news is that small farms are making enough of an impact to be a threat to corporate ag.”

Skills Building
It’s telling that many farmers don’t feel comfortable speaking about internships on the record. One Northern California-based farmer says she is currently working with a lawyer to draw up contracts that allow for an officially binding educational “live/work” situation on her farm, but she doesn’t feel comfortable sharing her name at this point. “We put people on payroll, to fully cover worker’s comp and payroll taxes. On top of room and board, around half their time (14–20 hours) is paid minimum wage.” The rest, she says, is designated as educational. “We’re formalizing what we’re trying to teach, so there will be formal tutorials on grafting, jam-making, animal husbandry, etc.” One possible approach the farmer is looking into is charging for an educational program, and then waiving the fee when applicable.

The Catch 22
While interns bring youthful energy and ideas, many farms rely heavily on farm workers who are new to the country (as many as 70 percent of whom are undocumented). They do most of the hardest, most unpleasant work for an hourly wage, but have few other options. The fact that these crews work as hard as they do makes it tough for many small-scale farmers (working on a shoestring budget) to rationalize paying interns full-time salaries. As the woman farmer mentioned above sees it, “you cannot hire your basic American to spend eight to nine hours in an orchard.

Internships aren’t the only underground aspect of the U.S. agricultural system; forged documents, false identification, and under-the-table pay are also commonplace. In a broken system, many farmers find themselves doing what they can to make things work. “The immigration and internship issues are very linked,” says the farmer. “They’re two impossible situations, legally, and yet we have willing workers in both cases.”

Twilight Greenaway writes about sustainable food systems for the San Francisco-based Center for Urban Education about Sustainable Agriculture (CUESA). This article originally appeared in the CUESA e-letter, available by subscription at www.cuesa.org.
Connecticut Passes Pickle Bill
by Jack Kittredge

In May, 2010, Connecticut passed a bill easing a few regulations for farmers. They will now be allowed to process and sell their farm-dressed poultry (up to 5000 turkeys and 20,000 other birds per year) to consumers, restaurants, and hotels, and to sell acidified foods directly from the farm without having a commercial kitchen.

This last provision, locally known as the “Pickle Bill” had been filed in previous years and died. This year, however, it passed into law. “Part of what the legislature and the governor are focused on this year,” says Steve Reviczky, Executive Director and lobbyist for the Connecticut Farm Bureau, “is the state’s economy and jobs. This would be a boost to the state’s agricultural economy.”

The bill was opposed by the Food and Drug Administration, the Connecticut Department of Public Health, the state’s Department of Consumer Protection, and the Connecticut Environmental Health Association. Opponents generally testified about the possibility of botulism, graphically described the horrors of a lingering death from the disease, and insisted that no exemptions should be granted to the state’s network of public health laws.

Supporting the bill against this line-up of nervous officialdom were farmers from CT NOFA, the Farm Bureau, and an organization called the Working Land Alliance. Jane Maher, CT NOFA Executive Board member and specialty food manufacturer, testified in favor of the bill that she had made pickles at home for years with a fully operational commercial kitchen. She was selling them to Whole Foods, various health food stores, and to restaurants and at many farmers markets. But she ultimately had to close her business, in part because of the high cost of overhead for her commercial kitchen. Reviczky told the legislature of the Farm Bureau’s strong support for the law, arguing for common sense. “We don’t think you need to build a $30,000 to $40,000 commercial kitchen,” he said, “to make pickles!”

Preorder quantities of The Natural Farmer for your Farm Stand or CSA members!

10 - 29 copies for $2.50 each
30 - 59 copies for $2.00 each
60 - 99 copies for $1.50 each
100 + copies for $1.25 each

these prices are postpaid to any US street address (no PO Box please).

You must preorder, however, so send a check for the total amount so that we receive it by the 20th of the month before publication. That is:
Feb. 20 for Spring issue
May 20 for Summer issue
Aug. 20 for Fall issue
Nov. 20 for Winter issue
The forming, maintenance and re-creation of the landscape is not only an external biological problem, but a problem with essential social and spiritual significance.

Ehrenfried Pfeiffer

Learn the most exacting, most effective method of chemical-free agriculture with our One-Year Part-Time Training in Biodynamics! Now enrolling for 2010-2011.

www.pfeiffercenter.org

“...is our wisest pursuit, because it will in the end contribute most to real wealth, good morals and happiness.”

Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, 1787

If your destination is Nutrient Dense Produce

Start with the right road map...

International Ag Labs
Soil Test
507-235-6909
www.aglabs.com
800 W. Lake Ave. | Fairmont MN 56031

• One-Year, Part-Time Training in Biodynamics
• Year-round internships
• Weekend workshops
GARDENING, BEEKEEPING, & MORE

Clements Law Office, LLC
9 Damonmill Square,
Concord, MA 01742
978.287.4901
www.clementsllc.com

Appeals and Litigation • Advice and Advocacy
In this modern age, Eaters in this country generally expect that our daily meals are not going to make us sick, let alone kill us. Whether we buy it fresh or processed – from the membership warehouse, supermarket chain, corner store, CO-OP, Farmers Market or CSA – we count on a safe food supply that is free of pathogens and contamination. We take comfort that the restaurants we frequent are regularly inspected for health violations. And we’re also part of the equation: taking responsibility for monitoring the fridge for spoilage, cleaning the cutting board, keeping the picnic dishes out of the sun...

Yet the News is regularly full of headlines about dangerous food-borne pathogen outbreaks in the food supply, which in our inherently risky industrialized food system are often distributed to millions nationwide from a single source. For a country claiming to have “the safest food supply in the world” the statistics are daunting. The Centers for Disease Control estimate that there are some 350,000 hospitalizations out of 76 million infections a year due to food poisoning – with some acute case victims requiring kidney dialysis or constant care for the rest of their lives. And there’s the 5,000 deaths annually, where virulent new stains of salmonella, campylobacter, E coli (H7:0157) and the like target the most vulnerable in our population: the very young and the very old.

The calls for increased food safety oversight have become a major political issue whose time has come. The Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) basic regulatory mandate has not been updated since 1938 and contemporary demands for action were completely stonewalled during the 8 years of the GW Bush Administration. The simplistic modern mantra coming from on high is that all food should be safe, whatever the source. But trying to insert the realities of risk and scale into the debate often falls upon deaf ears. In this pent-up environment it is no longer a question whether there will be increased food safety regulation, but rather how much and what kind – and for us, what will be the side-effects on small scale farms.

The exigencies for increased regulation are primarily coming from consumer groups and litigation concerns. Big-budget consumer-based policy organizations such as the Pew Charitable Trust, the Center for Science in the Public Interest, Consumer’s Union, etc. have been leading the charge on Capitol Hill and in the media, sponsoring contamination victims’ visits and targeting ads in various districts to pressure Congressmen. And in this lawsuit-prone environment, insurance entities are requiring growers, handlers and purveyors to comply with new, increasingly stringent auditable metrics and supermetrics. Whether those measures have actual scientific validity takes a back seat to the necessity of having a certificate on file in the office to demonstrate due-diligence for protection from litigation.

Even though the small farm sector is already subject to an array of local, state and federal health and food safety regs (see: Understanding Food Safety Regulations for Farm-Direct Sales: A Study of CT, MA, NY and VT at: http://www.nofa.org/policy/regulations.php) it is now finding itself between a consumer-scare-stories rock and a one-size-regulations-fits-all hard place. Given that it is political suicide for congressmen to go on record as voting against food safety, some form of bipartisan legislation is bound to pass. And, in fact, it already has. One of Congress’ responses to the 911 attack was the Bioterrorism Act of 2002, which already gives FDA direct regulatory oversight over the family farm.
The first inklings of FDA regs coming down on small farmers came in early 2009 when Representative Rosa DeLauro (D, CT) released her preliminary stab at a Food Safety Modernization bill, H.R. 875. A victim of severe food poisoning in her younger days, Congresswoman DeLauro had been cited as a victim in some congressional testimony on food safety, but her bill was never introduced. DeLauro and her co-sponsors had been working on food safety legislation for years, but the bill was never passed. It was a long time coming for the organic farmers and small-scale processors who had been waiting for a comprehensive food safety bill.

As some grassroots farmers and down home free-doms-from-government activists parsed every line of H.R. 875 like they were big city lawyers, the bill’s move through Congress and to the House floor was a slow process. Some advocacy groups used the ramped up issues to promote their own organizations – their websites featuring a big “Donate” button next to the Alerts. Some advocacy groups used the ramped up issues to promote their own organizations – their websites featuring a big “Donate” button next to the Alerts.

Lesson #1: Concerted advocacy is one thing, but self-serving, fear-based misrepresentation and vilification for its own sake is quite another. Rather than just saying “No” which can lead nowhere, grassroots groups have an important role to play in working responsibly with their representatives and in delivering straightforward messages to their members. Positive action generates positive effects. After helping to clear the hype of H.R. 875 and subdue the criticism there’s some indication that DeLauro in her role as appropriate agrarians was happy to support the grass-roots opposition against the National Animal Identification System (NAIS), later completely defunding the entire program within USDA.

Lesson #2: It’s not over until it’s over. Legislation and other government initiatives are a step-by-step process and it’s important to maintain a wider perspective of the proceedings and the multiple opportunities for changing bad provisions. H.R. 875 folded into H.R. 2749, for example, and now on the Senate side S.510 is in the final stages with a number of farmer-friendly amendments built into the final manager’s markup that counteracts negative language in the House bill. The next stage is to resolve the Senate and Senate versions in Conference into a single bill and after a final vote by Congress the passing the President a rule-making process will be further open to public input.

The bill was marked up for a floor vote by the end of July 2009. The NOFAC/SAC Task Force was largely stymied in their efforts to get needed language changes but was able to orchestrate a “cold-veto” – a scripted floor debate – that could later inform the regulation-making process by providing an “intent of Congress” background that FDA would have to consider. When Representative Dingell issued a letter in rebuttal, the Senate put together a rebuttal of the Dingell rebuttal that further codified concerns about the impacts of the bill’s provisions on small farms.

In order to insure H.R. 2749’s passage, Chairman Waxman placed the House vote under special rules requiring a 2/3’s supermajority in exchange for barring any floor amendments. But to everyone’s surprise, thanks to alerts and barrages of calls and letters from grassroots constituencies, the vote failed to pass. With egg on their faces the Waxman leadership fixed that the very next day by changing the rules to require only a simple majority and
Iowa senator Thomas Harkin is chair of the Senate’s Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, which is in charge of the Food Safety Bill in the Senate.

S.510

As this is written, the Food Safety Modernization Act is in the final stages with a floor vote expected to pass in the next few weeks. This time around, however, the Task Force has been a key player in the development of the legislation – helping to write language and to develop the bill’s provisions as the negotiations have progressed. Consumer groups have had to back down, allowing small farm exemptions in return for a widely supported amendment from Senator Stabenow (D. MI) which provides funding for food safety education and training for small farmers.

Other key amendments by senators on the governing Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee include better facilities definitions from Senator Sanders (D, VT); much less onerous identity-preserved traceability provisions from Sen. Brown (D, OH); unmanned/biodiversity protection language from Sen. Boxer (D, CA) and paperwork reduction requirements from Sen. Bennett (R, UT) and others. All of these are now included in the Manager’s Amendment – the package of provisions that will be included in S.510 when it comes up for a vote on the Senate floor.

The Task Force is also backing a floor amendment from Senator Tester (D, MT) that would exempt smaller scale farmers making under $500,000 from FDA oversight. The NSAC-led group has not signed on to an exclusive Tester endorsement, however, in order to keep the other amendment sponsors engaged and actively supportive. Also, the consumer group stance against exemptions is expected to knock Tester’s floor amendment out of contention when the bill comes up for a vote.

Lesson #5: Make hay while the sun shines and take advantage of your strengths. Big entities have much more money but grassroots groups can summon votes. With key senators on the HELP Committee, NOFAs VT, NH, and CT played successful roles in alerting their members to contact their senators to support the Task Force amendments and get them included in the final bill.

Lesson #6: Protect your gains, keep the wagons circled and don’t put all your eggs in a basket with holes in it.

And finally (for now) Lesson #7: Legislation is only as good as its funding. The $500 annual fee in the House bill is not expected to stand up in Conference, but even if it does the funds raised are nowhere near what is needed to equip FDA to do the job. That means FDA oversight will be subject to the annual appropriations process along with everything else the government is funding. There are so many glaring necessities needing to be addressed in the industrialized food system that small farm regulation will remain low-priority well into the future. This doesn’t mean, however, that we should let up on our diligence or input for one second!
The Robinson family has owned a good chunk of farmland in the town of Hardwick, Massachusetts, since the late 1800s. During that time various brothers and cousins, most still named Robinson, have carved out their own farms and homes. Ray Robinson took over a family dairy operation 20 years ago and, along with his wife Pam, has managed to keep it going at a time when many dairies have gone belly up.

But it has not been easy. About ten years ago they were struggling to pay the bills by a conventional dairy buying in feed and selling milk to the marketing cooperative Agri-Mark. Daughter Gina tried to convince them to transition to organic grass-based production and sell some of their output on-farm to folks wanting raw, or unpasteurized, milk.

But there were no other organic dairies nearby, so there was no organic milk plant with a pick-up route anywhere near Hardwick. Without an organic outlet for their milk, it hardly seemed sensible to incur the costs of transitioning and buying in organic feed. And Ray and Pam felt their rural location was too isolated to be attractive to far-off buyers to come all the way to the farm.

Undaunted, in 2003 Gina pushed forward by herself with her vision. She had been given four cows over the years by her grandfather. Pulling them out of the herd, managing them organically, and using the farm’s facilities, Gina soon had a successful raw milk business of her own with customers coming to the farm daily. Eventually Gina married and moved away (with her cows) but Pam and Ray pondered her success.

“We knew we couldn’t be viable forever as a conventional dairy farm,” recalls Pam. “We needed a value added product, so we decided to try raw milk. We also decided to sell half of the herd and downsize to graze the cows because we had the land base to graze fifty cows. That enabled us to transition to organic. We did that and we were certified in September of 2009. Gina’s success with raw milk was a real catalyst. We realized we could be a retail location.”

Over the next few years the Robinsons developed a successful raw milk business, attracting some large groups who would pick up cooperatively. They continued to sell the majority of their milk to the bulk truck, even while transitioning to organic. We did that and we were certified in September of 2009. Gina’s success with raw milk was a real catalyst. We realized we could be a retail location.”

But clouds on the raw milk horizon have the Robinsons nervous about having so many eggs in that basket. In January the state Department of Agricultural Resources issued cease and desist orders to three raw milk pick up coops, claiming (in error, some attorneys feel) that they are unlicensed milk handlers rather than cooperative efforts to conveniently secure a legal and licensed product. A month later, Farm Family Insurance announced it was dropping raw milk sales from coverage under the product liability section of policies it sells to farmers. Buying that coverage elsewhere will cost much more.

“We don’t want all our eggs in the raw milk basket,” Pam says. “Right now all you can do is sell it at the farm gate. And if someone claims to be sick, even if it is not from raw milk, you can have the rug pulled out from under you quite quickly. It feels too risky.”

The couple decided a while ago that it made sense to develop a new value added venture. So they have been working hard to learn new skills and by late this summer they hope to be making and selling “Robinson Family Swiss” cheese!

The numbers look convincing, according to Pam and Ray. Last year conventional milk brought the dairy farmer about $12 per hundredweight (cwt). This year it is going for closer to $16. But out of that you pay shipping, the coop holds some of your money back as equity, and you also have dues, taxes and various fees withheld. Organic milk brings closer to $27 or $28, but that is if you can get an organic processing plant to pick up, which the Robinsons can’t. Raw milk, on the other hand, pays about $80 per cwt and the only extra costs are labels, bottling and refrigeration. Cheese is even better. Although it requires more labor, investment, and time you can gross an astonishing $100 per cwt.

Not only that, but you also get whey – the healthy liquid full of vitamins and protein left over after making cheese. “If you have ten pounds of milk,” explains Pam, “you can make that into one pound of cheese. It’s a ten to one ratio. Whey is not worth a lot, but we don’t want to put it down the drain. It is worth something. Neighboring farmers who raise pigs don’t want to put it down the drain. It is worth something. Neighboring farmers who raise pigs wouldn’t want to put it down the drain. It is worth something. Neighboring farmers who raise pigs will take the whey, by the barrel, for a cheap price. We may eventually get pigs ourselves, but not this year. We can’t fit another project in right now! I hear pigs are nice for keeping the edges of your pastures clean.”

Their business plan calls for Pam and Ray to use five days of milk each week during the summer for making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to one use or the other is because you want to either fill your milk tank or your cheese vat, but not half of both. And you don’t want to set up for bottling milk on a day and not do a full run.

They figured their prices would be between $8 and $20 per cwt. This year it is going for closer to $16. But out of that you pay shipping, the coop holds some of your money back as equity, and you also have dues, taxes and various fees withheld. Organic milk brings closer to $27 or $28, but that is if you can get an organic processing plant to pick up, which the Robinsons can’t. Raw milk, on the other hand, pays about $80 per cwt and the only extra costs are labels, bottling and refrigeration. Cheese is even better. Although it requires more labor, investment, and time you can gross an astonishing $100 per cwt.

Not only that, but you also get whey – the healthy liquid full of vitamins and protein left over after making cheese. “If you have ten pounds of milk,” explains Pam, “you can make that into one pound of cheese. It’s a ten to one ratio. Whey is not worth a lot, but we don’t want to put it down the drain. It is worth something. Neighboring farmers who raise pigs wouldn’t want to put it down the drain. It is worth something. Neighboring farmers who raise pigs will take the whey, by the barrel, for a cheap price. We may eventually get pigs ourselves, but not this year. We can’t fit another project in right now! I hear pigs are nice for keeping the edges of your pastures clean.”

Their business plan calls for Pam and Ray to use five days of milk each week during the summer for making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the rest raw and for yogurt. The reason to dedicate a whole day’s production to making cheese, and sell the res...
to lactic acid, and then rennet is added to facilitate diabetes. They convert the lactose in the milk fat and Lactococcus species as well as propionic inoculated with a mixture of S. Thermophilus or Emmentaler Cheese, the milk fat is originally Swiss is not an easy cheese to make. In Swiss one from Holland for their new cheeses. pasture. They have ordered a 1000 liter (264 gallon) using a 100 gallon vat Ray found abandoned in a Canada – to go to this cheese school. They bring in come from all over – California, the Midwest, farmers markets, some restaurants and some small specialty shops for markets beyond the core farm stand buyers.

“Marketing it is going to be a huge undertaking,” admits Ray. There is definitely a demand for good local cheese. But marketing it will be another new learning experience. Besides the catchy name, it helps that there is nobody else doing Swiss cheese in Massachusetts. And everybody knows it and recognizes it.”

Ray expects that most of their cheese will be made during the grazing season, when the milk supply is ample. But he doesn’t think that they will ever go totally seasonal – getting all the cows to calve at the same time in the spring and dry off for the winter.

“Partly there is the raw milk market,” he says, “which wants a supply year round. But even worse, it is hard to get all the cows to calve at the same time. Anyone who does it is pretty strict about culling cows that don’t fit the timing. Getting cows bred back on time is quite challenging, also. And when they are grass-fed, that can be even more difficult because their cycling can be irregular.”

Despite the fact that construction of their cheese facility has been delayed by regulatory hurdles, in December the Robinsons stopped shipping their milk to Agri-Mark. Over the years they have tied up a good deal of capital in the coop. Once a dairy stops shipping milk, Agri-Mark will begin returning their capital over 7 years with an annual check each May. The Robinsons figure they can use that money to help with the construction costs.

“We jumped off the cliff,” Pam laughs. “Right now we are only milking once per day, and selling 5 days worth per week. We don’t have a market for the extra 2 days of milk, so we practice making cheese. We could get a per diem pickup from the extra 2 days of milk, so we practice making cheese. We have to start with a large wheel, Ray explains. The Robinsons plan on making a 20 to 25 pound wheel. During this “hole-forming” phase the cheese also have to fit in a trip to a different farm when we go. I think it is hard to get all the cows to calve at the same time in the spring and dry off for the winter.”

For their practice cheeses the couple are currently using a 100 gallon vat Ray found abandoned in a pasture. They have ordered a 1000 liter (264 gallon) from Holland for their new cheeses.

Swiss is not an easy cheese to make. In Swiss or Emmental Cheese, the milk fat is originally inoculated with a mixture of S. Thermophilus and Lactococcus species as well as propionic bacteria. They convert the lactose in the milk fat to lactic acid, and then rennet is added to facilitate coagulation. After the curd has been drained, the cheese is pressed and aged. During this aging process carbon dioxide is released. It is this carbon dioxide, collecting in bubbles within the solidifying cheese, that forms the characteristic holes.

In order to capture these gases to make holes you have to start with a large wheel, Ray explains. The Robinsons plan on making a 20 to 25 pound wheel. During this “hole-forming” phase the cheese also needs a period of time when it is 68˚ to 72˚F. So beyond the cold “cave” or aging room needed for normal hard cheeses, Pam and Ray need to have a warm aging room as well.

Ray holds one of the cheeses he and Pam have been making to learn the art.

Another aspect of cheese making about which they are learning is affinage – a French term for caring for the aging of the cheese. (Someone who does this is an affineur.)

“The work involves brushing and turning the cheeses as they age,” explains Ray. “It helps to get a nice rind and gets rid of molds on the cheese which you don’t want. We put cultures in the wash water that will encourage the microflora that we want on the rind. These are different cultures than the ones we use to make the cheese.

You do it more in the beginning and then less overtime. Chris Greene is our affineur and right now she is doing it three to four times a week.

Besides the fact that aged raw milk cheese has more flavor, it is also attractive to their current raw milk customers. So the Robinsons will not pasteurize the milk.

“Fresh, soft cheeses,” Pam explains, “have to be pasteurized. Only cheeses aged 60 days or more can be made out of raw milk. We have all these raw milk customers and we wanted to build on that customer base. So that is another reason we picked to make a hard Swiss style cheese. Most of it will be best from 4 to 6 months of age.”

Pam and Ray have been doing their homework on cheese making for some time. They took a course administered through the Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) called “Filling the Soil of Opportunity” about planning farm businesses. They have also been going for years to Vermont to learn about the business.

“We ski in the winter,” Pam says, “and often try to fit in a trip to a different farm when we go. I think we’ve been to most farms in Massachusetts and Vermont that makes cheese. We’ve been going to the Vermont Institute of Artisan Cheese. They have a master cheese maker certification program. People come from all over – California, the Midwest, Canada – to go to this cheese school. They bring in European cheese makers to do some of the lectures.
Pam and Ray point to some of the excessive pipes they were required to install. Pam says it all: “The expense is all in the ground. We’re standing on it. These three drains have nothing but condensation coming into them. Yet they have to be vented and have cleanouts wherever they take a turn. And we weren’t sure whether we’d have to have a grease trap, so we put the piping in the ground for one just in case. I don’t know exactly what a grease trap is, but I know each one costs $1600.”

“We started dealing with the regulations in the fall,” Pam recalls. “The Department of Public Health would be the licensor and would occasionally come out and inspect our cheese once we are licensed. There is a device called a trier which probes into the cheese and pulls out a small sample, which can be tested for microbial contamination. So we started with them, to find out whether our plans made sense. You have to write Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for everything you are doing. You have to have a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan. You have to have your building designs approved.

“We started with Ellen Fitzgibbons,” Pam continues, “who is the dairy expert at the DPH. She is a wonderful woman, very personable, very knowledgeable. She looked at our plans, said everything looked fine, explained to us that we should use PVC pipe for the drains because iron will break down and the rust will create pock marks on the inside of the pipe which can harbor bacteria. We didn’t want bacteria getting back into our aging rooms and creating a safety issue.

“Ellen wrote a letter to our plumbing inspector in January,” Pam relates. “She came and met with our board of health, along with our plumbing inspector, our plumber, the building inspector, someone from the planning board, and us. We were all trying to settle this at the local level, which is how it usually happens. She was reiterating her points about the PVC pipe, us being agricultural, and everything else. At the meeting everyone relaxed and it seemed that everything was all set. Then the inspector said he would take the issue to the state board of plumbing. We all hoped he wouldn’t, but he did.”

Besides knowing how to make a tasty cheese, of course, the Robinsons had to make a legal one. They knew they would have to work with various public agencies to get approved as a business. The state Department of Public Health (DPH) is in charge of making sure cheeses sold in the state are safe. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the local Board of Health (BoH) are concerned with waste water and sanitary issues. Various building inspectors and boards deal with construction permits. Pam and Ray knew there would be a lot of regulatory hurdles to jump over. But they were surprised how tall some of these hurdles were!

We’ve taken probably half of the master cheese courses -- even though they’re so expensive. A three day course is $750, plus you have to drive up there, get a hotel, and take the time off!”

The farm’s milk house waste wash water currently goes to the manure pit, and is then spread on the field with the manure as fertilizer. That is standard practice for dairies. The Robinsons had heard that the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) was piloting some alternative milking parlor waste water programs and had developed a Memo of Understanding with the DAR regarding their concerns about milk house waste. The pilot programs have not been completed or approved, but the DEP has been studying tougher regulations with regard to manure and milk house waste. Rather than raise questions in an area that was being considered for tougher regulations, the Robinsons decided to recycle their cheese making waste water by draining it into a tank and then reusing it to clean up manure from the milking parlor floor. That way no extra water would be put into the environment and the existing barn layout could be modified with drain pipes running through the gutters to a holding tank.

As an agricultural establishment, Robinson Farm has been able to use PVC piping for drains, and has never had to have things like grease traps or a separate bathroom for workers. Employees have always been welcome to use the house facilities, which are just across the road from the barn. Pam and Ray reasoned that making cheese, as an effort just to add value to their primary product, milk, is still an agricultural venture. As such they didn’t want to be subject to commercial requirements such as separate toilets and expensive drains and plumbing.

“We started dealing with the regulations in the fall,” Pam recalls. “The Department of Public Health would be the licensor and would occasionally come out and inspect our cheese once we are licensed. There is a device called a trier which probes into the cheese and pulls out a small sample, which can be tested for microbial contamination. So we started with them, to find out whether our plans made sense. You have to write Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for everything you are doing. You have to have a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan. You have to have your building designs approved.

“We started with Ellen Fitzgibbons,” Pam continues, “who is the dairy expert at the DPH. She is a wonderful woman, very personable, very knowledgeable. She looked at our plans, said everything looked fine, explained to us that we should use PVC pipe for the drains because iron will break down and the rust will create pock marks on the inside of the pipe which can harbor bacteria. We didn’t want bacteria getting back into our aging rooms and creating a safety issue.

“Ellen wrote a letter to our plumbing inspector in January,” Pam relates. “She came and met with our board of health, along with our plumbing inspector, our plumber, the building inspector, someone from the planning board, and us. We were all trying to settle this at the local level, which is how it usually happens. She was reiterating her points about the PVC pipe, us being agricultural, and everything else. At the meeting everyone relaxed and it seemed that everything was all set. Then the inspector said he would take the issue to the state board of plumbing. We all hoped he wouldn’t, but he did.”

Pam and Ray point to some of the excessive pipes they were required to install. Pam says it all: “The expense is all in the ground. We’re standing on it. These three drains have nothing but condensation coming into them. Yet they have to be vented and have cleanouts wherever they take a turn. And we weren’t sure whether we’d have to have a grease trap, so we put the piping in the ground for one just in case. I don’t know exactly what a grease trap is, but I know each one costs $1600.”

“We started dealing with the regulations in the fall,” Pam recalls. “The Department of Public Health would be the licensor and would occasionally come out and inspect our cheese once we are licensed. There is a device called a trier which probes into the cheese and pulls out a small sample, which can be tested for microbial contamination. So we started with them, to find out whether our plans made sense. You have to write Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for everything you are doing. You have to have a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan. You have to have your building designs approved.

“We started with Ellen Fitzgibbons,” Pam continues, “who is the dairy expert at the DPH. She is a wonderful woman, very personable, very knowledgeable. She looked at our plans, said everything looked fine, explained to us that we should use PVC pipe for the drains because iron will break down and the rust will create pock marks on the inside of the pipe which can harbor bacteria. We didn’t want bacteria getting back into our aging rooms and creating a safety issue.

“Ellen wrote a letter to our plumbing inspector in January,” Pam relates. “She came and met with our board of health, along with our plumbing inspector, our plumber, the building inspector, someone from the planning board, and us. We were all trying to settle this at the local level, which is how it usually happens. She was reiterating her points about the PVC pipe, us being agricultural, and everything else. At the meeting everyone relaxed and it seemed that everything was all set. Then the inspector said he would take the issue to the state board of plumbing. We all hoped he wouldn’t, but he did.”

The farms milk house wash water currently goes to the manure pit, and is then spread on the field with the manure as fertilizer. That is standard practice for dairies. The Robinsons had heard that the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) was piloting some alternative milking parlor waste water programs and had developed a Memo of Understanding with the DAR regarding their concerns about milk house waste. The pilot programs have not been completed or approved, but the DEP has been studying tougher regulations with regard to manure and milk house waste. Rather than raise questions in an area that was being considered for tougher regulations, the Robinsons decided to recycle their cheese making waste water by draining it into a tank and then reusing it to clean up manure from the milking parlor floor. That way no extra water would be put into the environment and the existing barn layout could be modified with drain pipes running through the gutters to a holding tank.

As an agricultural establishment, Robinson Farm has been able to use PVC piping for drains, and has never had to have things like grease traps or a separate bathroom for workers. Employees have always been welcome to use the house facilities, which are just across the road from the barn. Pam and Ray reasoned that making cheese, as an effort just to add value to their primary product, milk, is still an agricultural venture. As such they didn’t want to be subject to commercial requirements such as separate toilets and expensive drains and plumbing.

“We started dealing with the regulations in the fall,” Pam recalls. “The Department of Public Health would be the licensor and would occasionally come out and inspect our cheese once we are licensed. There is a device called a trier which probes into the cheese and pulls out a small sample, which can be tested for microbial contamination. So we started with them, to find out whether our plans made sense. You have to write Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for everything you are doing. You have to have a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan. You have to have your building designs approved.

“We started with Ellen Fitzgibbons,” Pam continues, “who is the dairy expert at the DPH. She is a wonderful woman, very personable, very knowledgeable. She looked at our plans, said everything looked fine, explained to us that we should use PVC pipe for the drains because iron will break down and the rust will create pock marks on the inside of the pipe which can harbor bacteria. We didn’t want bacteria getting back into our aging rooms and creating a safety issue.

“Ellen wrote a letter to our plumbing inspector in January,” Pam relates. “She came and met with our board of health, along with our plumbing inspector, our plumber, the building inspector, someone from the planning board, and us. We were all trying to settle this at the local level, which is how it usually happens. She was reiterating her points about the PVC pipe, us being agricultural, and everything else. At the meeting everyone relaxed and it seemed that everything was all set. Then the inspector said he would take the issue to the state board of plumbing. We all hoped he wouldn’t, but he did.”
That is when, as they say, the manure hit the fan! The state plumbing board does not recognize agricultural entities. Their classifications include only residential or commercial applications. Since the Robinsons were going to sell the cheese, rather than give it away, they classified their cheese operation as a commercial one and said they had to meet commercial plumbing standards. That meant cast iron drain pipes, grease traps, and a separate bathroom with its septic system.

But cast iron drains are four times as expensive as PVC, and involve at least twice as much plumber’s labor. That means for the Robinsons the iron drains alone would cost $20,000 more than PVC ones.

“We have contacts all over the country in the cheese business,” Ray explains. “We asked them all about cast iron and they said ‘It’ll rust like a son of a bitch’ and laughed at us. But they couldn’t supply any studies we could use to appeal the ruling. It should give you an indication that in 48 states you can use PVC for drains. Just not in Massachusetts.”

“And the way the barn is laid out,” he continues, “it would have been easy to run the pipes down the gutters to a sump inside the barn, and pump the waste water to a holding tank from there. But no, according to the plumbing code you can’t lay the pipe on any existing concrete. You have to jack hammer up a lot of existing cement and lay the pipes underground on gravel until they go ten feet outside the building.”

Pam adds: “And there had to be all these vents. Even the aging room, which produces about a cup of condensation a week, had to have the same drains and plumbing as the vat room where there is a serious amount of wash water. And of course each drain has to have a vented trap. So the 2 by 4 walls became 2 by 6 walls to accommodate the vents up to the roof. Then there is the grease trap issue. The plumbing board says if you are commercial you have to have a grease trap, but the DPH says not to have one – that they are a source of contamination. There is a cleaning issue with grease traps, and besides, there is no grease in our operation.

“Also there is the issue of bathrooms,” she continues. “If a commercial building is 1200 square feet you have to have a bathroom. A composting toilet meeting NSF41 approval is permitted in Massachusetts. But do we need a septic system for the grey water we could easily put into the manure pit with the other wash water? Of course there is no place by the barn for a septic system, so we would have to put it across the street, in our front yard, and dig up the public road to do it. So there’s another $20,000.”
Pam: “The bucket capping that pipe is 10 feet out the door. That is where the plumber’s jurisdiction ends. We’re going to put in a closed tank here to contain the water from the cheese operation which we can then recycle and use to clean out the milk pump.”

with a comprehensive nutrient management plan and involved no additional water from the cheese operation. The DEP agreed to allow it until the agency comes up with a better manure management strategy for dairies throughout the state.)

So at least on the issue of putting milk house water into the manure pit, the Robinsons won. There will be no new septic system in their front yard. On everything else, however, they felt forced to comply rather than face further delays seeking variances that would probably be denied.

“We went along with everything,” says Pam. “The delay was costing us more than it would to comply. We’re using cast iron drains, we’re putting in a bathroom with a composting toilet. We got stainless steel drains to minimize the problem of harboring contamination, although it is kind of depressing to put them on top of cast iron pipes. We have all the vents we don’t need, and put in an extra pipe to enable a grease trap that will never see grease in case we lost that one too.”

All the excavation and plumbing installation was done by April, when I interviewed the pair. They were hoping to get the concrete truck out next, to pour the floor and bury the expensive drains. The carpentry has yet to be done, and all the finish work, as well as installation of the vat and other equipment.

Also, before the couple can get their license they have to write their SOPs and HACCP plan. Then they have to fill out all the paperwork and get their labels approved and printed. This is all after they finish the renewal of their organic farming application. They can add on the cheese operation to their certification later.

So right now (April) the Robinsons are hoping to be up, running and selling cheese by late summer. The regulatory hassles are hopefully over, and the going now looks clear. But there as been a price.

“It’s taken a toll on us these last few months,” Ray states. “We haven’t killed each other yet, but…”

Pam concurs: “The thing which is most upsetting is that we’re being treated like criminals. We’re law-abiding citizens. We’re just milking cows and making cheese. The plumbing code people are taking advantage of us, but the other agencies are really trying to help. They understand our situation and want to do what they can to make it happen. The DPH is trying to do their job and protect public safety. The DEP is the same. And the DAR was very helpful, although it doesn’t seem to have much power.”

Ray adds, wryly: “Maybe we should grow something safe, like tobacco!”

Raw Milk Advocates, Consumers and Farmers Gather to Support the Struggle

by Winton Pitcoff

“We are at war,” said Canadian dairy farmer Michael Schmidt. “This is a war about food rights, which for some may appear silly but for others is more and more a growing concern.” Schmidt was speaking to several hundred people gathered in Madison, Wisconsin for the Second Annual International Raw Milk Symposium in April. “Today’s food is mostly looked at as a commodity by government regulators and the industry. Those who control food control the people, control countries, control the world, all without a visible army.”

Schmidt was acquitted by an Ontario court in January of charges relating to selling and distributing raw milk and raw milk products. The sale of raw milk to consumers is illegal in Canada, but Schmidt’s operation is based on a cowshare model.

“We have consented in silence to a food culture which will destroy millions of years of evolution,” he said. “We have consented to the loss of liberty for the sake of convenience. We are in the forefront by default – we are in the forefront to defend the most important element of our society: the health and sanity of our body, our soul and our spirit.”

Schmidt was just one of nearly a dozen speakers, each one an expert in their given area of the raw milk battle and each one passionate about food freedom and the need to fight to preserve it. The focus of the day was on the growing role of the consumer in this battle.

“The consumer is now an integral part of the farm,” said Tim Wightman, President of the Farm to Consumer Foundation and the lead organizer of the event. The raw milk movement is moving forward because consumers and producers are exercising their rights and staking a claim in the issue, he said.

“By supporting local raw milk you are doing, at a grassroots level, what we say we want the government to do,” said Mark McAfee, owner of Organic Pastures, the largest raw milk dairy in California. “You’re engaging in North America’s greatest economic stimulus by paying the farmer directly for your milk, and you’re engaging yourself in a wonderful health care plan” by drinking such a healthy product.

A Microbiological Perspective

“We are in a war, not really about milk, but about control of our food supply,” said Dr. Ted Beals, retired from the University of Michigan Medical School and VA Health Administration. “Why should the government and businesses be able to control such a basic activity as eating?” The interest in such control, he said, is straightforward: when food is produced commercially and in bulk, there are more opportunities for more people to make money. When farmers produce and sell their food directly to consumers, that potential for others to make easy money is gone.

Milk is the perfect symbol for this battle, said Beals, because milk drives so much of the rest of food purchasing and consumption. Even the way stores are laid out demonstrate this, he said, pointing out that the dairy section is always in the farthest corner of the big grocery stores, since store owners know that most consumers buy milk on a regular basis and that making them walk through the store to get to it, past all of the other items, will encourage them to buy more products. The growing interest in raw milk, then, poses a threat to many areas of the food system.

“Those waging the war have learned that promoting fear is successful,” said Beals. “They tell you that there are germs waiting to kill your children, and that if you oppose them you could face criminal prosecution.”

In processing conventional milk homogenization is necessary to hide the fact that so many components and practices and poor farming management. “If the laws requiring pasteurization were removed, industrial operators would still pasteurize because they would have to,” said Beals.

Unpasteurized milk is one of the most thoroughly nutritious foods, said Beals, and was critical to the evolution of humans as it allowed people to migrate and bring their food sources with them. If raw milk had truly been hazardous the practice of drinking it...
The benefits of drinking fresh, unpasteurized, whole milk far outweigh the risks of drinking it, concluded Beals, and no government agency or corporate power should take away consumers' right to adequately transport it to where they want and consume it as they please. Beals said he looks forward to the day when people can fly to any part of the country and pick up their milk when they want it. The animal rights movement has not figured out yet that raw milk is not inherently hazardous to the general public.

The Weston A. Price Foundation has conducted numerous scientific studies that pointed to the health benefits of raw milk, with it being found to be useful in fighting off allergies, skin problems, fatigue, prostate problems and more. These studies found raw milk drinkers to have better teeth and better developed bones than those who consume pasteurized milk or no milk at all. But the trail of such studies stops cold in 1943, she points out, at the same time that an article appeared in Coronet Magazine about a town called Cressrood where 1/3 of the residents died from undulant fever as a result of drinking raw milk. The article was repeated in Readers Digest in 1946, as part of the ongoing campaign to enforce mandatory pasteurization.

The Weston A. Price Foundation has meticulously followed up the CDC report on illnesses from raw milk between 1998 and 2005 that attributed 831 illnesses, 66 hospitalizations and one death to raw milk consumption. In 94% of the cases, she said, there was no statistical association with raw milk consumption or no valid positive milk sample, and in many cases there was no evidence that pasteurization would have prevented the outbreak. “The first reaction when raw milk is blamed for an illness should be skepticism, because there is so much bias” she said.

Rapid testing methods that err on the side of false positives is one ongoing problem that contributes to this bias, said Fallon, as are the cultures used in testing that actually promote pathogen growth. The questionnaires used during illness outbreaks always list raw milk as a possible source of the problem, while often ignoring other potential causes such as local water systems, petting zoos or travel. In some outbreaks Fallon found instances where subjects were omitted from the list of victims because they hadn’t drunk raw milk, even though they had the same symptoms as those who had. Virtually all of these incidents have resulted in press releases and media attention blaming raw milk, but there have also been retractions of studies when raw milk was eventually eliminated as the source of the problem.

At the advent of pasteurization in the late 1800’s there was indeed a need for a solution to the problem of unsafe milk. Many dairies were in inner cities where cows were fed swill from breweries and lived in dark and small buildings, all conditions that led to high levels of dangerous pathogens in the milk. But it wasn’t pasteurization that solved the problem, said Fallon. It was the outlawing of inner-city dairies, improvements in hygiene, cleaner water, the replacement of the horse with motorized transport for milk, increased access to refrigeration and the certified raw milk movement that did it. The incidence of infectious disease in the U.S. dropped dramatically after long before mandatory pasteurization, she said, in large part due to these management changes.

Some more recent studies have returned to examining raw milk consumption and its affect on health. In a study of 14,893 children aged 5-13, consumption of raw milk was the strongest factor in reducing the risk of asthma and allergy, whether the children lived on a farm or not. The benefits were greatest when consumption of farm milk began during the first year of life according to this study, published in Clinical & Experimental Allergy in May 2007. There is evidence that increases in asthma, allergies and even lactose intolerance could all be at least partly addressed by better access to raw milk for children, she said. Many of the bioactive components of raw milk are particularly important for building immune systems and keeping the bacterial balance necessary in the human gut, she added, and some bacteria present in raw milk even work to destroy potentially harmful pathogens.

Fallon laid out what she called a “Fivefold Health Benefit System in Raw Milk.” Raw milk, she said:
1. Destroys pathogens in the milk.
2. Stimulates the Immune system.
4. Prevents absorption of pathogens and toxins in the gut.
5. Ensures assimilation of all the nutrients.
“Raw milk can mean the difference between a healthy productive life and a miserable life,” concluded Fallon, adding that the health of millions of children worldwide is at stake.

The Wisconsin Experience

Presenters Wayne and Kay Craig illustrated the challenges facing raw milk dairies, when they told the story of their experience as Wisconsin dairy farmers dealing with state regulators, a story re-echoed throughout the Symposium. Though the Wisconsin statute has long allowed ‘incidental’ sales of raw milk, when Wayne and Kay began selling shares of a small farm store to customers and providing those customers with raw milk along with other products, they learned that the state’s definition of ‘incidental’ was very different from theirs. This resulted in a legal action from the State Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection (DATCP), saying that their operation required a retail license. Wayne and Kay have filed suit against DATCP, challenging the interpretation that only members-only establishment needs a retail license.

The Craigs spoke of the value of raw milk to their operation. Since milk needs to be purchased every 10-14 days, having that product brings people to the store on a regular basis, which encourages sales of their other products like meat and eggs. That traffic keeps customers connected with the farm, the money they spend stays in the community, and the revenue from sales of non-dairy products and the farm keeps the farm alive in the face of otherwise poor economic conditions, as all dairies are experiencing.

At the time of the Symposium, in a situation being closely watched by raw milk advocates around the country, the Wisconsin legislature was considering a bill that would make on-farm sales of raw milk by Grade A dairies legal. As the second-largest milk-producing state in the nation, the conventional dairy industry has long fought such proposals. At press time, however, although the legislature passed the bill the Governor vetoed it.

From the consumer’s perspective, Emily Matthews, a raw milk drinker and emergency room nurse, raised numerous questions about rights. “Does the government even have the right to forbid people from getting raw milk?” she asked, noting that no government effort has ever been launched to stop people from drinking raw milk from their own animals. “Why are farmers, and not the buyers, the only ones busted, unlike in a drug deal?”

Those who seek out and purchase raw milk “are not ignorant people that need to be protected from our own free will,” said Matthews. “Free will!” she noted. “If so many people go out of their way to change their lifestyles to get raw milk – some even to the point of getting their driver’s licenses – saying that their operation required a retail license. Wayne and Kay have filed suit against DATCP, challenging the interpretation that only members-only establishment needs a retail license.

Matthews also said that the rate of raw milk consumption is higher than the government is aware, because it involves an illegal product, which Rich points out is not true – there are no laws making it illegal to possess or consume raw milk. The government has also responded that the agreements are merely shams to circumvent the law. The legal proceedings are ongoing.

“The legal light is not about raw milk, it’s about freedom,” said Rich. “That’s why everybody needs to stand up and be heard on this issue. Even if you would never consider drinking raw milk yourself, you should oppose the government’s contention that they have the right to decide that for you. Each of us has the right to choose the food we eat – that’s a fundamental right of every human being.”

The European Perspective

Sylvia Onusic worked at the National Institute of Public Health of Slovenia and then at that country’s Ministry of Health and Food Safety Cooperation. She spoke about her experiences in Slovenia, and gave an overall picture of the raw milk situation in Europe. Raw milk has long been the basis of many of traditional dishes all over Europe, she said, and Europeans generally believe that raw milk is healthier than pasteurized.

Slovenian dairy farms are not regulated in the way that dairies are in the U.S., said Onusic, and have few of the sanitary conveniences that are employed here – stainless steel equipment, for instance, is rarely found at a Slovenian farm. Yet residents rely on these farms as their source, bringing their own containers and getting fresh milk on a regular basis. There is no talk of outbreaks of food borne illness from this milk, and Slovenians have the lowest rates of heart disease and hypertension in Europe, said Onusic.

Public opinion is critical to the success of any of these efforts, said Kennedy, citing the turnout of more than 800 people at a hearing on the Wisconsin raw milk bill as a major turning point in that campaign. “We all need to continue to push toward food freedom of choice,” said Kennedy. “That right is yours only if you take it.”

Slides from the presentations and the 2010 International Raw Milk Symposium are available online at http://www.farmtoconsumerfoundation.org/rawmilksymposium/ppt.htm, and an 8-CD set of the talks are available for purchase at https://www.farmtoconsumer.net/EducationalDVD-RMS2.asp.
ATTENTION
LOCAL GROWERS
AND PRODUCERS:

WHOLE FOODS MARKET WANTS YOU.
(Actually, we want your APPLES, CORN, CHEESE, CHICKEN, JELLY, PICKLES, SAUSAGE... You get the idea.)

If you are a local grower or producer and would like to expand your business, register now for one of our store-based NATIVE GROWERS & PRODUCERS EVENTS.

• Learn about packaging and labeling guidelines.
• Get great tips on operations and logistics.
• Discover how to grow your business through marketing and quality standards.
• Check out our local loan program.

EMAIL: na.newitems@wholefoods.com, or
CALL: 617-492-5500 ext. 3071 for more information.

WHOLEFOODSMARKET.COM
Since 1976, farmers have trusted us to get them everything they need to grow organically at the very best prices. This year, we are happy to roll out a new program that goes even further. Substantiate that you’re a larger commercial farm and we’ll show you the very best prices available on our vast product line, from cover crop seed to bare-root trees.

Call Hope at (888)784-1722 ext100 or email farmerpricing@groworganic.com for more info.

Whether you are a farmer or a gardener, we have the most comprehensive selection of organic growing supplies you’ll find anywhere, at the very best prices.

www.GrowOrganic.com
(888) 784-1722

Organic Seed Packs
Variety & Prices You Won’t Find Anywhere Else

Organic Vegetable Seeds
Browse our website or give us a call... we carry over 200 varieties of certified organic vegetable seeds in bulk and by the pack.

Organic Seed Packs $1.99
Organic Bulk Seed $3.99+/½lb

Peaceful Valley is sponsoring first year farmers!
Read about their experience at FreshmanFarmer.com

Read organic gardening tips, tricks, and information at intheloop.groworganic.com

NEW! Plantskydd Granular - Easy to Use!
Just Sprinkle it On!
Repels rabbits and small critters, including chipmunks, squirrels, voles, nutria and opossum.

Granular—No Bad Odor!
1 lb. Shaker, 3 lb. and 7 lb. Shaker Bag
20 lb. ‘Easy Carry’ Bag

For our DEALER LOCATOR, FAQs, testimonials and *independent research results, visit our website:
www.plantskydd.com
CALL TOLL FREE 1-800-252-6051

Plantskydd Deer Repellent*
A Proven Leader!
#1 Most Effective, #1 Longest Lasting, #1 Most Tested Animal Repellent.
Effective against deer, elk and rabbits.

1 qt. and 1.32 gal Ready-to-Use Spray
1 lb., 2.2 lb. and 22 lb.
Soluble Powder Concentrate

Plantskydd
REPELLENT
DEER • RABBITS • ELK

#1 Choice of Landscapers, Professional Growers & Foresters
We were surprised by the results. We maintain our tank SCC down at 80-100,000 by spraying every fresh udder for 4 to 5 days.

— Alan Mesman

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

— Alan Mesman

**VEGETABLE GROWERS:**

Bejo proudly offers a wide range of high-quality, organically-produced seed. Bejo’s breeders focus on strong root systems, enhanced disease resistance, and good flavor and nutrition. Largest producer of quality hybrid organic seed.

**Value-added film coating for Bejo organic seed (pictured left, natural seed on left and coated seed on right):**

- Exclusive from Bejo for the organic sector
- Accepted according to EU and NOP organic regulations
- Improved visibility of seed in soil
- Smoother passage of seed through sowing equipment
- Bejo high-quality product

**Preorder quantities of The Natural Farmer for your Farm Stand or CSA members!**

10 - 29 copies for $2.50 each
30 - 59 copies for $2.00 each
60 - 99 copies for $1.50 each
100 + copies for $1.25 each

these prices are postpaid to any US street address (no PO Box please). You must preorder, however, so send a check for the total amount so that we receive it by the 20th of the month before publication. That is:
Feb. 20 for Spring issue
May 20 for Summer issue
Aug. 20 for Fall issue
Nov. 20 for Winter issue

**The Natural Farmer**

411 Sheldon Rd.
Barre, MA 01005
978-355-2853
TNF@nofa.org
Organic crops start with the seed.

With our extensive testing program and experienced dealer network, it’s easy to see why more organic farmers trust Blue River Hybrids to provide high-yielding regionally-specific hybrids and varieties for their operation.

To locate a dealer go to: www.blueriverorgseed.com or call the BRH office at: 800-370-7979
Laws, Regs and NOFA: When Should We Enter the Fray?

The National Organic Action Plan (NOAP) Summit, in February, 2009, was attended by Steve Gilman & Liz Henderson representing NOFA

by Elizabeth Henderson

“To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places (and there are so many) where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction. And if we do act, in however small a way, we don’t have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as if we thought human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.”

-Howard Zinn, patriot, historian, and author

When Jack Kittredge first announced the topic for this issue of TNF, there was an outpouring of stories about laws and regulations that have made smaller scale or organic farming difficult or impossible. It is very easy for us all to get riled up about regulatory strangleholds and injustices. Farmer complaints about the government, the banks, the corporations punctuate the history of farming in this country back to the earliest days of European settlement. Sometimes it is hard to distinguish our anti-government rhetoric from that of right wing libertarians or even the Militia. “They are out to get us!” “They will destroy our farms!”

But when we talk like that, what do we really mean? Do we want less government? Exactly what part of the government do we want to reduce? The safety net for sick, weak, young or aged people, protections for the environment, regulations limiting the power of big business? The military? Or do we want a government that is responsive to the needs of the vast majority of the people in this country who earn less than $200,000 a year, own few stocks and bonds, and sit on the boards of no multi-national corporations. This is tricky. Lots of times there’s no one “position” that farmers adhere to – and it often becomes a matter of polarized underlying belief systems -- a glorified Ron Paul/ Ralp Nadar debate on the nature of government if you will. Do we believe in democracy and collective action? If not, what is the alternative? Let’s have a conversation about this.

Some small farm advocates will vehemently assert that ANY government regs are infringements on our freedom, while others maintain we should work through regs to rein in power imbalances and corporate hegemony. Some people in sustainable and organic ag. just want to say NO. Meanwhile, some of us have been working for decades, attending thousands of hours of meetings and negotiations to try to keep legislation from bringing hardships to family-scale farmers. We need to talk more about when it is worth our time and effort to work for changes in regs., rules or legislation. What are our top priorities and how are we going to get them implemented?

NOFA Interstate Policy Work
From 1989 until 2008, volunteers did all of the NOFA Interstate Council policy work. In choosing what issues to engage, the Policy Committee has stuck pretty closely to the basic principles of organic agriculture as formulated by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM). With our fellow members of NOSC, we worked on the organic portions of the 2007-8 Farm Bill. We regularly respond to action alerts that oppose GMOs, pesticides and the routine use of antibiotics. We encouraged NOFA members to participate in creating the National Organic Action Plan. Besides food safety, we have also taken active positions on other family farm issues that are broader than organic -- the National Animal Identification System, the patenting of living organisms, free trade, access to healthy food for lower income people, and concentration in the food system.

Since joining the Domestic Fair Trade Association (DFTA), the NOFAs have joined in positions calling for immigration reform and fair contracts for agriculture.

Since 2008, when we hired Steve Gilman as our very part time staff person to coordinate the volunteers, we have increased participation by the seven chapters and have been able to respond more quickly to the action alerts from the NOSC, NSAC and other national efforts. Steve and I served on the NOSC committee that organized the National Organic Action Plan and attended the Summit. Steve has played a central role in creating a Leafy Greens Working Group, including organic farming associations from Maine to Florida, to influence the food safety legislation that is in process in DC. (See Steve’s Food Safety article in this issue!) And I have taken a lead in implementing domestic fair trade.

From conversations with NOFA members, various NOFA surveys and comments to newsletters, besides maintaining the integrity of organic agriculture, the Interstate Policy Committee has identified these areas as top priorities:

a. To enable citizens who want to drink raw milk to obtain it at convenient retail outlets.
b. To recreate the infrastructure needed to allow the processing and distribution of livestock products from family-scale farms throughout the NE states.
c. To put in place regulations that will prevent gas mining companies from polluting the region’s water supply, yet allow farmers and the communities with significant gas resources to share in the benefits from those resources.
d. To establish a close working relationship with the USDA/NRCS in each of the NE states so that the NOFA organizations can assist in the conversion of many additional farms to organic agriculture and allow organic farms to access a fair share of federal conservation dollars.

e. To implement food safety regulations on the fed-
eral and state levels that protect the eating public, while assisting family-scale farmers in improving the safety of their farms in a manner that is appropriate to the scale and resources of those farms.

1. To push for the enactment of immigration reform and a solution to the current impasse on providing a fair and humane immigration bill. This bill must make provision for family-scale organic farms, and the growing organic and small-scale farms of the future.

2. To move more quickly to implement the new national standard for organic production and to provide a fair and equitable transition for organic farmers and consumers.

3. To establish legally recognized internship programs for farm workers. This will help to ensure that young people have the opportunity to learn about and enjoy organic agriculture.

4. To work with the USDA to develop new and improved standards for organic food and farming. This will help to ensure that consumers of organic products are getting what they pay for and that our farms are sustainable and profitable.

5. To push for the enactment of immigration reform and a solution to the current impasse on providing a fair and humane immigration bill. This bill must make provision for family-scale organic farms, and the growing organic and small-scale farms of the future.

6. To work with the USDA to develop new and improved standards for organic food and farming. This will help to ensure that consumers of organic products are getting what they pay for and that our farms are sustainable and profitable.

7. To work with the USDA to develop new and improved standards for organic food and farming. This will help to ensure that consumers of organic products are getting what they pay for and that our farms are sustainable and profitable.

8. To work with the USDA to develop new and improved standards for organic food and farming. This will help to ensure that consumers of organic products are getting what they pay for and that our farms are sustainable and profitable.

9. To work with the USDA to develop new and improved standards for organic food and farming. This will help to ensure that consumers of organic products are getting what they pay for and that our farms are sustainable and profitable.

10. To work with the USDA to develop new and improved standards for organic food and farming. This will help to ensure that consumers of organic products are getting what they pay for and that our farms are sustainable and profitable.

NOFA Experience with OFPA

NOFA has been involved in the passage of the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) in 1990 and the subsequent institution of the National Organic Program. We have learned a lot by reflecting on this history. For the record, back in the 1980’s, the NOFAs did not want a national organic program housed in USDA. Our Interstate Certification Committee took the position that a national definition of organic agriculture would be adequate so that organic certifiers would stop competing with each other. Each state or group of states could have its own certification program and as long as we all adhered to the same principles and procedures, it did not matter if we had minor differences in standards or even major differences in procedures. The NOFA Interstate committee also proposed a system of accreditation for certifying organizations, with a priority rating system, with the university system, where schools inspect one another.

But when it became clear that Senator Leahy was going forward with the OFPA and that there was enough public sentiment in its favor that the bill was likely to pass, NOFA had to make a painful choice. We could have continued as a group of organizations that just said no — led by the Ozark Organic Growers Association. Or we could get involved in the lobbying to make the legislation as smart and farm friendly as possible.

We chose the latter and Liz spent the summer of 1989 doing 3½ hour conference calls with organic farming groups from all over the country (MOFGA, COCOF, Washington Thlth, Oregon Thlth, Michigan Organic Growers and Buyers Assn.) developing language that we submitted to Congress. The original version of the OFPA, the materials that can be used in organic production was the work of Lynn Coody, backed vociferously by our committee. If administered conscientiously and fairly, this language can ensure that organic farming and food production is done in a way that is safe and healthy for the consumer and the environment.

Two decades have gone by since the OFPA became law as part of the 1990 Farm Bill. During these years, NOFA has followed through on its commit ment to work with organic farmers, the importance of maintaining the integrity of the organic label. For many years, we sent representatives to the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture Organic Committee and I served on it with Michael Sligh. That committee helped orchestrate the ou tpouring of protests against USDA’s first attempt at a Rule for OFPA, the record-breaking 275,000 negative comments. That protest pushed USDA to withdraw the offending Rule and thoroughly rewrite it before implementing the NOP in 2002. The second version of the Rule was far from perfect and USDA did not go out of its way to appoint people with a commitment to organic agriculture to run the program. Nevertheless, despite a lot of talk about the need to go “beyond the organic label," the system of organic certification has functioned decently. The growing market for organic products has been one of the few bright lights in U.S. agriculture, and for the most part, consumers of organic products are getting what they pay for.

During the 1990’s, the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture Organic Committee served as the broad watering hole where the increasingly varied and policy-driven organic agriculture came together to work on policy. There are voices that blame the passage of the OFPA for the industrialization of organic agriculture. The case, however, can be made that it was the entry of agribusiness into organics that led to the passage of the law and not the other way around. By the time Arthur Harvey, the blueberry farmer from Maine, took his case to Congress, the system of organic certification had functioned decently. The growing market for organic products has been one of the few bright lights in U.S. agriculture, and for the most part, consumers of organic products are getting what they pay for.

Today, the NOP is a serious bone of contention. What was then the ozark Organic Growers Association is now a large, diverse, and polarized interest group. The National Organic Coalition has been able to mediate between us, representing other groups – scientists, the chemically conscious public, and consumers. Our ally, the consumer organization Food and Water Watch, has been able to mediate between us, representing family-scale farmers, and the other consumer groups that have little understanding of the realities of the small farms that they love in the abstract when they buy local.

NOFA has also continued its involvement with the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, following the merger of the National Campaign and the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition.

The latest report on the food safety legislation from Fred Hoefner of NSAC underlines the kind of dedicated and time consuming effort required to influence legislation:

“We continue to work on multiple amendments, in cluding:

• a Sanders amendment on getting a new rulemaking on which farms are facilities and which are not for purposes of the new reg requirements. The provision in $ 510, a Bennet amendment to get scale and diversity language into the HACCP section of the bill and to get “paperwork reduction” provisions into both the HACCP and the Produce Standard sections of the bill.

• direct marketing and farm identity preserved provisions into the Brown amendment on Recordkeeping and Traceback.

• the Stabenow and small processor training program amendment, and

• as yet unsponsored amendments to require risk analysis for rulemakings on Performance Standards,

• to authorize FDA to make exemptions for HACCP for very small businesses including farms, and

• to reduce the frequency of FDA inspections for low risk facilities.

To the maximum extent possible we will handle these amendments as a package, so that we work with the respective sponsors working together as a unit. Our goal is to get as many included in the Managers Amendment to the bill (the only amendment that is likely to be in conference) and if we succeed, we will need to determine whether to engage in a floor fight and try to win approval as stand alone amendments or get them in the bipartisan legislation’s sponsors’ opposition.”

This is dense stuff! Saying NO is a lot easier. But remember, “Electricity is the gift of life.”

 Wendell Phillips (1811-1884), abolitionist, orator and columnist for The Liberator, in a speech be fore the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society in 1852. To preserve any victory we win for small farms and organic agriculture, we must be prepared to organize over and over again. This means that since our resources are limited, when possible, we must pick our battles, though all too often they are imposed on us. Food safety is a good example.

---

Alvin Fisbinger – born Oct 8, 1924 Aylton, Ontario, died May 19, 2010, Hanover, Ontario

Fisbinger’s farming life started in the 1930’s with community wheat harvests by wood-fired station ary steam thresher and the horse-pulled plow. A founding member of O CIA, ACR ES, and COG (Canadian Organic Growers), Alvin’s Ontario apple orchard was the original research orchard for the Biodynamic Society at Spring Valley, NY, and was frequently visited by Dr. Pfeifer in the 1950’s. He harvested 68 apple crops and was the first commercial shipper of organic apples when railways connected him to health food stores as far away as Texas and California. His main concerns were maintaining soil fertility and re-mineralization, and the nutritional content of the food produced.

– Mike Larsson, Ontario, Canada
Summer, 2010

continued from page 1

energy reserves, or what is often referred to as the Peak Oil crisis, which began in the 1970's, the global community will be forced to begin looking for ways of existing and producing food methods which are not dependent on petroleum products. Dr Fernando Funes played a significant role in Cuba’s aggressive shift toward a new model of agriculture based on organic methods. Today nearly 70% of food is grown in the cities of Cuba, employing half a million people and using integrated organic urban agricultural techniques.

In addition to his ongoing research, Dr. Funes, the son of farmers, also spends his time teaching agricultural Eco-Tours of Cuba, hosting visitors from around the world as they explore the various sustainable farming projects that have supported and supplied the Cuban population with organically raised products since the early 1990’s. Dr. Funes brings a unique international perspective to the NOFA conference, and will illuminate us on not only the various organic farming techniques which have been successful in his country, but will paint a picture of how sustainable agriculture is possible on a large-scale. Dr. Funes will be speaking on Saturday night, August 13th and on Sunday, August 15th will be leading two workshops: “Urban and Suburban Agriculture” from 10-11:30 am and “Animals and Crops Integration in Agroecology” from 1-2:30 pm.

To add to our captivating speakers, as always, the Summer Conference will feature a fantastic array of workshops. Children’s Conference, a Teen Conference, a local meal, dozens of exhibitors, and a Saturday afternoon fair. This year, the conference will also feature a Live Auction, which will take place in front of the Exhibitor Tent at 3:15 pm, on Saturday afternoon. Workshops range from topics such as Animal Care, Growing Produce, Farm Management and Business Development, Cooking, Policies and Politics of Agriculture, Nutrition, Health and Holistic Medicine, Dairy Production, Gardening and Flowers, Alternative Energy, Herbs, Food Preservation, and much more. For a complete list of 2010 Workshops, please visit www.nofasummerconference.org/program.php.

Workshops begin on Friday, August 13th at 2:00 pm and continue throughout the weekend. Participants who are unable to attend the entire weekend may choose to take advantage of this option, based on individual workshop preferences. To download a registration form, or to register online, please visit www.nofasummerconference.org/registration.php. You can also request a registration packet from the NOFA/Mass office by calling 978-355-2835 or email Kathleen Geary at info@nofamass.org.

While adult participants busy themselves taking notes, exploring various topics, kids of all ages get the opportunity to explore the Children’s Conference! Workshops on Mural Painting, get the opportunity to explore the Children’s Conference, a Teen Conference, a local meal, dozens of exhibitors, and a Saturday afternoon fair. This year, the conference will also feature a Live Auction, which will take place in front of the Exhibitor Tent at 3:15 pm, on Saturday afternoon. Workshops range from topics such as Animal Care, Growing Produce, Farm Management and Business Development, Cooking, Policies and Politics of Agriculture, Nutrition, Health and Holistic Medicine, Dairy Production, Gardening and Flowers, Alternative Energy, Herbs, Food Preservation, and much more. For a complete list of 2010 Workshops, please visit www.nofasummerconference.org/program.php.

Workshops begin on Friday, August 13th at 2:00 pm and continue throughout the weekend. Participants who are unable to attend the entire weekend may choose to take advantage of this option, based on individual workshop preferences. To download a registration form, or to register online, please visit www.nofasummerconference.org/registration.php. You can also request a registration packet from the NOFA/Mass office by calling 978-355-2835 or email Kathleen Geary at info@nofamass.org.

While adult participants busy themselves taking notes, exploring various topics, kids of all ages get the opportunity to explore the Children’s Conference! Workshops on Mural Painting, get the opportunity to explore the Children’s Conference, a Teen Conference, a local meal, dozens of exhibitors, and a Saturday afternoon fair. This year, the conference will also feature a Live Auction, which will take place in front of the Exhibitor Tent at 3:15 pm, on Saturday afternoon. Workshops range from topics such as Animal Care, Growing Produce, Farm Management and Business Development, Cooking, Policies and Politics of Agriculture, Nutrition, Health and Holistic Medicine, Dairy Production, Gardening and Flowers, Alternative Energy, Herbs, Food Preservation, and much more. For a complete list of 2010 Workshops, please visit www.nofasummerconference.org/program.php.

Workshops begin on Friday, August 13th at 2:00 pm and continue throughout the weekend. Participants who are unable to attend the entire weekend may choose to take advantage of this option, based on individual workshop preferences. To download a registration form, or to register online, please visit www.nofasummerconference.org/registration.php. You can also request a registration packet from the NOFA/Mass office by calling 978-355-2835 or email Kathleen Geary at info@nofamass.org.

While adult participants busy themselves taking notes, exploring various topics, kids of all ages get the opportunity to explore the Children’s Conference! Workshops on Mural Painting, get the opportunity to explore the Children’s Conference, a Teen Conference, a local meal, dozens of exhibitors, and a Saturday afternoon fair. This year, the conference will also feature a Live Auction, which will take place in front of the Exhibitor Tent at 3:15 pm, on Saturday afternoon. Workshops range from topics such as Animal Care, Growing Produce, Farm Management and Business Development, Cooking, Policies and Politics of Agriculture, Nutrition, Health and Holistic Medicine, Dairy Production, Gardening and Flowers, Alternative Energy, Herbs, Food Preservation, and much more. For a complete list of 2010 Workshops, please visit www.nofasummerconference.org/program.php.

Workshops begin on Friday, August 13th at 2:00 pm and continue throughout the weekend. Participants who are unable to attend the entire weekend may choose to take advantage of this option, based on individual workshop preferences. To download a registration form, or to register online, please visit www.nofasummerconference.org/registration.php. You can also request a registration packet from the NOFA/Mass office by calling 978-355-2835 or email Kathleen Geary at info@nofamass.org.

While adult participants busy themselves taking notes, exploring various topics, kids of all ages get the opportunity to explore the Children’s Conference! Workshops on Mural Painting, get the opportunity to explore the Children’s Conference, a Teen Conference, a local meal, dozens of exhibitors, and a Saturday afternoon fair. This year, the conference will also feature a Live Auction, which will take place in front of the Exhibitor Tent at 3:15 pm, on Saturday afternoon. Workshops range from topics such as Animal Care, Growing Produce, Farm Management and Business Development, Cooking, Policies and Politics of Agriculture, Nutrition, Health and Holistic Medicine, Dairy Production, Gardening and Flowers, Alternative Energy, Herbs, Food Preservation, and much more. For a complete list of 2010 Workshops, please visit www.nofasummerconference.org/program.php.
Organic Producers: Help Make USDA Conservation Programs Work for You

Now you can have a seat at the table in shaping U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) policies for organic agriculture. And, you don’t need to fly to Washington to do so. New federal initiatives, if taken advantage of, can yield greater support for organic stakeholders in every state and community across the nation. For that to happen, however, organic farmers must be involved in the implementation of these initiatives at the state and local level. Much is at stake. If organic farmers do NOT participate, then dollars spent in each state on conservation programs will mostly be directed to larger farms, including CAFOs, rather than small and mid-sized family farms. Please consider submitting a request to serve on your local Conservation Service (NRCS) State Technical Committee (STC) or Local Working Group. Read on to learn how.

The Details:
The 2008 Farm Bill contains several provisions that expand federal support for organic agriculture, especially around conservation and natural resource issues. Key changes include the creation of a new Organic Initiative in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Additionally, the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) now includes a requirement to develop a “crosswalk,” bridging the program’s conservation plan with existing National Organic Program requirements for an organic systems plan. NRCS has also developed a Conservation Activity Plan for Organic Agriculture that recommends conservation practice standards and aids farmers in transitioning to organic.

Successful implementation of these new organic provisions depends on operators who best understand why and how they matter. This is where you come in! Organic farmers and ranchers must step forward to ensure that the USDA and the NRCS fully understand the benefits of organic systems to environmental and natural resource protection in order for federal conservation programs to work for organic farmers and ranchers. You can help make this happen by serving on your State Technical Committee and your Local Working Group.

Preserving Farms for Farmers: A Manual for Those Working to Keep Farms Affordable by Equity Trust, Inc.; published by Equity Trust, Inc. in 2009

In very simple terms, one way to allow farmers to farm on land that is too expensive for them to buy (because of its potential value for commercial or residential development or as a rural “estate”) is for a third party to purchase the land and then lease it to the farmer for a long period of time (think 99 years). The third party’s motivation is not profit but personal use of the land, but rather an interest in seeing the land continue to be used for farming.

Massachusetts-based Equity Trust is an organization that has taken on this disinterested third-party role in preserving farmland, and several of the contributors to Preserving Farms for Farmers are from the staff of Equity Trust or other land trust organizations, including the Columbia (NY) Land Conservancy, the Vermont Land Trust, and the Franklin (MA) Land Trust.

The most accessible part of the book is the case studies of Live Power Community Farm (California), Roxbury Farm (New York), and Caretaker Farm (Massachusetts). These case studies show how the land trust model was sculpted to fit the needs of the particular landowners, community, and farmers. Case studies such as purchase of conservation easements, fund-raising campaigns, involvement of CSA members, and negotiation of long-term leases with buyout options (if the farmers fail to live up to the terms of the lease) were woven together to keep farmland functioning as productive farms. Each case study provides a history of how the land trust was negotiated and enacted as well as a short summary of the farm’s current status. It’s heartening that all three farms are thriving under the land trust model.

The case studies help bring the concept of land trusts for farmland preservation to life. But for those who want to embark on their own real-life “case study” to buy or preserve a farm, the technical chapters of the book will prove most valuable, although they’re not easy reading. They encompass a model agricultural ground lease, a model agricultural conservation easement with option to purchase, and an in-depth explanation and analysis of how to devise resale formulas. Two other detailed chapters offer commentaries on the lease and the easement documents. The commentaries break down each document clause by clause, defining terms and explaining, for example, the pros and cons of allowing post-sale development, how tax incentives can be structured, how mortgages can be administered, and what insurance coverage should be required of all parties involved.

Preserving Farms for Farmers makes it eminently clear that there is no simple way to preserve farmland if it has potential for other high-value uses. But it also demonstrates the powerful models, dedication to purpose, and lots of patience, preserving farmland is an achievable goal.
Sacred Expressions: 24 Years at the NOFA Summer Conference
A Tribute to Julie Rawson and Jack Kittredge

by Mindy Harris

To listen to Julie, you might think she was talking about receiving the Eucharist, attending a Baptism or a Confirmation. Not so. Julie’s referring to the NOFA Summer Conference, which is the embodiment of her holiest ideal: Community. And for 24 years, with her sturdy and loyal husband and partner Jack at her side, the Summer Conference has been, as she calls it, a “Sacred Expression.”

Bringing people together to celebrate the production of local food, nourishing bodies, minds and souls, while lifting each other up through relationships, are the focal points of the NOFA agenda. The Summer Conference is the heart and soul of the organization. And so we propose a toast – a hearty tribute to Julie Rawson and Jack Kittredge, who have served as co-coordinators of the NOFA Summer Conference for the last 24 years. After this summer, they will be passing the torch.

Julie first joined NOFA as a board member in 1984. At that time, NOFA/Mass had no staff, and the Summer Conference was a joint-effort by members of the NOFA Interstate Council. NOFA had originated in Vermont and New Hampshire, and the conference had always been in one of those states. But by 1986 it had fallen on hard times. That year it was held at Vermont’s Johnson State College and ran up a $6,000 bill, which the_rawson_kittredge chapter couldn’t afford to pay. The council decided to assess fees on the various chapters to help cover the bill, which was very unpopular. No one on the council wanted to take on a 1987 conference. But Jack and Julie felt that the conference was running in the red because it was offering unsustainable “perks” to presenters and organizers – discounts and other benefits which ate into the NOFA revenue. They went to the Massachusetts chapter and convinced the board to make a bid for the state chapter to run the 1987 affair. But it would be on an entrepreneurial basis. If they lost money, the chapter would take the hit. If they made money, the chapter would get the lion’s share of the profit. There were many older NOFA members who had been attending the conference for over a decade, and had some reservations about all these changes. But there was no better option and the board approved it. The Interstate Council was quick to accept this proposal as well (and has voted to do the same every year since) and so the conference moved to Massachusetts.

Julie and Jack took on the challenge of the 1987 conference with a small committee. They studied possible locations and decided on Williams College – at the junction of Massachusetts, Vermont, and New York. The young leaders felt very much that they had to hustle in order to make the conference work.

The division of labor between husband and wife has remained very much the same over the course of their 24-year leadership. Julie is the people-person, managing large groups of staff, volunteers, and attendees, while Jack tends to be the behind-the-scenes money, policy and strategy guy, helping to advise on facilities issues, finances, program development and operational details. You would think that they might get sick of each other after 24 years, but their different strengths and personalities complement each other nicely and they have served NOFA as a formidable leadership team.

When traffic patterns and facilities complications made the conference difficult, Julie and Jack moved it to Hampshire College in 1990. Hampshire seemed to be the ideal location, with its farming education program, barns, fields, and safe off-road setting. Many NOFA members responded positively over the years to the cozy summer-camp-like Hampshire site, and attendance grew to around 1,400 people.

It has always been an important goal of the conference under Julie and Jack to keep costs low. They remember the days when they brought their four kids in the mid-1980s, camping out, pre-cooking and packing in food to avoid the cost of meals. So they worked with Hampshire to keep costs low. Unfortunately, after 18 years, financial issues and scheduling conflicts made Hampshire College cost-prohibitive during the August timeframe of the conference. So, reluctantly, Julie and Jack started an other site-search for 2008, to preserve the integrity of the Summer Conference while finding a location that would be hospitable, large enough, and accommodating to the needs of the NOFA constituency.

UMass Amherst, somewhat to the pair’s surprise, stepped up to the plate. The administration at UMass Amherst has proven to be very supportive of many of NOFA’s needs. Most workshops are now held in one location, the campus center, which makes mobility easy. The exhibitors, fair, auction, and entertainment are all located centrally on a big grassy area outside the Campus Center, while the dorms, camping site, and dining hall are only a short walk away. The campus has agreed to serve only organic food, and to work with NOFA farmers to source the Saturday local meal – which has always been a popular favorite among attendees.

Many folks really love the pond and fountain in the middle of the campus, both of which lend a kind of tranquility and beauty to the setting. One downside to using UMass Amherst, Jack regrets, is the fact that outside groups are not allowed to bring in beer or alcohol for evening entertainment events. At Hampshire College, NOFA was able to get a liquor license, bring in company-donated organic beer and wine, and keep the revenue from sales. The loss of this several thousand dollar income source has represented a significant revenue loss for the conference and forced an increase in registration costs.

Over the past three years, however, major corporate sponsors have jumped onboard to help underwrite conference expenses. Since Jack and Julie began way back in 1987 – the attendance and participation has almost doubled to over 1,400 attendees, and roughly 100 exhibitors. Success! Jack and Julie have worked hard at not tinkering with the nature of the conference. The program remains similar each year, and features all varieties of workshops designed for both beginning home-gardeners and advanced commercial farmers.

For Julie and Jack, the NOFA Summer Conference has really been a complete family experience. All four of their kids grew up attending the conference, which they all saw as a family summer vacation. NOFA members know Dan, Paul, Ellen and Chuk very well – and watched them grow into adults. Dan is now a presenter at both the Summer Conference and in the NOFA/Mass Extension program, while Chuk is in charge of the Summer Conference Entertainment and Auction and is usually around at the Winter Conference as well. Of all their kids, Chuk, in his 28 years, has never missed a single Summer Conference. Paul, now an accomplished IT designer, was NOFA webmaster for years and still helps with website support from his home in Silver Spring, MD. Ellen, now a nutrition therapist, organized food donations and the local meal for several years.

For many years the NOFA conference completely took over the Rawson/Kittredge homestead in Barre, Massachusetts. Chuk recalls that in the years before the conference registration materials went online he learned professional office skills thanks to the event. Folks used to call with all sorts of questions, but with their parents outside on the farm, the Rawson/Kittredge kids had to do their best as NOFA support staff. After the conference, as “slave labor,” Chuk earned $4 an hour working for his mom and dad,

In 1994 the family started a decade-long conference tradition -- skits before the Friday night keynote speech. The first one was called “The Farmers Travails” and showed Julie trying to be polite (with Charlie uttering her real thoughts!) while she dealt with various difficult customers -- played by Jack and the others.
Even as teenagers the kids hung together at the conference. Here they are with a favorite conference friend, Nova Mackentley, between Ellen and Paul in about 1996, aged 15 to 19.

transcribing conference evaluations. When I asked him whether this bothered him, he joked: "Well, it wasn't as if we had a choice, you know. Julie is very good at coercion." Indeed, Jack and Julie's kids have been incredible assets to the organization, with their hard work, good will and support over the years. It has truly been a family affair.

One year, Jack and Julie received a remarkable offer. An attendee came up to them, and said "You know, I've been watching your kids at the conference for a few years. I'd really like to help send them to college." The man later helped the family to the tune of $10,000, as support for the kids in college. Overwhelmed by this response, and by the continuing positive energy they have received from attendees over the years, Julie and Jack associate the Summer Conference with feelings of love and gratitude. They feel incredibly supported by the NOFA community, which has, in turn, very grateful to them for all their hard work.

Being an organic farmer is a tough proposition. You're often swimming against the tide of commercialism, economic remuneration, and other societal and industry obstacles in order to earn a living and remain true to your principles. The NOFA Summer Conference seems to offer Julie and Jack an oasis -- a respite from the Goliath battles they have fought all their lives. They feel that they can come, kick off their shoes, and be amongst people who appreciate their work, and are fighting the good fight alongside them.

Ellen Kittredge, who now lives in Takoma Park, MD, feels strongly that growing up with NOFA had a major impact on her life as a professional adult. Running her own nutrition counseling business, she feels like she received great business training, watching and helping her parents manage both their farm business and the NOFA organization right from the ground up. Ellen articulates her vision as he steps into very big shoes next year. "I want to continue bringing together cutting edge innovators in the world of organic agriculture and bringing together a broad range of er cutting edge innovators in the world of organic agriculture and bringing together a broad range of..." The conference is there to support the movement of people towards greater self-reliance, and everyone. But Julie hates saying "no" to people. Chuk acknowledges the mental and physical toll the weekend takes on his mom. "Julie has a meltdown every year, usually it's Friday night or sometimes Saturday morning...she gets really tired and worn out, running the farm and working very intensely in the months leading up to the conference. During the meltdown, she swears off it all, then she rests for a while, gets back up and goes right back to work." Julie herself agrees that every year she gets sick at the conference, and is just trying to make it through the three days without too much trouble. She concedes that she does have to walk away from conference demands once in a while, leave someone else in charge, and go take a nap.

Jack and Julie's kids really created quite a soup opera at a conference in the mid-90's, when (as teenagers) they decided to sneak naked through the afternoon Fair for juggles and kicks. Neither Julie nor Jack actually saw the rebellious affair, but they heard about it after the fact. Despite being a great supporter of personal freedom, and a somewhat rebellious child herself, Julie laid down the line with her kids. Recognizing her leadership role with NOFA, and worried about holding on to her job as Conference Coordinator and Executive Director, Julie conveyed to her kids in no uncertain terms that they were to knock off their hijinks, or else! Luckily, conference attendees were not terribly offended, laughed at the kids' silliness, and thank goodness -- both Julie and Jack still work for NOFA!

One of the aspects of the conference that both Jack and Julie have relished, has been the opportunity to host and form relationships with keynote speakers. Sally Fallon, who will make her second Summer Conference appearance this year, along with Eliot Coleman and Joel Salatin, who have spoken at both the Summer and NOFA/Mass Winter Conferences, are among the keynote speakers that Jack and Julie have gotten to know. A major highlight for both Jack and Julie was when Wendell Berry came to speak. Berry, a prominent Southern author, philosopher, and advocate for sustainable living, is a kind of agricultural and literary hero to many who attend the conference. In Julie's signature persistence, she called Mr. Berry every year for 10 years to try to get him to come and give the keynote speech. Every year he declined. Finally one year, she left their conversation saying "This is the last year I am going to call to ask you to speak at the NOFA conference. Give me a call if you were like minded or it was. She stopped calling. The very next year Mr. Berry contacted Julie and signed on as a keynote.

One lively year, Ralph Nader and Ron Paul came to debate agriculture policy. Jack remembers "Their positions on agricultural issues were really what you would expect. Nader was in favor of regulations which protect the the environment, and Ron Paul was Libertarian, in favor of the government getting out of the regulation-business." When asked whether this particular conference was controversial in any way, Jack attests "Well, we got some angry letters about inviting Nader because some people felt that his run for the presidency in 2000 yielded a Bush administration."

Despite the fact that the conference is largely a warm, supportive atmosphere for Julie and Jack, it is not without obstacles. Registrants frequently have issues and questions about money, housing, keys, and other needs. Julie is constantly managing requests and personalities. "Some people tend to take their aggression out on you," Julie sighs. She remembers one frightening time, back when the conference was at Williams College, when a woman, disgruntled about her dorm room, came after Julie with a curling iron.

Over the years, Julie has had to set firm boundaries with people. In order for the conference to run smoothly, policies must be firm and fair to everyone. But Julie hates saying "no" to people. Chuk acknowledges the mental and physical toll the weekend takes on his mom. "Julie has a meltdown every year, usually it's Friday night or sometimes Saturday morning...she gets really tired and worn out, running the farm and working very intensely in the months leading up to the conference. During the meltdown, she swears off it all, then she rests for a while, gets back up and goes right back to work." Julie herself agrees that every year she gets sick at the conference, and is just trying to make it through the three days without too much trouble. She concedes that she does have to walk away from conference demands once in a while, leave someone else in charge, and go take a nap.

Ben articulates his vision as he steps into very big shoes next year. "I want to continue bringing together cutting edge innovators in the world of organic agriculture and bringing together a broad range of er cutting edge innovators in the world of organic agriculture and bringing together a broad range of..." The conference is there to support the movement of people towards greater self-reliance, and the knowledge that is shared at our conference is so important for the future of our world.”

Jack and Julie will still be integrally involved in NOFA/Mass, maintaining their staff positions as Policy Coordinator and Executive Director, respectively, and editing the Natural Farmer. So they’re not going too far. Jack says; and rings done a remarkable job keeping the NOFA constituents informed over many years.

And so, after 24 years of hard work, sweat, love and tears, Julie Rawson and Jack Kittredge will be taking a back seat at the NOFA conference. NOFA/ Mass has selected Ben Grosscup, who is currently working at the NOFA/Mass Extension Events Coordinator and the Summer Conference Workshop Coordinator, to lead the way. Julie feels that as the SC Workshop Coordinator, in charge of the entire planning and production of the conference, Ben will be able to "keep the energy high and maintain the enthusiasm and dynamism of the NOFA conference." Julie says, and he has done a remarkable job keeping the NOFA constituents informed over many years.

When asked why they decided to step down -- why now, why at all -- Jack and Julie reflect that they are at a different stage in their lives. Julie doesn’t want to "play chess" anymore; moving people, and tears, Julie Rawson and Jack Kittredge will be making decisions, scheduling, and organizing, constantly working for change. Now, as Ben will move into the position, he will be the one to lead the way. Julie feels that as the SC Workshop Coordinator, Ben will be able to "keep the energy high and maintain the enthusiasm and dynamism of the NOFA conference." Julie says, and he has done a remarkable job keeping the NOFA constituents informed over many years.

With their kids out of college, less need to provide for their family financially, Jack and Julie can afford to spend more time on their farm, with their grandchildren, and on theНОFA community. "I don’t want to do as much for you all have given the NOFA Summer Conference over the last 24 years. We wish you wonderful summers at Many Hands Organic Farm, weekends with your grandkids, and time to yourself. You deserve it! We thank you and we wish you well! We’ll see you in August!"
It might be a revelation to most people that plants do not have roots. Strictly speaking they have mycorrhizae. “Myc” means “fungus” and “rhizae” means “root”, and so the word “mycorrhizae” means “fungus-roots.” A mycorrhiza (plural mycorrhizae) is an anatomical structure that results from a symbiotic association between a soil fungus and plant roots.

In these mutually beneficial partnerships, roots of the host plant provide a convenient substrate for the mycorrhizal fungus, and also supply food in the form of simple carbohydrates. In exchange for this free room-and-board, the mycorrhizal fungus provides several benefits to the host plant. Mycorrhizal fungi produce an extensive network of microscopic hyphal threads that extend into the surrounding soil or growing medium to conduct water and nutrients.

The shiny soil coating is glomalin, a glue-like substance which gives soils their structure.

Arbuscular mycorrhizae send out hyphae into the soil, greatly increasing access to water and nutrients. The round structures are spores.

Mycorrhizal fungi increase plant access to phosphorus.

Literally thousands of research papers have been written on mycorrhizal fungi and farmers are generally well versed on the subject. Numerous brands of commerical mycorrhizal inoculums are available but, unfortunately, some have been marketed as a “silver bullet” that will cure all your farming problems. Since you are all experienced farmers who already know how to grow crops, we’d like to share with you a tool to make them even better.

As you know, cropping systems could be more sustainable with management of mycorrhizal fungi and less reliance on agrochemicals. New information is also indicating that, with proper management, agricultural soils with mycorrhizal fungi can store enormous amounts of soil carbon. Tiny fungal filaments are efficient at pulling CO₂ out of the air where it is a greenhouse gas and depositing it in the soil where it promotes soil and crop productivity. Increasing carbon in soil is also critically important in efforts to stop global warming.

The living soil: a reservoir of fertility

Truly healthy soil contains a prodigious abundance of biological activity. One heaping tablespoon of healthy soil may contain billions of soil organisms. Just an ounce can contain numbers of organisms equal to the earth’s entire human population! An acre of healthy topsoil can contain a web of life that includes 900 pounds of earthworms, 2,500 pounds of fungi, 1,500 pounds of bacteria, 130 pounds of protozoa, 900 pounds of arthropods and algae, and in most cases, even some small mammals. This plethora of soil organisms are like billions of miniature bags of fertility, each storing plant nutrients in their body tissue while slowly converting them into available forms of plant nutrients.

Managing Farms Biologically:

Incorporating nitrogen-fixing plants into farm management practices adds nitrogen and organic matter to soils in a less leachable form. An excellent example is the use of Rhizobia bacteria inoculant when planting nitrogen-fixing plant species such as legumes. Eighty percent of the earth’s atmosphere is nitrogen, yet despite this abundance, plants are unable to absorb it as a gas from the air. That’s where symbiotic nitrogen-fixing bacteria associated with the roots of certain plants come in. These bacteria are capable of utilizing the vast pool of atmospheric nitrogen by converting it to an organic form that plants can use. A legume cover crop can add and store as much as 200 pounds of nitrogen to an acre of soil.

In their natural environments, most plants, including more than 90% of all crop species, form a root association with mycorrhizae. In this mutualistic association, root-attached fungal filaments extend into the soil, helping the plant by gathering water and nutrients and transporting these materials back to the roots.

Miles of fungal filaments can be present in a small amount of healthy soil. The plant’s association with mycorrhizal fungi increases the effective surface absorbing area of roots several hundred to several thousand times. In return, the plant feeds the fungus sugars produced by photosynthesis. Scientific studies with hundreds of various crops indicate that the mycorrhizal relationship can improve nutrient uptake, yields, drought tolerance and root biomass.

The group of mycorrhizal fungi that are most important to agriculture are called arbuscular mycorrhizal...
Studies with hundreds of various crops indicate that the mycorrhizal relationship can improve nutrient uptake, yields, drought tolerance and root biomass.

3. Glomalin: the newest mycorrhizal benefit - In 1996, pioneering research by Sara Wright of the USDA- Agricultural Research Service showed AMF produce a sticky carbon containing substance called glomalin. Wright named glomalin after Glomales, the taxonomic order to which AMF belong. From a soil management standpoint, the most important property of glomalin is its stickiness which gives soils their “tilth”. Tilth is one of those terms that’s hard to describe on paper but you can feel it from the seat of your tractor. The best definition that we could find for tilth is “a sensory measure of the soil’s ability to be worked easily, to hold water, to smell sweet, to crumble easily into large aggregates, and to resist wind and water erosion”. You probably know that some of the best soils in the world developed under grasslands and now you know the mechanism. Soils formed under grasses are very high in organic matter due to their massive fibrous roots and annual senescence and decomposition of their shoots. Grassland soils are also known for their excellent structure and, since all grasses have AMF, we now know that improvement in structure can be greatly attributed to glomalin. From an ecological standpoint, one of the fascinating properties of glomalin is that it contains 30 to 40% carbon; in fact, glomalin can comprise one-third of all carbon in the soil and can persist for 40 years. We are all familiar with the deleterious connection between greenhouse gases and global warming. It has been estimated that up to a third of all of the increase in global CO2 that has been generated since the industrial revolution can be attributed to carbon losses through agricultural practices. Because of glomalin’s high carbon content, grass crops and natural grasslands are now being recognized as potentially valuable for offsetting carbon dioxide emissions from industry and vehicles. In fact, some private markets have already started offering carbon credits for certain farm practices and crops.

Rebuild Your Soil with Cover Crops and Green Manure crops

As you know all agricultural areas are only as good as their soil. Growing cover crops and green manure crops are excellent ways to rebuild it. Farmers choose cover or green manure crops for their organic matter, nutrient additions or resistance to erosion or root pathogens but now there’s another consideration – glomalin for improving soil carbon and structure. The species that you use for a green manure and cover crop is critical. Perennial grasses and deep-rooted legumes are best for this purpose. Shallow rooted legumes and annual grasses are next in line. Lush green crops decay quickly after incorporation and much of the biomass is lost to the atmosphere. Perennial grasses are effective in soil building because they grow more root mass and the AMF have more opportunity to form glomalin. Increased production results from improving soil conditions.

Conclusion

Scientific research confirms that fallow, tillling and compaction, all common in agriculture areas, reduce or eliminate the soil’s mycorrhizal fungal populations. The benefits of inoculating with mycorrhizal fungi are well documented, but the newly discovered relationship between arbuscular mycorrhizae and glomalin is particularly interesting. Arbuscular mycorrhizae are found on a wide variety of crops from around the world, and produce glomalin on their roots. This carbon based sticky protein is responsible for giving soils their tilth, which is critical to long term soil management and conservation. Certain crops are most effective in soil building because they grow more root mass and are more effective in soil building because they grow more root mass and the AMF have more opportunity to form glomalin. Because it contains 30 to 40% carbon and ties it up for decades, glomalin can help counteract the buildup of greenhouse gases and lessen the effects of global warming. We’re sure that we’ll be hearing more about the glomalin connection in coming years.

by Basil P. Tangredi, DVM

In the past several weeks, the mainstream media has been a buzz with articles bearing such headlines as: “Eco-friendly Foods Not Always What They Seem” or “Environmentally Friendly Food Myths Debunked.” This well-organized media campaign is founded upon the published research of Washington State University researcher Jude Capper, Ph. D., in which she claims to offer proof that modern industrial agriculture is more energy efficient and results in a smaller carbon footprint than organic or small-scale farms. Her views consider many food items, but I was able to track down her actual peer-reviewed scientific article on dairy production in the Journal of Animal Science (2009, Volume 87, pp. 2160-2167). Herein is my commentary.

Dr. Capper has developed a mathematical formula - a “model” - that takes values for energy utilization and milk production in a given farm operation and generates numerical outcomes for energy efficiency and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. All the parameters she uses - milk yields, cow nutritional requirements, ration formulation, methane emissions, etc. – derive from published sources; no new scientific data is presented. As an analogy, think of the equation for producing water: a certain amount of hydrogen combined with a certain amount of oxygen will yield a very specific quantity of water.

Dr. Capper compares the typical family dairy farm of 1944 with the corporate dairy farm of 2007 by plugging into her model the known values for inputs and then looking at the outputs in terms of efficiency of energy utilization and GHG emissions. Dr. Capper begins her paper with a patronizing allusion to the public’s perception of the “good old days” as opposed to the sensible logic of high-tech scientific dairy production of today. She eventually concludes that only biotechnology and the specialization/intensification of agriculture can feed a starving world with least environmental impact.
She first gives the average annual milk output for a 1944 cow as being 2074 kg, compared to 9193 kg per cow in 2007. After briefly describing the two systems, the ulterior motive for this article (indeed the entire media campaign) is revealed: "Interestingly, many of these characteristics (low-yielding, pasture-based, no antibiotics, inorganic fertilizers, or chemical pesticides) are similar to those of modern organic systems." So the idea it is – 1944 equals organic of today. This assumption is false. Of course organic methods make use of centuries of experience in pre-industrial farming. And they do all require a knowledge of agronomy, selective breeding, nutrition, etc. so that the average annual milk output of a modern organically managed dairy cow in 2005 is reported by the USDA as being 6181 kg. This one fact alone undermines much of the impact of Dr Capper’s analysis. Now, let me address the two major findings: energy input and GHG output.

Energy Input

In 1944, Dr Capper states that cow feed was almost exclusively produced on the farm (hay, pasture, some corn and soybean meal) and so the total energy input is captured within the farm unit (and thus in her mathematical model). In contrast, 2007 feed sources are described as “Total Mixed Ration” (corn silage, alfalfa hay, ground corn grain, soybean meal) to which I would add alfalfa hay like positivity litter found in modern cattle feed. Many of these components derive from genetically modified varieties, and rely upon mechanized production systems with high inputs of artificial fertilizers, pesticides, and fuels.

Since Dr Capper’s model appears only to concern on-farm energy going into the cow, all of the energy consumed in the production, processing and transportation to the factory dairy farm is absent from the 2007 calculation. Also, her statement outing the increased yields of GMO crops may be true compared to modern organic varieties, but such is not true for today’s.

Dr Capper also compares the energy utilization of horses (1944) with tractors (2007) for on-farm power. But, here again, the comparison is strictly between the energy of the farm-produced feed going into the horse versus fossil fuel going into the tractor, without accounting for the energy costs of oil extraction, refining, and transportation.

All of this is distilled into a statistic giving energy required per kg of milk output. A cow producing 7 kg of milk per day would require 2.2 Mcal of energy per kg of milk, whereas a cow producing 29 kg per day would need 15 Mcal of energy per kg of milk. Thus, 2007 systems are more energy efficient by a factor of two! But the understatement of the total energy input in 2007 makes that favorable, while the understatement of modern organic milk production (referring now to the real agenda) renders that system a poor second. I might also add that, logically, her statistical parameters should use the same units: energy. The calculation should entail all of the energy cost to production per calorific unit of energy in the milk. I know of no such comparison in the literature, but to the extent that organic production makes use of breeds (or grades) yielding a higher concentration of milk solids than the industrial Holstein, the disparity would be further reduced.

GHG Output

Similarly, Dr Capper purports to demonstrate that 2007 has a smaller carbon footprint per kg of milk than 1944 (1.35 versus 3.66 in CO2 equivalents). As with my reasoning above, the two production systems are not compared on an equal basis, and for the same reasons. Unfortunately, Dr Capper chose to overlook the work of Dr David Pimentel of the Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences who has published extensively in the peer-reviewed literature on the environmental impact of agriculture. Among his conclusions are that organic corn and soybeans – which are used by 70% less fossil energy, conserves more resources and has a smaller carbon footprint than conventional systems. In addition, organically managed soils sequester more carbon.

To make all of this clearer, let us consider another analogy. Assume that the leading manufacturer of electronic keyboard musical instruments desires to increase its sales over its major acoustic (non-electronic) competitor, the piano. The person heading the marketing division feels that an opportunity to accomplish this exists with the environmentally-conscious musician, and that he could prove that his product is more energy efficient and has a smaller carbon footprint. However, he wants to avoid going head to head with Steinway or Baldwin and decides instead to compare his factory product with the Flemish harpsichord of the 17th century (mind you, I have nothing against the harpsichord; I myself actually own and play one). So he sets up his equations, and examines the energy required to select and process the wood from a tree near Antwerp, hand-craft each part, and assemble the instrument. Assume also that he does a similar calculation for the emissions of GHG. Similar calculations are undertaken for his electronic keyboard factory in Korea. Then, he compares these two sets of numbers with the output: in this case the volume (that is, the decibel level) of sound produced by the two instruments. Finally, he initiates a media campaign stating that he has proven scientifically that an electronic keyboard is more energy efficient to make and has a smaller carbon footprint than an acoustic instrument. But what: all of the energy/GHG was captured in the harpsichord data, but the factory data did not include the energy or GHG emissions involved in the mining, manufacture and transportation of the various metals, silicon chips, and plastics that went into the electronic instrument. And what does the harpsichord data really tell me about the manufacturer of a modern piano anyway? Finally, is the decibel output more important than the nuances of music’s dynamics and harmonic overtones? Am I, as a musician and a listener, more interested in the physical impact of music on my ear than its nourishment of my soul?

It is clear to me that Dr Capper is peddling junk science and she doubtless knows better. So, what is going on here? The answer lies with the co-authors of her paper: Drs Dale Bauman and Roger Cady. Jude Capper is a young post-doc and protégé of Dr Bauman, who once worked for a lobbying law firm for bio-technology corporations and later received the Governor of the Year Award from their trade association. To make matters more obvious, Monsanto recently appointed Jerry Crawford as its lobbyist, a Des Moines lawyer who is Vilsack’s top fundraiser, top donor and longtime confidant. Also, consider Michael Taylor, JD who has been dancing through revolving doors for years: the FDA, Monsanto and the USDA. In 1994, when in the FDA Food Safety Inspection Service, he deregulated and privatized the inspection process and successfully had E. coli reclassified as an “adulterant” to circumvent congressional oversight. Since 2000, he has published research advocating a risk-based approach to food safety, which utilizes biotech fixes to treat E. coli contaminated food rather than attack the problem at the source (concentrated animal feeding operations). Last July, Taylor was once again appointed to the FDA where he will coordinate the implementation of whatever food safety legislation is passed by Congress. So, if Jude Capper and her ilk can drive a wedge between the environmentally-minded consumer and organic/local farmers, the likes of Vilsack and Taylor will follow in train, transforming the biased “science” into new regulations and policies that will consoli-date the market power of the corporate sponsors.

Let me conclude with one of my favorite quotes from Rachel Carson which is as relevant to this issue as it was to the struggle against the use of DDT: “As you listen to the present controversy about pesticides, I recommend that you ask yourself: Who speaks? – And Why?”

Basil Tongredi had a predominantly holistic veterinary practice in New York for 30 years and his small vegetable farm was NOFA certified from 1989-1999. He now lives in Vermont and teaches at Green Mountain College.
**Calendar**

**Monday, June 7:** IPM for Organic Greenhouse Bedding Plants. Hinesburg, VT; for more info: nofavt.org/annual-events/summer-workshops

**Friday, June 11 – Sunday, June 13:** Dowsers Convention, Lyndonville, VT; for more info: www.dowsers.org

**Saturday, June 12:** Dairy Field Day, Hardwick, MA; for more info: http://www.nofamass.org/programs/extensionevents/dairyfieldday.php

**Wednesday, June 16:** Timing Sweet Corn Plantings and Farm Tour, Starkboro VT; for more info: nofavt.org/annual-events/summer-workshops

**The two long weekends of July 8-11 and October 21-24:** The Permaculture 8-Day Design Certificate Course, Hillsborough, NJ; for more info: www.nofanj.org, or 907-371-1111 extension 3.

**Saturday, July 10:** Backyard Poultry Workshop and Farm Tour, various Massachusetts locations; for more info: http://www.nofamass.org/programs/extensionevents/backyardpoultry.php

**Saturday, August 7:** CT NOFA City Farm & Garden Tour, New Haven, CT, for more info: www.ctnofa.org

**Friday, August 13:** 2010 New England Raw Milk Symposium, UMass Campus, Amherst, Massachusetts

**Cape Cod Lounge, Student Union, for more info:** winton@nofamass.org

**Friday, August 13 – August 15:** NOFA Summer Conference, Amherst, MA; for more info: www.nofasummerconference.org, or 978-355-2853

**Saturday, September 18:** NOFA/Mass Fall Bulk Order Pick-up, various locations, for more info: winton@nofamass.org

**Saturday, September 26:** NOFA/Mass Fall Bulk Order Pick-up, various locations, for more info: winton@nofamass.org

**Saturday, October 9:** Backyard Poultry Workshop and Farm Tour, various Massachusetts locations, for more info: http://www.nofamass.org/programs/extensionevents/backyardpoultry.php

**NOFA Membership**

You may join NOFA by joining one of the seven state chapters. Membership is available at several levels for your state. Dues, which help pay for the important work of the organization, vary from chapter to chapter. Unless noted, membership includes a subscription to The Natural Farmer.

**Give a NOFA Membership!** Send dues for a friend or relative to his or her state chapter and give a membership in one of the most active grassroots organizations in the state.

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

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

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

**Contact:** NOFA/Mass, 411 Sheldon Road, Barre, MA 01005, (978) 355-2853, or membership@nofamass.org or join on the web at www.nofamass.org

**New Hampshire:** Individual: $30, Student: $23, Family: $40, Sponsor: $100, Basic $30

**Contact:** Elizabeth Obelusen, 4 Park St., Ste. 208, Concord, NH 03301, (603) 224-5022, info@nofanh.org

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

**Contact:** 334 River Road, Hillsborough, NJ 08844, (908) 371-1111 or join at www.nofanj.org

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

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

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

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

**Vermont:** Individual $30, Farm/Family $40, Business $50, Sponsor $100, Sustainer $250, Basic $15, Supporting $125

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

*does not include a subscription to The Natural Farmer

**Thanks for helping and joining support organic agriculture!**

**Choose Your Chapter & Membership Level:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>I would like to become a member of the _____________________________ state chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>Sign me up as this kind of member:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>farmer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please send this completed form to the appropriate state chapter.

**Organic Gardening Classes, Hillsborough, NJ**

**Saturday, June 12:** Feeling the Chill? Time to start your Fall Garden! **Saturday, July 10:** Managing your Weeds & Insects **Saturday, August 14:** Seed Saving and Seed Exchange **Saturday, September 11:** Fall into Garlic & Season Extenders for more info: www.dukefarms.org and click Agriculture Programs

**Pfeiffer Center Courses, Chestnut Ridge, NY**

**Saturday, June 19:** Summer Organic Beekeeping **Sunday, June 20:** Apitherapy: Health and Healing **Sunday, July 12:** Healing the Hive **Saturday, July 17:** Continuing the Vegetable Garden

**Saturday, August 7:** from Garden to Table **September 30 – October 2:** Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association national conference in Chestnut Ridge, NY. **September, 2010 - June, 2011:** One-year Part-time Training in Biodynamics for more info: 845-352-5020 / info@pfeiffercenter.org / www.pfeiffercenter.org

**RI CRAFT workshops**

**Sunday, June 27th:** Integrating Animal Production into a Diversified Farm, Rosasharn Farm **Sunday, July 11th:** Soil Fertility with Eri at Ledge Ends **Thursday, July 15th:** Urban Farming and Herbal Gardens at Farmacy Herbs.

**Sunday, August 8th:** Rotational Grazing at Simmons Farm

**Sunday, August 22nd:** Weed Control and Cultivating Equipment with Skip Paul

**Sunday, August 29th:** Moonstone Gardens

**Sunday, September 12th:** Growing Big Volumes of Small Acreage, City Farm

**Sunday, September 19th:** Bed Prep without a Tractor: Permanent Beds and Clover Paths with Red Planet

**Sunday, October 3rd:** Growing seed at Scratch Farm

**November:** Winter growing at Roots Farm

These workshops will be held at local farms, for more info: Katie Miller at katie.miller@gmail.com (preferred) or call NOFA/RI at (401) 523-2653
Dairy farmers, consumers, and food advocates all rally in May on the Boston Common in support of regulatory changes which would allow easier access to raw milk. Suzanne, a Jersey brought by Framingham dairyman Doug Stephens, provided the wherewithal for a “milk-in”. This issue contains news, features, and articles about organic growing in the Northeast, plus a special supplement on Small Farms & Government Regulation.