Organizing the NOFA Summer Conference is a year-round job. I wanted to share some news and plans made already for next year.

Thanks to the 218 people who filled out online evaluations that were available right after the 2011 Summer Conference online, we got a wealth of specific insights into the strengths and weaknesses of that conference.

Next year there will be changes to the physical layout. By summer 2012, a large construction project will be underway at UMass that uses up much of the pond lawn. Thus the physical center of the conference is moving to the grassy courtyard area in the middle of the Northeast Residential Area, which is immediately adjacent to the Worcester Dinning Commons. Dorm housing is also moving to the same place, providing for a more consolidated physical layout. We’re looking into nearby camping spaces where campers can avoid campus bright lights.

In 2011, the Northeast Animal-Power Field Days (NEAPFD) took place as part of the Summer Conference. Much of the success of the event depended on the generous contributions of time and knowledge offered by members of the Draft Animal Power Network (DAPNet). Although DAPNet is not planning to repeat the same offerings in 2012 that were offered in 2011, NOFA is hoping to be able to offer some workshops focused on working with draft animals. NOFA is also interested in partnering with other organizations wishing to hold their meetings in conjunction with our conference.

Past member Christine Rainville is coming back to the committee. She is taking on the task of organizing registration for the entire 2012 conference. With the many details this inevitably entails, we’re lucky to have Christine’s steady and thorough presence on the committee! Also, Valerie Walton, who has been organizing the Children’s Conference since 2008 will be organizing both the Children’s Conference and the Teen Conference next year.

Call for Workshops

Every year the NOFA Summer Conference recruits creative and enthusiastic presenters for workshops for adults, teens, and children. The call will also be mailed to past presenters and posted on the website: www.nofasummerconference.org. If you would like to submit a workshop proposal contact: Ben Grosscup, bengrosscup@nofamass.org or call 413-549-1568.

There will also be a Children’s Conference (ages 2-12) and a Teen Conference (ages 13-17), which explore many themes in common with the adult workshops in an age-appropriate manner. If you want to submit a proposal for either Conference, contact Valerie Walton, aallspice@aol.com, (978) 689-0716.

The sooner you submit your proposal, the better, but the deadline is December 31, 2011.

All workshop presenters receive free conference registration and a $50 honorarium for presenting a 90 minute workshop.

Interested in Sponsoring?

If you want to gain excellent exposure for your products and services, including a logo and website link placement on the NOFA Summer Conference website, see this link to last summer’s sponsors: http://www.nofasummerconference.org/sponsors.php.

Larger level sponsors also receive exhibit space and registration. Businesses and farms are welcomed to simply exhibit and advertise in the Program Book. For more information, contact Bob Minnocci: bob@nofamass.org or 617-236-4893.


by Ben Grosscup, Conference Coordinator

photo by Elizabeth Coe

2011 Summer Conference Fair attendees had a great time

photo by Jack Kittredge

The ox cart is a favorite with children at the conference

by Ben Grosscup, Conference Coordinator


by Ben Grosscup, Conference Coordinator


by Ben Grosscup, Conference Coordinator


by Ben Grosscup, Conference Coordinator


by Ben Grosscup, Conference Coordinator


by Ben Grosscup, Conference Coordinator


by Ben Grosscup, Conference Coordinator
Hi Jack,

This is Abrah Dresdale, instructor of Intro to Food Systems at Greenfield Community College and NOFA member. I put the recent ‘Farm Bill’ focus issue in the Natural Farmer on reserve for students at the library for reading assignments. However, I’m wondering if there is an electronic PDF of it I could have access to so students can read it more easily who live far away, can’t get to the library, etc. I noticed other back issues on the website, but not the Farm Bill 2011 issue.

Please let me know if this is available somehow.

Thank you!

Abrah

Hi Abrah,

We wait 3 months before putting each issue up on the website. It is a way of keeping subscribers, since they pay good money to get it and issue up on the website. It is a way of keeping the paper interesting and helpful to those looking for specific goods or services. We carry 2 kinds of ads:

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

- Display Ads - this is for those offering products or services on a regular basis! You can get real attention with display ads. Send camera ready copy to Bob Minnoci, 662 Massachusetts Ave. #6, Boston, MA 02118. If you have questions, or want to reserve space, contact Bob at (617) 236-4893 or Bob@nofamass.org.

Display Ads: These prices are for camera ready copy on clean paper, or electronically in jpeg or pdf format. If you want any changes we will be glad to make them - or to typecast a display ad for you - for $45 (which includes one revision - additional revisions are $10 each). Just send us the text, any graphics, and a sketch of how you want it to look. Include a check for the space charge plus $45.

Display Ads:
- Full page (15” tall by 10” wide) $360 $500
- Half page (7 1/2” tall by 10” wide) $185 $260
- One-third page (7 1/2” tall by 6 1/2” wide) $125 $175
- One-quarter page (7 1/2” tall by 4 7/8” wide) $95 $135
- One-sixth page (7 1/2” tall by 3 1/8” wide), or (3 3/4” tall by 6 1/2” wide) $65 $90
- Business card size (1 1/2” tall by 3 1/8” wide) $20 $25

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

Deadlines: We need your ad copy one month before the publication date of each issue. The deadlines are:
- January 31 for the Spring issue (mails Mar. 1)
- April 30 for the Summer issue (mails Jun. 1)
- July 31 for the Fall issue (mails Sept. 1)
- October 31 for the Winter issue (mails Dec. 1)

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

Sponsorships: Individuals or organizations wishing to sponsor The Natural Farmer may do so with a payment of $300 for one year (4 issues). In return, we will thank the sponsor in a special area of page 3 of each issue, and feature the sponsor’s logo or other small insignia.

Contact for Display Ads or Sponsorships: Send display ads or sponsorships with payment (made out to “TNF”) to our advertising manager Bob Minnoci, 662 Massachusetts Ave. #6, Boston, MA 02118. If you have questions, or want to reserve space, contact Bob at (617) 236-4893 or Bob@nofamass.org.

Advertise in or Sponsor The Natural Farmer

Why Organic Seeds?

by Jack Kittredge

Most organic farmers I have talked to buy their seeds from Fedco, Johnny’s, High Mowing, or one of the other dozen or more small seed companies that serve the organic market. Not all the seeds from all those companies are organic, of course, and many are necessarily bought from larger seed houses. But the rules for organic certification are pressuring farmers to work harder to find and purchase organic seeds, and the seed companies are scrambling to source them.

This issue of The Natural Farmer focuses on this topic. As the genetic foundation of the whole food system, seeds set the basic parameters for growth potential. If they were selected as excelling in a system using synthetic chemicals for fertility and pest control, who can be sure they will not be still lurking in the absence of such inputs? Will plants exhibiting disease resistance make the cut if the whole crop was sprayed with fungicides?

We look at why choosing organic seeds is important for organic growers. What are the steps by which they are selected, bred, developed, trialed, and finally offered for sale? Why does it take so long to bring an organic variety to market? How can interested organic vegetable growers get involved in that process?

We hope by the end of this issue you will have a new appreciation for organic seed as fundamentally different from conventionally raised seed, and understand why we need to encourage and support this nascent industry.

The Natural Farmer

by Jack Kittredge and Julie Rawson

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Farm Manager sought, Gravity Hill Farm, located in Titusville, New Jersey is seeking a motivated individual with a minimum of 2 years of experience in organic vegetable production and marketing, and a minimum of 1 year of experience in a supervisory position. The ideal candidate would be available to start early December 2011 (but consideration may be made for an early 2012 start). Additionally a two-year commitment to the position is preferred. This position includes housing, salary, health insurance, profit share, and produce. Visit our website at gravityhillfarm.com. Letters of interest and resume to jenniferschmehl@hotmai.com.

Willow Pond Community Farm, Brentwood, NH (www.willowpondfarm.org) seeks a farmer (or farmers) dedicated to the concept of a certified organic CSA. In its 9th year of farming on leased conservation land, Willow Pond currently has 62 members. The farmer’s salary (negotiable) has been about $15,000 from CSA members and a roughly equal amount from two weekly farmers markets and other local markets. Housing is not currently provided. For more information and a complete job description contact Rob McGregor robmgregor@ymcacincoln.org, or Joan Pratt cpratt@exeter.edu or 603-778-8881.

Intern/Assistant Farm Manager, Gravity Hill Farm, located in Titusville, New Jersey is seeking a motivated individual with a minimum of 2 years of experience in organic vegetable production and/or marketing. The ideal candidate would be available to start in early 2012. This position includes housing, stipend, and produce. Visit our website www.gravityhillfarm.com. Individuals with a commitment to farming as a livelihood and interest in farming/food policy issues are encouraged to apply. Letters of interest and resume to jenniferschmehl@hotmai.com.

NOFA-NY, based in Rochester, NY, is seeking a half-time Organic Fruit & Vegetable Coordinator to work with the Education Director and to lead the organization’s technical assistance and outreach to organic fruit and vegetable farmers. Estimated weekly hours are 20-31 depending on available funding. Hours may increase as this position grows. The position requires a creative and organized self-starter with a background in and/or experience in organic fruit and vegetable farming. The person must be passionate and knowledgeable about organic fruit and vegetable farming and gardening and have project management experience. Go to http://www.nofany.org/about-work-us for complete information.

The Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey (NOFA-NJ) is seeking to fill a newly created, grant-funded Beginning Farmer Program Manager position. This staff person will work with NOFA-NJ’s partners to launch a comprehensive Beginning Farmer program in New Jersey. The Project Manager will develop and implement all aspects of this program, including the development of tools, creating an application process for participants, coordinating learning opportunities and launching an incubator location for beginning farmers at Duke Farms Foundation’s property in Somerset County, NJ. For a full description and how to apply, visit http://www.nofanj.org/getinvolved_careers.htm

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Ohio Drops Regulations Limiting Organic Dairy Labeling

The State of Ohio on October 31 dropped its effort to prohibit statements on organic dairy products that they were produced without antibiotics, pesticides or synthetic hormones. The decision follows a ruling by the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals that such a prohibition was unconstitutional and in violation of the First Amendment protecting freedom of speech.

“Ohio’s abandonment of this misguided rule is a victory for consumers, farmers and manufacturerers alike,” said Christine Bussey, Executive Director of the Organic Trade Association, which had filed the court challenge. Critical to the decision was the Court’s reliance on an amicus brief filed by The Center for Food Safety and other organizations to rule that milk produced with synthetic hormones is different than milk produced without them.

Source: OTA press release, October 31

RoundupReady Crops Losing Battle to Superweeds

Infestations of 21 different varieties of “superweeds” resistant to the herbicide Roundup now cover 4.5 million hectares in the US alone. The most recent, the noxious weed Palmer Amaranth, is spreading “exponentially” in transgenic cotton designed to be immune to Roundup’s active ingredient glyphosate, according to Robert Nichols of Cotton Incorporated.

The severity of glyphosate resistance has forced Monsanto to sign agreements with other pesticide companies to provide other herbicides to farmers who do not want to buy the corn. Monsanto’s world’s largest seed company signed to be immune to Roundup’s active ingredient glyphosate, according to Robert Nichols of Cotton Incorporated.

The complaint said General Mills and Trader Joe’s have already indicated that they will not be using the Monsanto biotech sweet corn in their products. It said the biotech corn would be used in canned and frozen foods as well as sold fresh, but will be indistinguishable to consumers from conventional corn because the U.S. government does not require genetically altered food products to be labeled. Sweet corn makes up about 1 percent of total corn acreage in the United States.

Source: Reuters, October 27, 2011

US Organic Acreage Declines

For a number of years organic acreage has increased in America. From just under 1 million acres in 1995, it rose to over 4.8 million in 2006. Then, however, it began to decrease. Those familiar with the situation estimate that as much as 20% of Midwestern organic production has gone back to chemical farming.

The downturn stems from several factors: a faltering economy that reduced the market for organic food, burdensome paperwork and procedures necessary to be certified, the rise of conventional food prices, and bad weather.

Source: The Cultivator, Fall, 2011

Ex-Battery Hens Back Behind Bars as Jailbirds

Chickens that spent their lives laying eggs in cages have finally found freedom – in a maximum security prison in the United States. The British Hen Welfare Trust gave twenty ex-battery hens a new home at London’s notorious Holloway prison. The jailbirds will live at the prison for women and young offenders as part of a garden program offering educational and therapeutic projects to prisoners.

Source: British Hen Welfare Trust press release, October 13

Bayer to Pay $750 Million for Rice Contaminated

In the largest GMO settlement in history, Bayer AGE has agreed to pay $750 million to settle a case with 11,000 US farmers over the 2006 contamination by its Liberty Link rice (not approved for human consumption) of long grain rice shipped to Europe and Japan. All US growers raising rice between 2006 and 2010 are being compensated $300 per acre.

Source: The Organic and Non-GMO Report, July/August, 2011
Remembering Miranda Smith

by Grace Gershuny

NOFA has lost a few of its leading lights over the years, and Miranda Smith was one who lit the path for many of us. She died on June 3rd, just shy of her 67th birthday.

Miranda did not get very involved with NOFA as an organization, but pioneered as an organic grower, teacher, author and editor of farming and gardening books. She farmed in the Northeast and Southeast, as well as northern Quebec. She authored at least a dozen books, including serving as editor of The Real Dirt for NOFA’s first large interstate grant-funded project in the late 1980’s.

I first met Miranda in 1979, while I was NOFA-VT State Coordinator. She and a group of friends who had coalesced at the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT), where she was an agricultural specialist, decided to form a consulting group and move to Newport, Vermont as their homes straddled the Canadian border. Before this she had been at the Institute for Local Self-Reliance in DC, and had consulted on urban agriculture, greenhouses and rooftop gardening projects in various places. We first worked together to write a grant for a composting project for NOFA, which did not get funded. We had an instant and enduring connection – personal as well as professional, which often intertwined.

Miranda’s trailblazing work led her to Topsfield, MA to co-manage the demonstration organic farm there with Eliot Coleman, later living and working with Robert Honiat at his organic vegetable farm in Hardwick, VT. Her journey later took her to the New England Small Farms Institute (NESFI) in Belchertown, MA, where she worked closely with Judy Gillin and managed their first CSA, delighting Belchertown, MA, where she worked closely with Judy Gillin and managed their first CSA, delighting

After a stint in a “real job” as a gardening editor at Country Home Products Press in New Jersey she moved to Florida – glad to escape winter and return to her southern roots. There she became involved with Chinese healing arts, studying with Grandmaster Fu of the Ennei tradition of Qigong. She became a prodigious healer in her own right before she finally succumbed to cancer soon after moving to Port Townsend, WA.

Though she moved around a lot she formed deep connections wherever she went. She had an amazing, brilliant mind, a bawdy sense of humor, was infinitely curious and interested in everyone. She was a great cook and always a student of nutrition and health. After being gifted with a little money last year I decided to invest it in hiring Miranda to help me finally write and publish the book I have been working on for over ten years. I didn’t get much done before we lost her, but she helped me find the right voice at last, and the book (current working title: “Reclaiming the ‘O’ Word: Memoir of an Organic Revolutionary”) will be dedicated to her.

John, her final love and companion, wrote this in his blog: “Model, actress, activist and an organizing force in Greenpeace, author of a dozen books on gardening, pioneer in rooftop gardening, a leader in organic farming, scholar of Chinese healing, and so much more, she was a positive force in a sometimes cloudy world. Wherever she went she was at home. She loved travel and living in sunshine.” She leaves behind two remarkable children, Tagore Smith and Simone LePage, as well as countless beloved friends. Simone gave us a few gems as “things my mother taught me” - these are the thoughts that help me keep Miranda’s memory alive:

- The people who change the world in truly significant ways often weren’t the ones broadcasting those changes.
- Stand up for yourself, stand up for others, stand up for what you believe but be willing to change your mind. Throw out your old beliefs no matter how attached you are to them if they no longer serve you.

When talking about her life at the end she wanted us to know that if she got more time she wouldn’t spend it being noble, she would spend it having fun. Have fun.

…and my new motto: Damn convention.

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Report on the IFOAM Organic World Congress, General Assembly and the meeting of the farmers’ group, the Intercontinental Network of Organic Farmers Organizations (INOFO) on Sept 28 – Oct 5, 2011

by Elizabeth Henderson

The Natural Farmer Winter 2011-12

Farmers from around the globe at the INOFO meeting October 2, 2011

The IFOAM Organic Guarantee System has undergone revamping, and now consists of five parts: Carbon, “Powered by Nature” (biodiversity), “Not Just Commodities” (on significant role of organic agriculture with participants from almost every country in the world. This year, the brand new Organic Museum on the banks of the Han River near Seoul, S Korea, made a luxurious venue for the assembly. The GA sets the top priorities for IFOAM and elects the World Board. Under the leadership of a new Executive Director, Markus Arbenz, IFOAM is on the path to financial recovery and has created a unified strategic plan. IFOAM is undertaking major advocacy campaigns aimed at the United Nations (Food and Agriculture (FAO), UNCTAD (Commission on Trade and Development) and other international meetings, conventions and events: “People before Commodities (on food security), “Powered by Nature” (biodiversity), and “Not Just Carbon” (on significant role of organic agriculture in mitigating climate change).

At the 2008 GA in Italy, for the first time, the majority elected to the WB were people committed to support for smallholders (what we would call small farms or family-scale farms). As a result, since 2008, IFOAM has started to shift its resources from a focus on certification-accreditation and import-export trade to building local markets for smallholders. Support for smallholders has become a central priority. Hivos has provided financial support for the development of a network of Participatory Guarantee Systems. With more than half of the members present and participating in the Korea GA, a new World Board was elected that continues the commitment to promoting smallholder organic farming worldwide.

The IFOAM Organic Guarantee System has undergone revamping, and now consists of five parts:

1. Family of standards – draws the line between what is organic and what is not, includes all standards and regulations that have passed an equivalency assessment. At the GA, it was announced that the NOFA Organic Landcare standards had been accepted into the Family.

2. Best Practice Standards – to stimulate innovation and continuing improvement

3. Participatory Guarantee Systems – based on community organizing, a way for small farms that cannot afford certification to group together to provide a credible organic guarantee for use in local markets.

4. IFOAM’s Global Organic Mark – a universal logo now available for a fee.

5. International Organic Accreditation Service (IOAS) - provides Accreditation to organic certification agencies.

IFOAM also continues its commitment to GOMA – Global Organic Market Access – a joint project with FAO and UNCTAD to harmonize standards to allow free trade in organic farm products, especially important for developing countries.

A major portion of the GA is devoted to discussing and passing motions that direct the activity of the WB for the next three years. Members can send in motions by a certain deadline. At the GA, a “Motion Bazaar” takes place where members can discuss proposals with the writers and request amendments or changes. One of my goals in attending this GA was to make fair pricing a higher priority in IFOAM’s advocacy and standards. The current standards include a section on social standards, but these only cover conditions for workers on farms and organic businesses. In my view, farmers will not be able to provide good jobs until they get prices that cover their full costs of production. We need to reappropriate the food dollar along the organic supply chain, shifting more towards the bottom. I submitted a motion on fair pricing, and the meeting of INOFO, the organic farmers, endorsed it unanimously. The writers of Motion 64.2 Family Agriculture, agreed to add to their motion this language – “The importance of fairness and justice for all who labor in agriculture.” There was a long discussion about requiring fair pricing. Former IFOAM President, Gunnar Rundgren said it is unrealistic. Certified were upset that we might require it in standards. After the standards issue was placed in the hands of a social justice task force, the motion was accepted. There was also a motion declaring IFOAM support for next year as the International Year of Family Farming. NOFA should sign onto this declaration.

The next world congress will take place in Istanbul, Turkey, Oct. 4 – 14, 2014.

In his closing remarks, Arbenz praised the Korean organizers for mobilizing so many people with a huge fair to shine light on organic agriculture - 250,000 people attended. The last three years, Arbenz noted, have been hard, but IFOAM was saved by smallholder farmers. He urged the members to rely on diversity and people. IFOAM is committed to a strategy dominated by values, but not dogma. Retiring President, Katherine DiMatteo concluded that it is time to move from discussions of standards and regulations since their role has been established, so IFOAM can shift to carbon, biodiversity, energy use, and developing local markets.

Social Justice Dialogue

Before the conference began, the Agricultural Justice Project convened a gathering on organic and fair trade, and the relationship among organic certification, participatory guarantee systems (PGS), and CSA/Teikei. This open dialogue has been going on since 2000 at the IFOAM conferences in Victoria, Adelaide and Modena, and contributes to nurturing the Fairness principle in Organic Agriculture. The participants called upon IFOAM to create a task force on fair trade, a resolution that was later confirmed by the membership at the General Assembly. This task force will make recommendations on incorporating social justice principles in organic standards. The afternoon session discussed ways of building bridges among the different approaches to providing organic guarantees for farmers on all scales for both internal and international markets.

INOFO (Intercontinental Network of Organic Farmers Organizations) October 2, 2011

This newly recognized independent body of IFOAM links associations of organic farmers around the world, whether IFOAM members or not. Forty seven were represented at the meeting in S. Korea, from 27 countries.

Moises Quiñó, from ANPE in Peru and president of INOFO, declared that the meeting was an historic moment for small farmers. Introductions around the room revealed the participation from many countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Oceania and a few from Europe. I was the only N. American. The meeting discussed the motions that had been proposed as guidance for the World Board. There was unanimous support for including fair pricing and contracts for farm products in organic standards. The group agreed on strengthening the participation of organic farmers in the workings of IFOAM. At the elections to the new World Board, Andre Leu, a vice-president of INOFO, was elected president of IFOAM, and Ghana farmer James Benjamin Cole was also elected.

There was not enough time for discussion of all the priority themes:

- Climate change and especially access to clean water
- Family farming
- Sharing economic information – price and trader pressures
- Sharing farming information – capacity building program worldwide
- Threats to small farmers’ rights to land – mining, landgrabbing, conversion

These will be the topics for continuing communications through the INOFO section of the IFOAM website and a listserv.

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Forty Years is Just the Beginning –
A brief look at what we’ve done and what’s left to do

This is the ‘script’ for a special presentation at last summer’s NOFA Conference, co-presented by Grace Gershuny and Liz Henderson, to commemorate NOFA’s 40th anniversary.

Past Accomplishments: We’ve come a long way!
Look at how much we have done to develop and spread the organic vision – locally as well as globally:

Local Foods for Local Markets – Farmers Markets, Producer Coops, CSAs, Farm to School, 40 years of Locavoring, Local Food sovereignty and domestic fair trade (we just thought we were supporting local farms, buying from local businesses, supporting food coops, and generally practicing self-reliance, good neighborly behavior, fair pricing and respectful treatment of one another – farmer-gardener-farmworkers and customers – little did we know!). Over these 40 years, we have made it easy for citizens to buy from local farms by multiplying the numbers of farmers markets, CSAs, producer coops, and most recently, finding ways to insert our food into school lunches and summer feeding programs.

Grassroots Democracy – Strong state organizations connected through a confederated interstate structure – starting in 1971 as a loose bi-state organization we blossomed into 7 democratically managed chapters – and get better every year.

Empowering Women Leaders – At least half of our leadership are women, and we have cultivated strong women as leaders from the beginning.

Education – Where it was once hard to find information on organic practices, we provide more and more opportunities for Education – Summer & Winter conferences, TNF, farm handbook series, on-farm workshops, apprenticeships, technical hot lines, mentoring assistance. Easy access to information on organic farming practices, soil management and composting, pest and disease control, livestock husbandry, food processing, seed production, and much more. We have shared what we learned freely and spread the knowledge widely.

Organic Standards & Certification – NOFA developed its first organic standards and certification program in 1977, serving as a model for other programs throughout the country. We were founding members of the Organic Trade Association and helped develop its Guidelines for the Organic Industry, on which the National Organic Program regulations were based. NOFA chapters operate three USDA accredited certifying agencies that certify hundreds of organic farms and processors. MA & CT collaborate on an organic land care certification program, and VT now has the highest per capita number of organically farmed acres of any state!

Advocacy – For many years, NOFA involvement in public policy relied totally on volunteers. We were active during the winter and strangely quiet spring-fall. With the addition of a staff person to head up IC policy, we have become perennials and we are strengthening our participatory democracy in the policy arena on the state, national and even international levels to organic farmers, homesteaders, and eaters. NOFA took a lead in lobbying to help pass the OFPA; NOFA representatives attend NOP standards hearings, and make comments on issues that our members care most about – for example, we put a lot of energy into backing the dairy farmers on the pasture policy.

Networking – Locally, regionally, internationally - Connecting like-minded people, sharing ideas, creating community. Conferences & other events have built social relationships & solidarity throughout the region. Participation in national & international networks strengthens alliances in support of our vision. Networks we (NOFA Interstate Council) belong to include: National Organic Coalition, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, The Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, The Agricultural Justice Project, Domestic Fair Trade Association, IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements).

Future: There’s lots more to do!
Expand Organic as “foundation” approach to agriculture and landscape: maintain and continuously improve organic quality and integrity: increase domestic organic production & US farm share of organic products in the domestic marketplace while supporting organic expansion in other countries too.

Protect the environment - Organic farming to mitigate climate change, save farmland and soil, conserve biodiversity and help the world feed itself globally:

Challenge agribusiness domination – stop the spread of GMOs, reduce contamination. Let’s win battles to place liability on manufacturers and label all food. Count the lies that “organic can’t feed the world.”

Change the Research System - Farmer-scientist research collaboration to develop practical information that is site-specific, ecology based through a whole systems approach.

Support family farmers and their workers – expand market diversity, infrastructure, agriculture as respected career path with living wages, benefits.

Grow new farmers - Access to land, financing & training for new farmers, urban agriculture – Get more people on the land.

Food Security/Sovereignty for All - Access to healthy, local, organic fairly traded food for people of all income levels and ethnic groups establish food as a right. Make our movement more welcoming to people of all cultures, ethnicities, income levels.

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Soil and Nutrition: An Education and Coalition-Building Conference

by Ben Grosscup

During February 9-11, 2012 people connecting soil and nutrition through farming, consulting, teaching, and advocacy will gather for 3 days in Northampton, MA. The conference will bring together leading thinkers and practitioners of building healthy soils throughout the Northeast.

The conference’s purpose is to grow the movement for enhancing soil fertility as a basis for the long-term ecological and economic sustainability of farming, the environment, and our society as a whole. It is designed to draw out the particular knowledge of soil building brought by each presenter and each participant so as to facilitate knowledge sharing and develop participants as more knowledgeable leaders in their areas of influence. Training young farmers and facilitating intergenerational sharing of knowledge is essential to the process.

The event is organized as a coalition effort between NOFA/Mass and the Bionutrient Food Association – the new parent organization of the Real Food Campaign.

The first day is a seminar with John Kempf, a national and international speaker on soil fertility, farmer consultant, and proprietor of Advancing Eco-Agriculture. Although young in years, John has been a longtime student of schools of thought on soil building including thinkers such as Carey Reams, Arden Andersen, Neal Kinsey, William Albrecht, and Gary Zimmer. He speaks in clear practical language about scientific understandings of plant eco-systems and how the health of people is connected to healthy land and quality produce.

The second day is a collaborative symposium with regional experts focused on education on practical soils knowledge. Confirmed participants in these panels as this go to print include:

• Derek Christiustson, farmer at Brix Bounty Farm in Darmouth, MA
• Dan Holmes, diversified livestock farmer enhancing pasture fertility in Peterborough, NH
• Dan Kittredge, director of the Bionutrient Food Association in North Brookfield, MA
• Jack Lazor, organic dairy farmer and producer of Butterworks Yogurt in Westfield, VT
• Bryan O’Hara, soil building pioneer on his vegetable growing operation in Lebanon, CT
• Julie Rawson, organic farmer striving for nutrient density in Barre, MA
• Stephen Storch, biodynamic grower on Long Island, NY

The third day is a strategic action working conference. Participants will discuss building on the knowledge of building healthy soils to affect the broader world. Work groups will be formed to take action on:

• Defining research priorities that serve the needs of growers.
• Broadening public understanding of soil health and crop quality.
• Linking an understanding of soil health with institutions charged with caring for human health.

We’re aiming to promote a spirit of collaboration throughout the conference, but especially on Day 3. We aim to facilitate the continued development of collective knowledge and for this sharing to bring us toward efforts that could otherwise not be developed by just individuals or single organizations.

For more information, contact: Ben Grosscup, ben.grosscup@nofamass.org, 413-658-5374. To register: www.nofamass.org/seminars/winterseminar.php To inquire about sponsoring and exhibiting, contact bob@nofamass.org.

A farm is true to its essential nature, in the best sense of the word, if it is conceived as a kind of individual entity in itself — a self-contained individuality.

— Rudolf Steiner
This summer I read The Great Disruption: How Climate Change Will Bring an End to Shopping and Create a New World. Between hearing Bill McKibben talk this spring, paying attention to the struggles of those around me and watching the political dysfunction in Hartford and Washington (and major changes around the world) the title resonated with me. In the first half author Paul Gilding not only recapitulates some of the facts many of us know about energy supply, climate change and other environmental stresses, he also brings in the economic factor. He thinks we are not only hitting the wall of energy and environmental limits, but because of those, we are also fast approaching economic limits. He thinks we’ll soon see the end of growth. He believes it will be very difficult to learn that the end of growth is real and permanent, and to understand what that means for the future.

If you listen to the talk in legislative bodies around the world, you often hear that things will be fine once growth gets going again. For example, we hear that we can grow our way out of the debt crisis or help the world’s very poor achieve better lives by growing the global economy.

What if that will never happen because we have hit the limit, as predicted decades ago in “The Limits to Growth?”

Gilding predicts that such an adjustment will be difficult. (That humans are currently using 40 percent more resources than the earth produces each year and that the US government borrows 40 percent of everything it spends give an indication of the similar nature of the environmental and economic overshoot we’re involved in.)

Returning from vacation on August 2 to the dysfunction in DC and the subsequent financial volatility made Gilding’s book more believable.

Fortunately, Gilding is hopeful that at some point, before too long, we’ll realize what an enormous challenge Climate Change presents. We’ll understand that we have to address the climate with an urgency and unity that will dwarf what existed when the US entered World War II.

Many countries will begin to work to quickly reduce emissions and to adapt to the problems of a changed climate. The problems already seem nearly overwhelming. Recently, the Times carried separate stories about the effects of record drought on infrastructure in Texas, on the very long cleanup in Alabama and Missouri from the tornados that hit there and on the effort to dispose of sandbags from the flooding in South Dakota.

The enormous fires across the Southwest and the steep decline of the lobster population in Long Island Sound are other current events influenced by what we’ve done to the climate.


Bill McKibben says this is the new normal weather. We better get used to it. And this kind of weather creates a worrisome feedback loop. Higher temperatures cause more people to use more air conditioning which releases more greenhouse gases which makes it hotter which causes...

The melting Arctic ice causes the polar water to absorb more heat from the sun and melt more ice, and absorb more heat and...

Melting permafrost releases methane, a very powerful greenhouse gas which worsens climate change, melts more permafrost, releases more methane...

Before we left on vacation I was given several books to read, including The Fifth Sacred Thing by Starhawk. I’m not finished yet, but it seems very prescient. It was written in the 1990s and is set in California, in 2050, after many of the environmental, economic and political scenarios evolving now have played out.

The people of the North who live in and around San Francisco hold four things sacred, to be used but not owned. They are air, fire, water and earth. The fifth is spirit. The society described reminds me of NOFA. Water and food are very important and are available to all. The people there are very diverse, loving and accepting, with a variety of life-styles. There are lots of committee meetings to achieve consensus and get things done. And lots of work cleaning up a very polluted environment.

They are cut off from the rest of the world, which in the novel is southern California where the Millennials and Stewards have taken over and established the four purities. Some people there have large houses with pools and lawns while water shortages and rationing are the norm for most of the people. Obedience to the government is controlled through drugs. There are breeding pens for soldiers who are born without souls due to minor offenses by their parents.

The melting Arctic ice causes the polar water to absorb more heat from the sun and melt more ice, and absorb more heat and...

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Although this was written nearly two decades ago, it seems so believable given today’s reality. It is not so far from the tea party and religious fundamentalist attitudes and intolerance and the pharmaceutical industry’s pill-a-day approach, so common today.

I’m looking forward to how it turns out. Right now, with the Steves having invaded, Norovirus and taken control of the water and stopped the free-flowing streams, it doesn’t look good.

I think that we are in for very challenging times for the rest of our lives. However, we know that food, air and water are going to be very important, and the way to get our food with the least effects on climate and the environment is from nearby using organic methods.

Making Supper Safe: One Man’s Quest to Learn the Truth About Food Safety by Ben Hewitt
reviewed by Larry Siegel

Unlike farming, books about food safety and health are a growth industry. If there is a new twist to Making Supper Safe, it is by virtue of the fact that Ben Hewitt is a farmer (though how he has found the time to travel, research, and write a book while tending a 40-acre farm remains a mystery to me).

Hewitt writes with a certain cynicism, somehow appropriate to the subject at hand: ‘If you’re worried about the FDA being overworked in its tireless quest to keep you safe from pathogenic bacteria, well, don’t be. In fact, the FDA inspects a given facility only once every 7 years. But surely, they’re keeping a careful eye on the food arriving in our harbors, from places such as China, the country from which we now import 60 percent of our apple juice and the country that recently sickened 300,000 of its own infants with baby formula contaminated by melamine. Sure, they’re keeping tabs on that stuff, right? Oh, they are, they are: a whole 1 percent of it. My suggestion: Just be sure that any imported food you eat is part of that 1 percent of it. My suggestion: Just be sure that any imported food you eat is part of that 1 percent of it. My suggestion: Just be sure that any imported food you eat is part of that 1 percent of it. My suggestion: Just be sure that any imported food you eat is part of that 1 percent of it.

Hewitt explains why pathogenic bacteria are a growth industry. If there is a new twist to Making Supper Safe, it is by virtue of the fact that Ben Hewitt is a farmer (though how he has found the time to travel, research, and write a book while tending a 40-acre farm remains a mystery to me).

Hewitt is not offering a way to make supper safe; rather he explains to us why it is unsafe. And, as with any real estate, coops are all about location, location, location! Also about space, ventilation, heating, water and bedding.

Foreman devotes a couple chapters to finding the right hens. She discusses heritage breeds as well as what to look for when you begin to build your flock. If you live in a cold climate you’ll want to consider how weather-sensitive your chick is, she says. Combs, wattles, feet and toes are all at risk of frostbite or freezing.

One of the more interesting chapters describes how to be a “chicken whisperer”. Chickens have a highly developed sense of hearing, and can produce a wide variety of sounds to communicate. “Hens,” writes Foreman, “have their own culture, vocabulary and their own view of the cosmos.” Understanding their language is central to decoding their pecking order.

Foreman includes excellent chapters on chicken health care, creating a home egg business, and legal issues – a definite “read first” for anyone planning to convert their unused toolshed into a backyard coop.

Principles for the Oversight of Nanotechnologies and Nanomaterials (no date, maybe 2007 or 2008), 16 pages
From Nano/Action, www.nanoaction.org
International Center for Technology Assessment 660 Pennsylvania Avenue SE, Suite 302 Washington, DC 20003 202/547-9459 review by Tracy Frisch

We live in an era of the science experiment writ large. Over and over we experience new inventions in which formerly unimaginable feats of mastery become commonplace just a few short years later. The field of nanotechnology encompasses some of the latest in this string of achievements, yet few in the general public or the organic movement know coop design. Two oft-raised concerns voiced by city dwellers are maintaining property values and odor nuisances. The trick, Foreman says, is to design coops that will enhance property values – and she provides plenty of plans and photos. As with any real estate, coops are all about location, location, location! Also about space, ventilation, heating, water and bedding.

Foreman is farmer (though how he has found the time to travel, research, and write a book while tending a 40-acre farm remains a mystery to me).
Nanotechnology is a catchall category for a "new set of technologies for observing, taking apart and reconstructing nature at the atomic and molecular level." These technologies possess unique characteristics. They may be radically unlike familiar materials made of the same element or compound. In fact, that's the point of the innovation. But because their physical, chemical and biological properties may be so different, their toxicity cannot be reliably predicted, and there have been a number of red flags.

Due to their extremely tiny size, nanoparticles can enter the human and animal blood systems simply by being breathed in. From there, they can lodge in various organs, including the brain. Once inside cells, they can interfere with normal functions. Nanomaterials (some are already used in cosmetics and body care products) may even penetrate intact skin.

Before totally new technologies are unleashed into the marketplace – and into our homes, bodies, water and air, and every crevice of the planet – shouldn't we understand their potential unintended consequences? What might be their known and potential "side effects" on our health and the environment? What implications do they have for the social sphere and economic order? And how can we get rid of them if they prove too risky?

With pesticides and genetically engineered crops, for example, we let the genie out of the bottle without adequate consideration of such questions. Even today, a large number of pesticides and genetically engineered crops continue to govern their use and existence.

Now virtually without public scrutiny or government control, we find in nanotechnologies yet another example of the genie out of the bottle without adequate consideration of such questions. Even today, virtually without public scrutiny or government control, we find in nanotechnologies yet another example of the genie out of the bottle without adequate consideration of such questions.

In 2007 the International Center for Technology Assessment and Friends of the Earth invited representatives of various important organizations (such as labor, environmental, women's health, public interest and grassroots organizations) to develop a strategy for protecting humans and the earth from the possible dangers from these novel technologies. They met over the course of six months to produce the recommendations published in Principles for the Oversight of Nanotechnologies and Nanomaterials.

Already, when this report came out several years ago, some scientific studies had identified scary problems with nanotechnology. Here are a few examples.

Nanosilver causes damage to beneficial organisms. Bacteria such as Escherichia coli and Pseudomonas aeruginosa mutate and grow differently when exposed to nanotubes. Exposure to high levels of nanosilver causes damage to beneficial organisms.

Nanosilver can be used in making personal care products, sunscreen, and cleaning products. It can even enter the human and animal blood systems simply by being breathed in. From there, it can lodge in various organs, including the brain. Once inside cells, it can interfere with normal functions.

Nanosilver is a catchall category for a "new form of pollution in our food and to public health." It is the new "wild west" of nanotechnology. In this case, we have a lack of understanding of the nature and extent of the pollution caused by nanosilver. This lack of understanding is due to the lack of knowledge about the safety of nanosilver. In fact, that's the point of the innovation. But because its physical, chemical and biological properties may be so different, its toxicity cannot be reliably predicted, and there have been a number of red flags.

If we want to be sure that nothing is going on with this technology, we should not allow the companies to go unchecked. Instead, we should require them to be held accountable for their actions. We should also require that all new technologies be tested for their effects on the environment before they are released into the marketplace.
Eva Sommaripa is the owner of Eva’s Garden in South Dartmouth, MA where Didi found her second home and where her food came to life.

Each season is knit together with the harvest and lessons learned from living on the farm with Eva as the master steward. The book is organized by the seasons: Winter is for Salvaging, Spring for Community, Summer for Bartering and Fall for Preserving and Conserving.

Didi describes the farm as “the botanical version of the Louvre,” and credits her culinary transformation to “Eva’s peerless quality — the power of food grown extremely well, freshly severed from its life source.”

The book describes 46 of the over 200 varieties of herbs, greens, flowers and wild edibles that Eva makes available to Boston chefs. Didi outlines the culinary uses, health virtues, sources for seeds, and storage after harvest for each of the featured plants.

Imagine Chambrette’s cabbages, onions and garlic sautéed slowly for two hours in butter, melting in your mouth. Kale with apples, raisins, feta and walnuts gets a wonderful spark from smoked paprika. Cilantro stems saved and frozen combined with cardamom, cumin and cinnamon bringing the curry of cabbage, cauliflower and chickpeas to distinctive heights.

I was happy to see a few Lemon balm recipes since mine has invaded my entire herb garden. For those cooks who are a bit more adventurous, or those gardeners and farmers who find themselves inundated with goosefoot, chickweed, knotweed and purslane, Didi invents goosefoot pancakes, chickweed cheddar grilled cheese sandwich and forager’s pasta.

We all have experienced the disappointment of a tomato picked green before it’s time and delivered to our market weeks later. Herbs suffer even more degradation after being picked than fruits and vegetables. This is due to their essential and volatile oils, which evaporate quickly after picking.

Eva delivers herbs chilled and deprived of oxygen within 24 hours of being picked from the garden. In addition, she utilizes organic and nutrient dense farming techniques, the latter of which focuses on balancing minerals and trace elements in the soil to insure plant and subsequently human health.

Unfortunately, unless you are a chef at a restaurant (as Eva only sells to restaurants) or lucky enough to be invited over to Eva’s for dinner, you won’t find the same flavor in the herbs you buy from the supermarket. Wild Flavors gives the gardener good tips on growing many of these herbs, so that you can experience the true essence of these nutritious plants in your own backyard.

Thank you to Didi Emmons for exploring and digging up the stories of the other farmers and participants. The writer (also writing this article) kept a daily journal that year, now transcribed. He also collected the stories of the other farmers and participants. Photographs and drawings are included.

There is more recent farming history to be considered — the alternative communal farm movement of the 1960s and 70s. Raymond Mungo wrote a book Total Farm Farm — A Year in the Life. Wendell Farm grew cucumbers as a cash drop, advertised as Falling Tower Pickles in reference to the atomic power weather tower toppled by communard Sam Lovejoy. Montague Farm entertained Helen and Scott Nearing, and the people from Wendell and Montague appeared in a talk show program with the Nearings that year (1973). The drop out farmers were mainly from Amherst and Mt. Holyoke colleges, in part protesting the Vietnam War, also nuclear power.

Their attempt at large scale farming, finding a farm in upstate New York, is chronicled in a new book 1972 Farm Journal — A Back-to-the-Land Movement Story, iUniverse Press, 2011, 121 pp. The farmers followed organic principles; Robert Rodale came to visit and gave them a grant to get started. The writer (also writing this article) kept a daily journal that year, now transcribed. He also collected the stories of the other farmers and participants. Photographs and drawings are included.

The Arlington oral history Stories, and the Robbins Farm book may be obtained by sending $12.50 to Oakes Plimpton, 67 Coolidge Road, Arlington, MA 02476; send $15 for the Journal book, or you can download a kindle of it for $9.99 through iUniverse. Oakes is still currently involved with farming – see www.robbinsfarmgarden.org.
Calendar

Tuesday, December 6: The NOFA Organic Land Care Annual Gathering. UConn Storrs, 06269, for more info: call 203-888-1146 or e-mail Jenna Messori at jenna@organiclandcare.net or Kristianne Huber at Kristianne@ctnofa.org

Sunday, January 1: NOFA/Mass Spring Bulk. Order forms available, orders due postmarked by February 1, for more info: Cathleen O’Keefe, Bulk Order Coordinator, (413) 584-6786, bulkorder@nofamass.org

Sunday, January 8: Direct Marketing Conference, Location TBA, for more info: nofat.org/annual-events/direct-marketing-conference or 802-434-4122

Monday, January 9 – Friday, January 13: Massachusetts Organic Land Care Accreditation Course. Worcester State University, Worcester, MA, for more info: www.nofamass.org/programs/landcare/ or e-mail the Massachusetts OLC Program Coordinator Cathleen O’Keefe at nofamass.org or call her 508-360-0874.

Saturday, January 14: NOFA/Mass 2012 Winter Conference, Worcester State University, Worcester, MA, for more info: contact Cathleen O’Keefe, Winter Conference Coordinator, wc@nofamass.org


Friday, January 19 – Sunday, January 21: Organic Seed Grower’s Conference, Port Murray, NJ 08864, for more info: www.nofanj.org or call Teresa Mucci at teresa@ctnofa.org or call the office at 203-888-5146.


February 1, 2011 – February 6, 2011: Northeast Organic Seed Symposium, Burlington, VT, for more info: namass.org/annual-events/winter-conference or 802-434-4122

Wednesday, February 15, Friday, February 17, Tuesday, February 21 – Wednesday, February 22: Connecticut Organic Land Care Accreditation Course. Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, New Haven, CT, for more info: contact Deb Legge at 203-888-5146 or e-mail her at deb@ctnofa.org, for more info on the program: contact Frank Crandall by email, Frank.Crandall1@gmail.com or by phone 41-724-7619.

Saturday, March 3: Connectict NOFA Winter Conference. Manchester Community College. Manchester, CT, for more info: contact Teresa Mucci at teresa@ctnofa.org or call the office at 203-888-5146.


Contact: CT NOFA, Box 164, Stevenson, CT 06491, (203)-888-5146, or e-mail: ctconofa@ctnofa.org or join the web on 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) 355-2833, or Rebecca@nofamass.org or join the web on www.nofamass.org


Contact: NOFA-NH, 4 Park Street, Suite 208, Concord, NH 03301, Ph: (603) 224-5022, Fax: (603) 228-6492, e-mail: info@nofanh.org, website: www.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: NOFA-NJ, 334 River Road, Hillsborough, NJ 08844, Phone: (908) 371-1111, Email: nofnoinfo@nofanj.org, or join online at: www.nofanj.org

New York: Green Movement $20*, Gardener/Consumer $40, Family/Farm $60, Nonprofit Organization $75, Business $125, Lifetime Individual $1,000, Lifetime Business $300

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

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

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

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New York: Green Movement $20*, Gardener/Consumer $40, Family/Farm $60, Nonprofit Organization $75, Business $125, Lifetime Individual $1,000, Lifetime Business $300

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

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

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

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