

Aurora Organic Dairy Opens New Organic Dairy Farm in Stratford, Texas

Boulder, CO, July 10, 2007 —Aurora Organic Dairy today announced that organic milk production has begun at its Coldwater West organic dairy farm near Stratford, Texas. This is the first organic dairy farm in Sherman County and Aurora Organic Dairy’s second dairy location in Texas. Aurora Organic Dairy’s Coldwater West farm has created nearly 50 new jobs in Sherman County.

On June 15, 2007, the Coldwater West facility received organic certification for its 2,500 livestock from independent certifier Quality Assurance International. The 640 acres of cropland and pasture at Coldwater West have been certified separately for several years. Aurora Organic Dairy also owns the adjacent facility, Coldwater East, where Aurora Organic Dairy currently grows certified organic crops on an additional 640 acres.

“U.S. families have shown an increasing appetite for organic dairy products, especially as the price gap between organic and conventional dairy products has narrowed recently,” said Marc Peperzak, chairman and CEO of Aurora Organic Dairy. “We are delighted to add this facility to our network of organic dairy farms so that we can meet that demand, and make organic milk and butter more affordable and more available for American families.”

The Stratford farm is modeled after Aurora Organic Dairy’s High Plains Organic Dairy in Colorado, where the barns and facilities are located in the center of the farm, surrounded by hundreds of acres of organic pasture. ♦

The Organic Summit

By Kathie Arnold

A conference entitled “The Organic Summit: Renewing the Organic Conversation” was recently held in Boulder, Colorado. Because of its high cost and limited registration, it generated some controversy for being an exclusive event that limited participation by a large segment of the organic community. Conference producer, New Hope Media, did supply NODPA with one complimentary registration for a producer and I thus attended. While I saw a wide cross section of the organic community there, the primary population was industry/marketing/media folks with only a few farmers and grass roots organization representatives there. But still, I liked a lot of what I had a chance to hear and it was good to know that organic marketing and industry people were hearing the messages being put out there. I’d like to share some of the “conversation” that I heard there.

The leadoff keynote speaker was Fred Kirschenmann, who has long been a thought leader in organic and sustainable agriculture and a South Dakota organic farmer who continues to manage the family farm from afar. Fred laid out two challenges that face organics. He said that it is no longer adequate to rely on the organic label as a point of distinction and that we are not paying sufficient attention to what the market is telling us. He related that the Hartman Group reported that 62% of consumers now want food consistent with their values and that a growing edge of the market wants memory, romance, and trust, with health and nutrition close behind. Consumers want to feel good about the food they buy and they want to know where the food comes from and what the story behind it is. These consumers want active engagement. The second challenge Kirschenmann laid out is the climate challenge and the fact that following agro-ecological principles is going to be of paramount importance.

In the ‘Marketing to New and Existing Organic Consumers’ session, Rick Sterling, CEO and founding partner of the Sterling-Rice Group, reported that 35% of households use organic in some fashion and that 60% of those just started buying in the last year.

Kevin Williams, brand strategist for Pure Design Co., went on to describe the ‘echo boomers’, the children of the baby boomers who are now 10-32 years old and 75 million strong (compared to 78 million baby boomers). He described these echo boomers as being very in-

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volved with organics and active purchasers. They are price and value driven, super-center shoppers and convenience oriented—seemingly a perfect fit for Walmart's organic endeavor. Williams theorizes that Walmart's failure with this group is because of what he called 'echo apathy', which he described as a many faceted insecurity on the part of the echo boomers. The income expectation of the current generation will not match that of their parents, thus financial insecurity, on top of environmental insecurity, institutional insecurity, and food insecurity. He said that the echo boomers don't have faith in the establishment and that Walmart represent the establishment, thus Walmart and organics was not a good fit for the echo boomers. Mr. Williams went on to say that connecting with consumers has to be through the head, heart, and gut—that something has to click to achieve meaning.

The final presenter in the marketing session was Allyson Savage, vice president and group manager at Ketchum Public Relations. She emphasized that consumers are seeking a connection with their brand, that authenticity and transparency are vital and that 70% of the global consumers say that honesty is important to them. Buying organic is 'activism lite' for many consumers whose overly busy lives keep them from engaging more in activism but feel that they are at least doing something positive by purchasing organic. They are relying on their chosen brand to bring products to them from a source and in a way that upholds and meets their values.

The closing keynote speaker was Walter Robb, Co-President and COO of Whole Food Market. Robb started out listing issues in the organic sector: supply issues, certification issues, the pasture rule taking too long, food safety, GMO drift, fraud, loss of genetic diversity, and fewer farmers. He related that organic sales have doubled in the last five years. He sees consumers moving to deeper values. Robb's vision for organic in the 21st century is that rather than focusing on what isn't in organic, that there be a return to the positive of what is in organic.

Mark Bradley, Associate Deputy Administrator for the National Organic Program (NOP), also presented at one of the sessions at The Organic Summit and he described the ten point outcome of a visioning session done by the staff at NOP:

1. The NOP becomes fully funded with adequate resources.
2. The organic community has confidence in the organic label.

3. The NOP seldom receives FOIA requests. (They plan to soon list all certified operations and compliance actions on their website and have a FOIA reading room.)
4. Processes are fully transparent with quality manuals in place.
5. Efficient and effective process for standards development.
6. NOSB requests are handled in a time effective manner.
7. NOP certifiers are competent. (NOP will do more on-site visits.)
8. All accredited certifying associations are reviewed in a timely manner.
9. Recognition agreements with other countries are reviewed regularly and overseen.
10. NOP is boring place to work, all the fires are out, and everyone is happy with the way the NOP is working.

May this list become a reality!! ♦

Classifieds

ANIMALS

25 to 60 Registered Jersey heifers for sale. 25 open, breeding age heifers and 35 bred heifers. Certified through OEFFA, located in northern VA. Call 540-687-5112 or email sadiesim@yahoo.com or fox-run-organic@hotmail.com.

10 Bred Heifers for sale. \$1500 each if sold as a group of 10. Contact Dave Minar at 952-212-9506 or email daveandflo@cedarsummit.com.

Organic Heifer Boarding for 10 to 15 head in New York. Certified pasture, hay, and grain. Tie-stall barn and bedded pack area. Contact Klaas (for daughter Elizabeth) Martens.

Jersey/Swiss Heifer Calves for sale. Two 5-month old heifers at \$500 each; two 2-month heifers at \$350 each. Contact Steven at 610-935-0314 or email cleess@yahoo.com.

Holstein Bred Heifers for sale, due September. 7 or 8 heifers, some with horns. Located on Ohio, contact David Osterloh at 419-305-7765.

HAY

Organic mixed grass hay for sale. Small square bales. \$150/ton or \$3 per bale. Southern tier of NY, trucking can be arranged. Tony Marzolino 607-657-8543 or 267-502-3703.

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