GMOs Banned in California and Hawaii Counties, Oregon too Close to Call, Goes to Recount!

News Notes compiled by Jack Kittredge

Biotech and Agribusiness Spend Heavily to Defeat State GMO Initiatives, Colorado Loses, Oregon Goes to Recount

Monsanto spent almost $10.7 million, DuPont over $7.6 million, Pepsi $4 million, Coke over $2.5 million, Kraft $1.9 million, Land O’Lakes over $1.6 million, Dow over $1.4 million, and the rest of the usual suspects kicked in lesser amounts to defeat the latest two GMO Labeling initiatives, this time in Colorado which went down almost 2 to 1, and Oregon which was extremely close and will be recounted over the next few weeks. Supporters were the loyal Dr Bronner’s Magic Soap at almost $2 million, Center for Food Safety at over $1.2 million, Mercola.com at over $1 million, and many groups and organic companies offering support. Overall totals are in the neighborhood of $33 million to prevent labeling, $9 million to support it.

source: November 5, 2014 Cornucopia Institute

Maui Defies Monsanto, Passes Ban on GMO Farming

Voters on the Hawaiian island of Maui passed the nation’s first-ever ballot initiative targeting genetically engineered food following a campaign in which opponents of the measure, including corporate giants Monsanto and Dow AgroSciences, outspent supporters by a ratio of 87 to 1. The initiative temporarily bans the farming of GMO crops in Maui County until the county conducts an analysis of the health effects of genetically modified farming and foods. "I feel that this is a really strong message to the entire agrochemical industry in the state of Hawaii that we are no longer going to sit idly by and watch them expand their operations without the kinds of regulations that ensure the health and safety of people across Hawaii,” Ashley Lukens, director of the Hawaii chapter of the non-profit the Center for Food Safety, told Honolulu Civil Beat.

Monsanto Co. and Dow Chemical Co., which conduct field trials of genetically modified crops and also grow engineered seed for commercial purposes in Maui, said they plan to challenge the ban. Monsanto will “ask the court to declare that this initiative is legally flawed and cannot be enforced,” said Charla Lord, a spokeswoman for the Hawaii chapter of the non-profit the Center for Food Safety, told Honolulu Civil Beat.

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California Bans GE Salmon

Gov. Jerry Brown signed a bill in September banning the commercial production of transgenic salmon in California waters over concerns about the impact they could have on native salmon. AB 504 extends a prohibition on the production of genetically engineered salmon and constrains the ability of companies that want to commercialize GE fish. The provision basically allows for corporations to continue their efforts to commercialize GE fish, undermining the intent of the ban.”

According to the Center for Food Safety, the Food and Drug Administration received nearly two million comments opposing the approval of genetically modified salmon, and several grocery chains, including Kroger, Whole Foods, Safeway, Target and Trader Joe’s, committed not to sell genetically modified seafood if it is allowed on the market.

source: October 17, 2014 EcoWatch

Poorly Tested Gene Silencing Technology to Enter Food Supply with Simplot Potato

A GE potato with reduced browning was one of two new crops approved November 7 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that uses a new, little understood form of genetic engineering called RNA interference (RNAi). The other is a new low-lignin alfalfa from Monsanto. Despite the unprecedented nature of these approvals, USDA has inexplicably failed to undertake the legally required rigorous and thorough risk assessments.

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source: October 17, 2014 EcoWatch
The Natural Farmer

Needs You!

The Natural Farmer is a quarterly membership journal of the Northeast Organic Farming Association. You may join NOFA through one of the seven state chapters listed at www.nofa.org

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:

**Spring 2015:**
The True Cost of Food

**Summer 2015:**
Organic Dairying

**Fall 2015:**
Useful Tools and Equipment

If you can help us on any of these topics, or have ideas for new ones, please get in touch. We need your help! The deadline for the issues are: Spring - January 31, Summer - April 30, Fall - July 31, Winter - October 31.

Advertisers and Sponsors see rate and deadline information at www.nofa.org. Check the menu bar under “Publications.”

Moving? The Natural Farmer will not be forwarded by the post office, so those who subscribe directly should send address changes to us. Most readers, however, get this as a NOFA member benefit and should send address updates to your local NOFA chapter.

Archived issues from Summer 1999 through Fall 2005 are available at http://www.library.umass.edu/scoll/digital/. Most recent issues are downloadable (starting 3 months after paper publication) at www.nofa.org as pdf files.

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ntf@nofa.org
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Dear Jack,

...and also Julie from New Hampshire, here is my $100 toward the future of a paper newspaper for NOFA. Since CT NOFA’s Gleanings went e-printed, I don’t read it any more. Too much clicking, not enough sunshine (this is a factor of where the comfy chair is vs. where the computer is). I think PDF-ifying old articles is a good idea and a great plan. I don’t keep old issues very long but give them to young farming friends.

Anyway, thanks for everything and I hope you are thinking about a succession plan for when the chair is vacant versus where the computer is). I don’t read it any more. Too much clicking, not enough sunshine (this is a factor of where the comfy chair is vs. where the computer is). I think PDF-ifying old articles is a good idea and a great plan. I don’t keep old issues very long but give them to young farming friends.

Thanks so much Ellen.

Your support is much appreciated and is a god start on the way toward the $500 needed to raise the matching sum promised by Julie of NH in the last issue.

By the time you get this I will have presented some options for the future of the paper to the NOFA Interstate Council. There are certainly some ways the journal can be improved by making it digital. But there are a large number of members who want to keep a paper version.

I expect a decision will be made by the IC at their next meeting in fall of December. If they decide to go digital, I will try my best to keep a paper version alive even if we have to subsidize it somehow. This fund you are helping create will be the first place I look to for doing that.

Thanks again, Jack Kittredge

Hello Jack,

Our good wishes to you!

The real paper editions of The Natural Farmer are on our front room reception table at our Brewster, NY Organic Rug Warehouse Outlet — open to real customers on weekends. It is frequently read by people who sit in chairs near that table while their partners, spouses and friends shop. It sparks great conversations and connection of sympathetic spirits that wouldn’t happen otherwise!

So please keep it going wherever else you go on the trains. Great, substantive inspiring reading about the heart of America. Thank you! Good wishes, Marya

Jack

(continued from page 1)

overarching analysis of the GE crops’ impacts or reasonably foreseeable consequences.

“The change in how agriculture is produced has brought, frankly, a change in the profile of diseases. “The change in how agriculture is produced has brought, frankly, a change in the profile of diseases.

According to the World Health Organization, genetically modified organisms in the food chain are the branch of the World Health Organization that deals with genetically modified organisms in the food chain.

When not adequately controlled, these weed killers can create ‘hotspots’ that bring together a whole range of biological factors,” said recent research.

Another similar new weedkilling combination -- of dicamba-resistant crops -- is awaiting government approval. Monsanto's Roundup, the biotech company Dow Agrosciences to tolerate doses of those two weedkillers. Farmers will now be able to use the herbicide on the new (approved by USDA on September 17) types of corn and soybeans that have been genetically engineered by the biotech company Dow Agrosiences to tolerate doses of those two weedkillers. Farmers can spray either glyphosate or 2, 4-D (or both) to wipe out weeds within their own corn or soy crops. Another similar new weedkilling combination -- of the chemical dicamba and genetically engineered, dicamba-resistant crops -- is awaiting government approval. Promoters of these new herbicide-combo combinations say they are a big step forward. Critics cast a lingering doubt about the impact on the environment, including increased resistance of weeds. Global grain trader Archer Daniels Midland Co has said it is considering legal action against the seed maker over the variant, Illinois-based ADM “has not yet made a formal decision on what actions it will take,” said a company spokeswoman.

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Chinese Ministry Pulls Plug on Genetically Modified Rice and Corn

China's Ministry of Agriculture has decided not to renew biosafety certificates that allowed research to grow genetically modified (GM) rice and corn for a total of 3,600 hectares in the southern province of Hainan, China. The permits, to grow two varieties of GM rice and one transgenic corn strain, expired on August 17.

The ministry, with much fanfare, had approved the GM rice certificates in August 2009. At the same time, the ministry approved production of a corn strain developed by the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences’ Biotechnology Research Institute in Beijing. All of the certificates were valid for 5 years. Since the certificates were issued, however, public skepticism about the benefits of GM crops has grown in China. Some scientists conducting GM plant research have been attacked when giving public lectures.

Why the ministry allowed the certificates to lapse is in dispute. Some environmentalists say public worries about GM crops played a decisive role. “We believe that loopholes in assessing and monitoring [GM] research, as well as the public concern around safety issues are the most important reasons that the certifications have not been renewed,” writes Wang Jing, a Greenpeace official based in Beijing, in an e-mail to Science Insider.

source: August 20, 2014 sciencemag.org

The Natural Farmer Winter, 2014-15

CU Finds Cost of GMO Labeling Less Than 1¢ per Day

Consumers Union, the policy arm of Consumer Reports, conducted a study of the cost to the consumer of GMO labeling and found that the median cost per person would be $2.30 per year. The report is available online at https://consumersunion.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/GMO_labeling_cost_findings_Exe_Summ.pdf

CU Finds Cost of GMO Labeling Less Than 1¢ per Day

source: September 11, 2014 UpsideDownWorld.org

The Natural Farmer Winter, 2014-15

Mayan People’s Movement Defeats Monsanto Law in Guatemala

On September 4th, after ten days of widespread street protests against the biotech giant Monsanto’s expansion into Guatemalan territory, groups of indigenous people joined by social movements, trade unions and farmer and women’s organizations won a victory when congress finally repealed the legislation on protection of plant varieties, known as the “Monsanto Law”, that had been approved in June. After some battles between the presidential Patriotic Party (PP) and the Renewed Democratic Liberty Party (LIDER), the Congress when it convened on September 4th finally decided not to review the legislation, but cancel it.

Lolita Chávez from the Mayan People’s Council summarized the essence of what has been at stake these last weeks of peaceful protests as follows: “Corn taught us Mayan people about community life and its diversity, because when one cultivates corn one realizes that there is a variety of crops such as herbs and medical plants depending on the corn plant as well. We see that in this coexistence the corn is not selfish, the corn shows us how to resist and how to relate with the surrounding world.”

source: September 11, 2014 UpsideDownWorld.org

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Getting FDA’s Food Safety Regulations Right – Round Two
by Steve Gilman
Interstate NOFA Policy Coordinator

In a regulatory agency reversal that rarely happens, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) was forced to take major chunks of their proposed food safety regulations back to the drawing board for a complete rewrite. Thanks to a strong orchestrated outpouring of farmer and citizen comments, Round One went to family scale agriculture and the emerging food movement. Now, with the issuing of the re-regulations for public comment it turns out that the civic response in 2013 was just a dress-rehearsal for this final public rule-making phase. The new comment period ends December 15th.

Many farmers and food groups across the country participated in last year’s successful effort against FDA’s initial one-size-fits-all regulations, including a well-organized national comment campaign mounted by the food safety team with the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC). As a charter coalition member, Interstate NOFA has been working on multiple aspects of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) since 2009 when the legislation was first introduced in Congress.

With much of FSMA initially formulated by special interests in far-off seats of power, this legislation is the most sweeping reform of our country’s food safety laws since the 1930’s. Once FDA goes to final rule-making after this public comment period is over, these new food safety regulations will absolutely have a major effect on how farmers farm – and thereby, on how eaters eat.

Comments Needed! For a transparent and viable food system farmers must be allowed to utilize their safe sustainable agricultural practices via rigorous scientific risk-based regulations that actually provide bona fide food safety. And FDA’s rules should not be allowed to supersede regulations already put forth by law – including the National Organic Program and various U.S. conservation programs. At stake is what fruit and vegetables will be available in the marketplace as these rules will dictate how food is produced and who will produce it.

But because FSMA focuses solely on microbial contamination in food, time-honored organic biological farming practices using compost, manures and other natural amendments to build soil fertility automatically become a regulatory target. Meanwhile, standard industrialized agriculture routines that feature heavy use of toxic pesticides, chemical fertilizers and herbicide-compatible GMO seed are not dealt with at all and under some FSMA interpretations are even considered a “safer” alternative.

Certainly all farmers, food facilities and preparers have a major responsibility for producing safe pathogen-free food. Despite some gains made in Round One, FDA’s re-proposed Produce Rule (governing production) and Preventive Controls Rule (governing facilities) still unfairly impacts family-scale farmers’ ability to stay in business, jeopardizes organic and sustainable farming practices and drives down the availability of fresh local food in the marketplace. This final comment period is our opportunity to shift food safety rulings to a precise risk-based footing – not one-size-fits-all decrees that favor corporate agribusiness over family farms and food businesses.

Targeted wins and major issues For Round Two not only do we have to generate even more comments to protect family farms and our sustainable food supply – but we also have to play defense. Because we got a number of positive modifications that we asked for last year – now, as written in the re-proposals those items have a big bull’s-eye plastered all over them as targets for various special interest groups.

For farmers who grow, harvest, pack or hold fruit or vegetables – or facilities that process, manufacture, pack or store human food – the NSAC team’s FSMA website has guidance on who might be immediately affected by the re-proposed rules: http://sustainableagriculture.net/fsma/who-is-affected along with easy to use commenting materials and templates. There are specific comment resources posted for consumers as well.

Manure and compost In Round One some consumer organizations pushed hard for restrictive regulations governing “Biological Soil Amendments” – adversely affecting how farmers use manure and compost to build soil fertility. Bowing to this pressure FDA initially proposed a stringent nine month interval between applying manure and harvesting food crops and a 45 day interval for finished compost.

As successfully challenged in the 2013 comments, however, FDA had to acknowledge they put the rule before the science. Instead of setting arbitrary intervals, valid scientific assessment are needed to accurately measure the risks posed by differing production practices, growing conditions, sources of manure and organic levels of biological soil activity that apply fairly all around the country. FDA will institute a new regulation when this research is finalized – which could take anywhere from 5-10 years. But in their re-proposal FDA now has erred in the opposite direction by requiring no interval at all during the research period – which is just as scientifically indefensible. In so doing they have created

Regulations Right – Round Two

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The Natural Farmer
Winter, 2014-15

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ANDRÉ LEU
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farms are not defined by activities at a single location – there may be multiple parcels, buildings and structures spread out over a wider area. Above all, FDA’s farm definition should be risk-based and not interfere with standard farming practices.

Water testing

The testing provisions for E coli in surface water irrigation sources have also been modified – from every 7 days to 20 tests a year (every 10 years to establish a baseline) and then at 5 tests per year if your water qualities. While the revisions are more risk-based and recognize watershed differences they are still very expensive and non-scientifically verified. Since surface water conditions are so variable, perhaps testing closer to the times of harvest is warranted – using the established Good Agricultural Practice (GAPs) protocol of testing three times a year.

FDA’s unauthorized supplier verification program

Out of the blue these re-proposals include a new FDA provision that requires growers dealing with aggregators such as food hubs, farm to school programs, auctions, etc. to automatically undergo food safety audits. Not only would this be a major expense for farmers – but also it is specifically not authorized in the FSMA legislation. Farmers who want to do business in specific markets (such as Whole Foods, for example) may voluntarily choose to undergo audits – but adding this as a general requirement would place a cap on farm expansion and the growth of local and regional markets.

All Hands On Deck!

The biggest error for smaller scale farmers and the consumers who rely on them would be to think that since they are currently exempt there’s no need to comment. In fact the final rulemaking will severely limit future farm growth possibilities, curtail expansion and impact the development of local and regional food security.

Many NOFA members got their feet wet in the commenting process during the 2013 campaign and armed with coalition-prepared information and talking points, discovered how easy and effective it was to officially submit their feedback. However, others that responded to petitions circulating the internet didn’t realize that only input submitted individually by mail or through the Regulations.gov website are counted in the all-important final tally – as petition drives that gather even thousands of signatures only count as one single comment.

For complete comment guidance go to: http://sustainableagriculture.net/fsma/ -- or more simply just Google “NSAC FSMA”.

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— Dan, Illihi Farms
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The Art of Balancing Soil Nutrients
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by William "Crop Doc" McKibben
$25.00, paperback, 228 pp. not including the index
review by Jane Hammer

First of all, my perspective as reviewer: I am
a gardener, farm volunteer, and student of soil
science, who has attended soil workshops and
organic farming conferences, and done her own
independent reading and experimentation.

The subtitle is largely what this book accomplishes,
written from “Crop Doc” McKibben’s decades of experience
as a soil consultant in NW Ohio. The reader benefits from case studies of individual
farms as well as comparisons across farms, over the
course of a season or in many cases, several years.
There are dozens of soil test reports reproduced in
the book, each serving to demonstrate some point
made in the text, so the reader necessarily becomes
familiar and comfortable examining soil test reports.

In this book, McKibben’s experience and audience
seem to be concentrated on row crops (corn, wheat,
soybeans) or turf/golf course management. He
addresses the challenges specific to each of these
very different management situations fairly evenly
over the course of the book, including not just the
soil needs but also what is practical in each situation
(e.g. a golf course manager typically applies
amendments several times over the course of the
season while an agricultural situation might have to
make the most of the moment of pre-seeding, etc.)

The style of the book is somewhat conversational,
less textbook-y, although each chapter is clearly
and succinctly organized into sections, for instance
going through each of the macronutrients and
several of the more common trace elements, and
their interactions with other nutrients. Within each
section, though, it’s like he’s talking about a familiar
personality and the conversational style kicks in.
The paragraphs wander a bit and often jump from
one bit of content to another. Often there is some
flow, but I found myself flipping backwards and
forwards to make connections, remind myself of
what something was, or even find a definition of
a term that is used early in the book but discussed
much later. I also had to flip pages because often the
text refers to a figure or table found several pages
later in the book. I do appreciate that soil nutrition
is a complicated subject with so many variables,
interferences, etc., and that organizing the complex
interactions along with the simple facts takes some
clear decision-making about presentation. I found
myself wishing for more of the information to be in
chart form. There are a couple of handy charts he
has created which I have not seen elsewhere.

McKibben explains and makes definite recommendations about the different types of crop
and soil testing and timing of these, given your
situation. He explains the shortcomings of each type
and recommends more than one kind to get the full
picture of what nutrients are actually available for
use by the plants. He has correlated past soil test
results and crop responses with hundreds of tissue
analyses.

Cation exchange capacity is explained in fair detail
including why and when you need to pay attention
to that aspect of your soil test. He organizes soils
into two tiers of total exchange capacity, low and
high, giving each an entire chapter of special
considerations. Even though you may have only
one tier on your land, I would read both of these
chapters as they cover different topics.

McKibben gives his commentary and analysis, and
while speaking authoritatively, clearly states his
opinion as his opinion and lets the reader in on his
past mistakes. At the same time, he’ll make broad
statements and conclusions that don’t jive with what
I’ve heard recently from other soil experts. For
instance, he repeatedly alerts us that the soil in no-
till fields is almost always problematically stratified
and compacted and thus puts limits on the roots and
the soil nutrients they can access. He thus seems
very much in favor of fairly heavy tillage when
possible to ensure mixing of amendments and root
access to nutrients. While these are no doubt very
important to consider in many no-till situations,
especially those that have been conventionally
heavily fertilized and herbicided, McKibben does
not mention the potential that no-till organic has
to overcome these issues with the reach of fungi
that might be able to thrive where there is no heavy
tillage, for instance, and the resilient bounce/spunge
quality and enhanced root growth possible in a well-
aggregated soil.

Relevant to this, McKibben doesn’t cover a lot of
ground with soil biology, hardly mentioning fungi
and only briefly mentioning the role of soil bacteria
in making nutrients available to plants. He also
completely leaves soil biology out of his discussion
of the limits to humus building and soil carbon
sequestration. He goes through the calculations
by which he arrived at his conclusion that one can
not add 1% of soil organic matter to agricultural
soils within a person’s lifetime. He maintains
this conclusion even while acknowledging that
it’s a very rough calculation—and even this
acknowledgement shows no awareness of the role of the
liquid carbon pathway that Christine Jones talks
about (see the summer and fall issues of The Natural
Farmer for more discussion of this.) At the same
time, this conclusion leads him to emphatically
instruct us to hold onto the organic matter we do
have, calling it precious as gold.

Among other topics that receive considerable and
repeated discussion are the role and quality of
irrigation and the use of glyphosate (particularly its
dangerous impact on micronutrients like manganese
in the plant itself.)

This book can help shed much needed light on soil
testing terminology and methods, and amendment
use for those who are employing soil tests to help
solve problems in agricultural or turf management
situations. It covers many important topics, but
not all, that must be understood by those who are
serious about balancing the nutrients in soils on their
farm, garden or landscape. I recommend it as part
of a library that includes other resources about soil
biology and about management techniques other
than heavily tilled row-cropping and conventional
turf management.

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The Small-Scale Cheese Business: The Complete Guide to Running a Successful Farmstead Creamery
by Gianaclis Caldwell
$34.95, paperback, 256 pages
reviewed by Sanne Kure-Jensen

If you have dairy animals and are thinking about starting a cheese operation, do your homework first. “The Small-Scale Cheese Business” offers a thorough roadmap for would-be cheesemakers and Caldwell shares her own experience as well as stories from other cheesemakers. The book will be helpful to beginning and established small and hobby-farm livestock owners and is an excellent guide for anyone wanting to improve his or her dairy practices and upgrade their on-farm cheesemaking infrastructure.

Before making a significant financial investment in equipment and other infrastructure, be sure to review Caldwell’s guidelines for setting up a cheesemaking operation. Learn about forming a business, creating infrastructure and selling your finished products.

Caldwell’s book opens with two simple questions:
- Do you love rising early and working long days, day after day?
- Do you love washing dishes over and over again?

If you and your partner or family are prepared for lots of labor, periodic stresses and financial challenge, then you may have what it takes to run a cheesemaking operation.

Caldwell’s book guides prospective cheesemakers through a market analysis to discover future customers, how to reach them and at what cost. Readers can learn the many elements of a budget, complete business plan and potential sources of start-up and operating capital. Caldwell discusses the need for “food insurance”, also known as product liability insurance. She guides readers through considerations for health and auto insurance. Caldwell explained that when entering into a business with one or more partners, life insurance is an important consideration if the business is to go on without a key partner. Partnership agreements should also have an exit plan that allows one partner to leave the business, without a serious illness or death.

Finding good help is hard. Keeping and managing employees offers its own challenges. Caldwell discusses pay rates, job classifications and applicable labor laws.

“The Small-Scale Cheese Business” helps readers design a creamery. Caldwell briefly covers dairy management and the importance of starting with high quality milk. She thoroughly discusses equipment needs as well as lay out considerations for the milking parlor, milkhouse and makeroom. Aging rooms must have good temperature humidity and air exchange systems. Aging rooms may be below ground cellar or “caves,” repurposed refrigerator truck beds or walk-in coolers. Caldwell discusses shelf systems and ways to save money with used equipment.

Caldwell reviews design considerations for accessory spaces including an office, packaging room, tasting room, laundry room and bathroom.

Using Caldwell’s guidelines, readers can calculate their water needs, explores different types of heating systems and wastewater handling options. Efficiency is critical to any business; Caldwell advises readers to purchase the right sized equipment for peak efficiency in energy use as well as upfront and operating costs.

Details on planning, daily chores as well as food safety requirements and liabilities help a new cheesemaker ensure customer safety and operational efficiency. Caldwell discusses Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) Plans and the need to develop a plan, set up regular monitoring and verification, establish record keeping and follow through with action plans.

Recalls are any food manufacturers’ nightmare. Caldwell explains preventive steps and federally required traceability tools that can help minimize the impact of any recall, should there be a problem with a particular batch.

Agritourism, Agritainment and Open Houses bring additional customers and revenue to farm operations across the country. To bring in extra revenue, cheesemakers can offer public workshops or offer consulting and training to other cheesemakers.

Caldwell even has a chapter on how to manage a recall plan should one partner to leave the business, without a serious illness or death. Partnership agreements should also have an exit plan that allows one partner to leave the business, without a serious illness or death.

An extensive Appendix lists sources for equipment, resources, training, associations and sample layout diagrams.

This book was originally published in 2010 as “The Farmstead Creamery Advisor.”

Learn about Gianaclis Caldwell at http://gianacliscaldwell.wordpress.com/ or facebook.com/pages/Gianaclis-Caldwell/499644159083571. Learn more about the author’s farm and cheesemaking operation at pholiafarm.com.

America’s Two-Headed Pig
Written by Leah Dunham and with contributions by Arthur Dunham, DVM
11.95, Paperback, 199 pages
reviewed by Dr. Stephanie Gilfoy, ND

The front cover clearly states the goal of America’s Two-Headed Pig: to explain how to go about treating nutritional deficiencies and disease in a genetically modified, antibiotic resistant, and pesticide dependent world. Author Leah Dunham is the daughter of a veterinarian and as such grew up seeing her father diagnose and cure herd illnesses through providing cattle with proper nutrition. As this book clearly describes in great detail, however, proper nutrition is a lot harder to come by and has been getting even more difficult in the more recent years as politics, money, and health collide.
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The author deeply explores how alternative motives and vested interests affect our plants, animals, and us; how what we once thought were quick and easy solutions have become complex and very expensive issues; and how if we don’t do something soon to change it, there may no longer be any nutrition in our food. For example, this book gives a fantastic description of how the weeds and pests solution was “fixed” with herbicides and pesticides, but how that led to the genetic modification of plants, animal food, and as a result, our food. It describes how the GMO plants then affect the animals, making them weak, deformed, and ill, and how that led to antibiotic and hormonal treatment. These sick plants and animals, covered in herbicides and pesticides, and pumped with medications are supposed to provide us with the best nutrition.

The style of this book is interesting in that each chapter describes an animal illness and how it has been affected by a political agenda, and in reality, has nothing to do with providing our nation, or world, with healthy food, and especially not animal welfare.

As a naturopathic physician, I found this book to be of great interest and importance. Although much of this book is written to explain the relationship between animal illness and disease, I could not help to draw parallels between all that is going on in our food supply and the patients that I see daily in my practice. A huge part of treating patients from a naturopathic perspective is to replace the nutritional deficiencies. In my office, I always try to start with healthy food, but as this book clearly points out, it can be difficult to do so if our food itself is full of nutrient deficiencies. Overall, I found this book to be a very interesting and informative. I was eager to learn more about the animal illnesses and relate them to what I see in humans; I was frustrated to learn about what is actually going on; and I am happy to have a much clearer understanding of how to feed my family and guide my patients. I think everyone who cares about or is interested in their health, animal health, or the environment should read this book.

Perennial Vegetable Gardening with Eric Toensmeier (DVD)
directed and acted by Eric Toensmeier
$29.95, DVD, 143 minutes
review by Sanne Kure-Jensen

Gardeners and farmers considering permaculture or season extension will find this film an excellent resource. It features over a dozen perennial vegetables on Toensmeier’s Massachusetts garden. The host also shows high-elevation, temperate gardens at Las Cañadas in Huautuco, Veracruz, Mexico (bosquedeniebla.com.mx). Those growing conditions are comparable to those in the Pacific Northwest. The final segment of the video covered Toensmeier’s workshop at ECHO’s global farm in North Fort Meyers, Florida (echonet.org).

Every spring, perennial vegetables offer growers an extra 4 - 6 weeks of garden fresh foods. Unlike most annual vegetables, many perennial vegetables tolerate full and partial shade and even wet conditions. Toensmeier enjoys supplementing his perennial garden with standard summer annual vegetables like tomatoes. Perennial vegetables resist annual droughts with deep, established root systems. They resist leaf- eating pests or slugs by growing new leaves using their large root reserves. Unlike most annual vegetables, perennial vegetables resist early or even heavy frosts. Most need less care than annual vegetables.

Toensmeier adds 1” of compost every year or two to his. He said his biggest chore is to harvest food. One important challenge with perennial vegetables is that you only get one chance to prepare the beds and improve soils. Perennial vegetables need deep loose, fertile soils. Toensmeier adds amendments per soil test recommendations, adds compost and loosens soils with a broad fork.

Another approach is to use sheet mulch to establish perennial gardens or beds for the following season.

First kill and remove all weeds, lay down a layer of cardboard as a weed barrier. Cover with compost leaves and wood chips up to 24” deep. It will become a thin compost layer and be ready to plant next year. Lay dry mulch like wood chips on top to suppresses any weed seeds in the upper layers that may sprout.

Growing in polycultures helps to minimize competition and maximize cooperation. Toensmeier trains Chinese yam vines on living trellises for easy harvest of its small berries. He used horizontal bamboo poles secured between Siberian pea shrubs (nitrogen fixers). Late in the season, he placed a sheet under the vines to catch the harvest of yam “berries.” Under all this, he grew ramps as an early season ground cover, which disappear before the yam harvest.

Toensmeier’s perennial vegetable garden includes an edible water garden. Plants attract and feed beneficial insects. This helps balance his garden with natural pest control. He recommends using pots in a water garden for easier harvest and containing running plants like water celeriy.

Be especially careful with non-native water plants, he advises. Do not plant them in natural waterways, streams or ponds where they might overtake a natural area or escape downstream. He uses a closed pond with a rubber liner and has enjoyed success growing in kiddy pools.

Perennial vegetables can include trees or large shrubs. Coppicing encourages young growth at an easy harvesting height.

Three Brothers. Sunchoke or Jerusalem artichokes take the place of corn. A mint relative with edible tubers, Chinese artichoke takes the place of squash. Groundnuts take the place of beans. Toensmeier eats this spicey refried beans. He surrounds this garden with root barrier of 18” aluminum flashing. At the end of the growing season, these plants offer huge yields.

The Neighboring Food Co-op Association is a network of over 30 food co-ops and start-up initiatives across New England, locally owned by more than 90,000 people like you. For more information and a map of store locations, please visit www.nfca.coop/healthyfoodaccess.

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— Dale Covert

Deerfield Belmont Sarah is one of five EX Jerseys in Dale Covert’s herd, and she is quite a ‘diva,’ they say.

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“I continue to use Udder Comfort™ going on 5 years now because I’ve tried them all and haven’t found anything else that works this well. Udder Comfort is most effective and works fastest,” says Dale Covert of West Winfield, New York. Over the years, his Dalco Holsteins grew to include his daughters’ Paigebrook Jerseys and Darlin Dutch Belts; more recently, his wife Laura’s Brown Swiss.

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AWARE OF THE RUMBLING OF VIOLENCE ON TURKEY’S BORDERS AND THE URGENT PRESSURES OF GLOBAL WARMING, MOUNTING SOCIAL INEQUALITY, HUNGER AND FEAR, THE IFOAM ORGANIC WORLD CONGRESS (OWC) ASSEMBLED IN ISTANBUL TO LAY OUT A VISION OF HOPE, COOPERATION AND JUSTICE.

“We, the organic-minded people of the world, have come together to assist society with innovative ways to manifest the Principles of Organic Agriculture to help humanity sustain itself on Earth. Committed to showcase how we can meet the challenge of sustainability, we extend ourselves to build bridges to other people, organizations, and institutions. During the 18th Organic World Congress we have come together to make a step in developing Organic 3.0, a new concept for how we define our agriculture system, how we design our lives, and how we strategize our future.” (OWC Declaration on Building the Bridge to Organic 3.0)

IFOAM, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, unites over 800 affiliates from 117 countries with the mission of “leading, uniting and assisting the organic movement in its full diversity.” NOFA people have been involved since its founding in 1972. Summarizing what goes on at an OWC is more than trying to cover all of the workshops. There are 16 or 17 choices at almost every slot. Fortunately, there is a CD with the proceedings, 2 – 3 page written versions of the hundreds of presentations, enough for a whole winter of reading. You can order a copy from the IFOAM head office in Bonn - www.ifoam.org.

Each day, the OWC opened with inspirational talks by keynote speakers. (Video recordings will be available.) I was particularly moved by one of these remarkable speakers. Patrick Mooney, Executive Director of the ETC. Group in Canada, warned that the conference Main Track was a series of discussions designed to allow as many people as possible to contribute to creating “Organic 3.0.” As a participant in the Sustainable Organic Agriculture Action Network process (See Winter 2013 TNF for my article on SOAAN), I had the exciting chance to be on a panel on “Organic Visions and Trends.” My main points were that the organic world still reflects too closely the inequalities of the larger economy. I suggested that a critical indicator of future success be the number of family-scale farms and their prosperity and that “there cannot be a truly sustainable food system without justice for the people who grow, pack, ship, process and sell the food and also those who eat it.” I concluded by quoting former World Board president Gunnar Rundgren, “if we are worried about insects and the environment, for God’s sake, what about the people?!”

At the final Main Track session, “The Roadmap to Sustainability: the Organic World 2017 and 2020,” former World Board president Gunnar Rundgren urged that we be more radical. “We sold ourselves to the devil of the marketplace,” Gunnar exclaimed, “We need a new story, the story of food as a human right, and a philosophical shift to managing the planet as common good.”

Andre Leu, Australian farmer and President of the World Board, had the last words. Thanking Bhun-tan with its plan to be 100% organic by 2020 for inspiration, and summarizing the three intense days, Leu said we’ve looked at climate change, pollution, GMO contamination, the need for social justice. IFOAM wants to continue hearing from the people assembled in Istanbul and hopes we will take home what we have learned.

When there are so many enticing choices, you just have to plunge in and make the most of each moment. The conference Main Track was a series of discussions designed to allow as many people as possible to contribute to creating “Organic 3.0.” As a participant in the Sustainable Organic Agriculture Action Network process (See Winter 2013 TNF for my article on SOAAN), I had the exciting chance to be on a panel on “Organic Visions and Trends.” My main points were that the organic world still reflects too closely the inequalities of the larger economy. I suggested that a critical indicator of future success be the number of family-scale farms and their prosperity and that “there cannot be a truly sustainable food system without justice for the people who grow, pack, ship, process and sell the food and also those who eat it.” I concluded by quoting former World Board president Gunnar Rundgren, “if we are worried about insects and the environment, for God’s sake, what about the people?!”

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To organic farmers everywhere for treating their animals and earth with care and treating us with some of the finest organic ingredients around, thanks.
Besides the Main Track, I attended sessions on CSA around the world, and listened to a discussion between the IFOAM Standards Committee (SC) and Will Allen on aquaponics. The SC did not come to a decision, but concluded that they need to judge and evaluate the entire system. I was deeply inspired by Medina Charita’s report on the work of Masipag: “The Practice of Biodiversity Conservation and Agroecology to Enhance Climate Change Resilience of Organized Small Scale Organic Farmers in the Philippines.”

I was NOFA’s official delegate to the IFOAM General Assembly, the membership meeting that takes place following the OWC. Members guide organizational policies through the election of the World Board and by proposing and voting on motions. To enable full discussion of motions, there is a “motion Bazaar,” where proposers and challengers can hash out controversial issues. This time, the Motion bazaar took place in the evening on a boat that cruised around the Bosphorus. Istanbul really struts its stuff at night, the facades historic buildings and bridges illuminated with changing colored lights. Another advantage of meeting on a boat - no one could leave early.

By the time motions get to the General Assembly, many of the votes are unanimous. We voted for motions favoring a campaign on the importance of organic agriculture in building soil health and carbon storage during the 2015 UN International Year of Soils, for clarification and strengthening of the IFOAM position on GMOs, for the establishment of a bee keeping group and an animal husbandry alliance. As urged by the Fukushima organic farmers, we voted for IFOAM to be an advocate of nuclear phase outs and their replacement with renewable energy. We also voted to recommend that the World Board strengthen its ties with like-minded movements like CSAs, peasant movements and permaculture, and lead the world debate on “improving the life, welfare and justice for farmers and farm workers.” You can read the full texts of all the motions in the next edition of IFOAM in Action.

Through intentional efforts to achieve diversity, IFOAM membership has spread around the globe. Most continents have “self-organized structures” – IFOAM Asia, Africa, and Latin America - and there is also a farmer group – the Intercontinental Network of Organic Farming Organizations (IN-OFO) which has am IFAD funded project to train more farmer leadership. At this General Assembly, we elected a World Board that includes one North American (Peggy Miars, of OMRI), three Europeans, an African, two Latin Americans, two Asians and the President, Andre Leu from Australia.

IFOAM priorities have shifted over the years from leading the world in creating organic standards, to harmonizing standards for smooth international trade, to the current focus on strengthening and empowering smallholder farmers as the path to ending world hunger and creating a sustainable future. The recent declarations from the UN Rapporteur on World Hunger and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) that the best way to feed the world is by improving the organic practices on millions of tiny farms are evidence that IFOAM has been working behind the scenes for decades with other civil society representatives to make the case for this crucial policy focus.

My trip to Istanbul has filled my memory with positive images and leaves me full of hope. The final Organic World Congress declaration shows that I was not alone in calling for social justice: “We call on all stakeholders to join with us to affirm our interdependence and assume shared responsibility for the collective health and prosperity of humanity. We call for policy reform that empowers the organic paradigm and supports it with positions, educational campaigns, and tools. We reach out and build bridges to others to reduce farm practices and inputs that have adverse effects, to build diversity, to create fairness, and to improve nutrition and health.”

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