

NODPA NEWS

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

CONTENTS:

Organic Industry News

NOSB Pasture Symposium	1
NODPA Field Days	1
NOP Draft Rules	5
NODPA Survey Results	6
From the NODPA Desk	7
Pasture: Consumers Care	9
More Organic Milk Sought	12
NODPA History	13
NOSB Nominations	14
Organic Milk Integrity	15
Co-op Business Model	16

Organic Production

Featured Farm: UNH	19
Pasture Management	21
Milk Without Antibiotics	22
Crossbreeding Studies	24

Research/Education

NESARE Grants	26
---------------	----

Commentary

Pasture Is A Foundation	28
USDA and Pasture	28

Net Update

OMILK/ODAIRY	27
--------------	----

Member Info

NODPA Representatives	18
Calendar	30
Membership	31
Classifieds, hats, t-shirts	32

MAY 2006

VOLUME 6, ISSUE 2

WWW.NODPA.COM

Organic Industry News

NOSB Dairy Pasture Symposium and Meeting Seeks To Clarify Access To Pasture Requirements

by Ed Maltby

The much awaited meeting was held to provide advice to the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) and NOSB on the changes necessary to clarify the current regulation requiring "access to pasture for ruminants" in order to provide universal interpretation of the law and be able to cite operations that do not comply. This meeting was organized by NOP officials who sought to provide as many different perspectives as possible from practitioners and experts. Just days earlier, the USDA / NOP had published an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) on the role of pasture in organic dairy production.

Dairy Issues Group meeting

Because of the importance of this issue to organic dairy farmers, consumers and certifiers, NODPA, MODPA (Midwest Organic Dairy Producers Association), and WODPA (Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance) sponsored a meeting on Tuesday morning, April 18th immediately prior to the Symposium. The meeting was very well attended with over 60 people in the room, including farmers from across the country, representatives from certifiers and others from non-governmental partnering agencies.

There were detailed discussions both on the issues and the best way to pro-

(Continued on page 2)

SAVE THE DATE!!!!

NODPA 6th Annual Field Days Event August 18 & 19, 2006 Organic Dairy Research Farm, UNH

by Ed Maltby

This year's NODPA Field Days will be held at the first land grant university organic dairy farm in the nation: University of New Hampshire. The Burley-Demeritt Farm, located just down the road from the UNH campus, is the 300-acre, 80-cow organic Jersey research farm that is to be used for integrated organic dairy production research, and as a demonstration and education center for organic dairy farmers, farmers undergoing or considering transition to organic, and people interested in developing sustainable farming practices.

NODPA's Field Days are a great place to re-connect with friends and with what is going on in the organic dairy world. The Friday night banquet and producer meeting will be held at UNH and will give NODPA members the opportunity to hear about the past year's activities and have input into the future work of NODPA. As usual, we will have a trade show and on Saturday we will have a number of workshops. There will be a field trip to the dairy facility to look at their plans, the building they are constructing, the milking parlor plus a tour of their pas-

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from Pasture Symposium, page 1)

vide input into the process to safeguard the integrity of the organic program and the support of consumers. Broad agreement was reached on the joint position on pasture and herd replacements developed by NODPA, MODPA and WODPA. Agreement was a result of the discussions over the past five years that has taken place with farmers across the country both within processor meetings and independently in meetings initiated by NODPA and the Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture. The consensus was that although the existing rule clearly defined what was needed, the growth in the organic industry necessitated additional definition to ensure consistent interpretation of the standards by certifiers across the country. Farmers attending the meeting were aware that this would increase their paperwork but agreed that it was necessary to maintain the integrity of the NOP program and the accountability necessary to maintain the confidence of consumers. The meeting adopted the following two positions:

- a) Organic dairy livestock over 6 months of age must graze on pasture during the months of the year when pasture can provide edible forage. The grazed feed must provide significant intake, at minimum 30% of the dry matter intake (per cow per day) during the growing season but for no less than 120 days per year. This provision must be for all cows, whether dry or lactating. Certifiers must carefully monitor pasture stocking rates to ensure that the definition of pasture stated in the regulations is maintained, thus safeguarding soil and water quality and animal health.
- b) After a dairy operation has transitioned to organic production and been certified, all animals brought onto the operation must be certified as organically raised from the last third of gestation, just as all young stock on the farm need to be under continuous organic management. Whole herd conversion must be a one-time only opportunity, encouraging transition, but should not be used to continuously bring non-organic animals into an organic herd.

**NODPA Press Conference: Family
Farmers Say NO To Factory
Farms In Organic Dairy:
Cattle Must Be Managed Organically From
Birth And Have Access To Pasture**

With a banner proclaiming the need for pasture

as a backdrop, over 90 people attended the NODPA sponsored press conference that followed the morning meeting. The gathering was held in the lobby of the Symposium conference room and attracted attention from all those entering the meeting.

NODPA, MODPA and WODPA felt it necessary to have an open meeting involving the press and attendees at the Symposium as they were not offered an opportunity to have their representatives speak at the Symposium. (Farmers who were chosen to speak later on the Symposium's Farmer Panel were chosen by their affiliation to a processor rather than from independent producer groups).

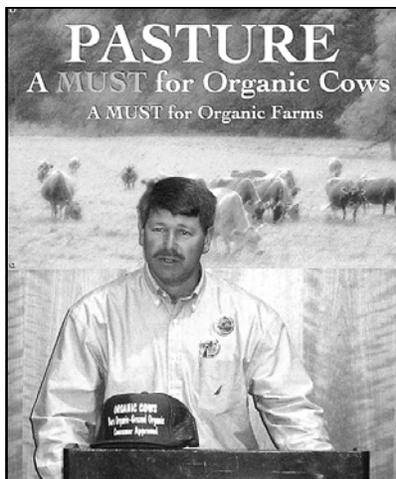
Speakers from NODPA and MODPA laid out their position, with Dave Johnson (NODPA Vice President) speaking on behalf of NODPA, "NODPA is here today to support consumers and producers who believe that organic milk comes from dairy cows that have been organic since birth, and have access to quality pasture during the grazing season." Steve Pechacek, president of the Midwest Organic Dairy Producers Association (MODPA), said that "It is imperative that the desires and expectations of organic consumers are met. Allowing a breach of the standards in order to bring more organic milk to market, by a handful of factory farms, is unfair both to consumers and to all the farmers who uphold the standards to the highest level."

Other farmers spoke of their own experiences, with a rousing speech from Ed Zimba (MI) about the need to make a decision on the pasture issue rather than keep bringing farmers back "for another four years" to make comments. Roman Stolfus, representing LOFCO, closed the meeting by urging farmers to take this opportunity to speak directly with NOSB members and NOP officials and then follow up by providing written comment to the USDA before June 12th.

Everybody attending had buttons ("Last Third - a must for organic farms" and "Pasture a must for Organic Cows") and hats ("Organic Cows - born organic-grazed organic-consumer approved").

Pasture Symposium

The Pasture Symposium started at 1:00 PM and was excellently facilitated by Bob Anderson (Strategic Solutions) who was assisted by Valerie Francis, National Organic Standards Board Executive Director. The Symposium was designed to inform the



Forrest Sticker, organic dairy producer from Wernersville, PA.

(Continued from Pasture Symposium, page 2)

NOP and NOSB about the issues related to the role of pasture in organic dairy animal management and organic dairy products for consumers. In the words of the USDA, “The symposium is intended to inform the NOSB and NOP of issues related to pasture and how the NOP regulations might be changed. The NOSB and NOP will hear from technical experts on pasture and dairy animal management, farmers, and certifying agents on their experiences with pasture, and be able to ask questions of the panelists. The symposium is intended to provide input to USDA as part of a rule-making exercise as it explores whether and how there should be a larger or a more specific role for pasture.” The public was allowed to ask questions (via cards) and some of them were asked by Bob Anderson, and all the questions received will be entered into the public record.

The symposium started with a presentation by George Kuepper of all the different resources available through the NCAT ATTRA program for grazing organic pastures and was followed by a great presentation from Lisa McCrory, who demystified the measurement of dry matter intake of pasture with practical examples from her work in Vermont. James Cropper from USDA NRCS outlined their pasture recommended practices highlighting the agency’s national standards which are used by all states as a base requirement and then each state adds different requirements. The discussions and questions from the NOSB centered on the practicality of measurement of pasture intake with general agreement that it is possible to measure consumption of pasture in a number of different ways using practices that are already developed and in use by different organizations.

The next panel featured presentations from two veterinarians, Ann Wells (Springpond Holistic Animal Health) and Linda Tikosfky (Cornell University) and two leading academics, Carl Polan (Dairy Science Department, Virginia Tech) and Kathy Soder (USDA Agricultural Research Service). The topics ranged from Dr. Ann Wells describing pasture as a base part of holistic animal health to Kathy Soder’s discussing factors affecting pasture dry matter intake. Dr. Tikosfky presented the results of more than a dozen studies, done both in the US and Europe, that showed positive benefits from pasture for dairy cow lameness, mastitis and milk quality, longevity, reproduction, behavior, and youngstock. Carl Polan pointed out that “there is enough survey and anecdotal evidence to be convincing that cows produce more

lactations when grazed”. Both Polan and Soder discussed the higher levels of conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), a potent anti-carcinogen, that is highly correlated with amount of pasture intake.

Wednesday morning, April 19th, started with a panel of farmers representing the larger processors and Albert Straus, CA, from Straus Family Creamery. The farmers from all parts of the country representing: Horizon, Ed Zimba, MI; H.P. Hood, Kathie Arnold, NY; Organic Valley, Jon Bansen, OR; Humboldt Creamery, Blake Alexandre, CA; and Natural by Nature, Roman Stoltzfus, PA, all supported the 120 days on pasture with a minimum 30% dry matter intake and said they could easily meet those requirements. Albert Straus from Straus Family Creamery said they could reach those standards in a good year and highlighted the fact that their cows graze lush

...“there is enough survey and anecdotal evidence to be convincing that cows produce more lactations when grazed”.

pastures, and that they have plenty of farm tours by their customers. Juan Velez, DVM and VP of Farm Operations at Aurora Organic Dairy, CO, focused his

talk on overall animal welfare. The farmers agreed that stricter accountability and enforcement of standards is needed. They also stressed that organic dairying is as much an art as a science and that USDA should look beyond scientific rationale to accepted industry practices in making their decisions.

A panel of certifiers followed who stressed the need for more clarity and guidance in how to interpret the standards, emphasizing that their job is to certify, or not, and its up to the USDA to deal with those that do not meet the required standards. There was some suggestion that perhaps the processors could assist with enforcement of standards.

The final presentation was about marketing. Margaret Wittenburg from Whole Foods quoted survey results from Whole Foods customers who said that they expected that the cows producing the organic milk that they purchase do graze pasture. Whole Foods also supported the maintenance of high standards even at the expense of a slower increase in supply.

Maryellen Molyneux from NMI Solutions reported on the USDA-commissioned survey that they conducted specifically for the Symposium. Their survey showed that consumer’s reasons for purchasing organic milk were based more on the perception that the cows did not receive antibiotics or growth hormones and were humanely treated. Grazing pasture came in fourth or fifth, although still high in their reasons. She also emphasized that organic milk was the “entry point” for

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from Pasture Symposium, page 3)

consumers who were starting to buy organic products and the organic industry needed to maintain a good supply of organic milk to maintain the growth of all organic sales. She was questioned about the basis of the survey questions; why the study contradicted Whole Foods survey and why had the large processors invested in cartons and promotional material that shows cows grazing lush pastures in order to sell their dairy products

As a wrap-up, the USDA thanked everyone and said they would review all the presentations and the questions people had submitted. They also asked interested parties to comment on the ANPR on pasture by June 12th. The NOP has posted the presentations and comments of most of the presenters at the Symposium (along with questions asked by the audience). Some of these should be very helpful in responding to all the questions posed in the ANPR on pasture.

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/PublicComments/DairyPastureSymposium/PublicCommentsDairySymposium.html>

The NOSB committee meeting immediately followed the USDA Symposium starting at 1:15 PM with a lot of people signed up for comment. The meeting agenda included reports from the Pet Food Task Force and the Aquaculture Working Group which, with public comment, meant an extended session that didn't finish until 9:00 PM on Wednesday. ♦

You can comment on the ANPR by:

- Mail: Comments may be submitted by mail to: Mark A. Bradley, Associate Deputy Administrator, Transportation and Marketing Programs, National Organic Program, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Room 4008-So., Ag Stop 0268, Washington, DC 20250.
- E-mail: Comments may be submitted via the internet to: NOP.Livestock@usda.gov.
- Internet: www.regulations.gov.
- Fax: Comments may be submitted by fax to: (202) 205-7808.
- Written comments on this ANPR should be identified with the docket number TM-05-14.

Commenter's should identify the issue or questions of this ANPR to which the comment refers. Comments should directly relate to issues or questions raised by the ANPR

We have Premium Quality Pasture Mixes
made with top quality

CERTIFIED ORGANIC SEED

All of these mixtures contain clovers to boost productivity

ORGANIC STAR

For dairy quality pasture on varying soil types

ORGANIC GREENFAST

Lots of tonnage fast for pasture or balage

DAIRY GREEN ORGANIC

Extremely high forage quality and palatability

A full line of untreated seed for the serious dairy or beef farmer: Alfalfa, corn, BMR sorghum sudan, forage type small grains, clovers, and leafy grasses.

CALL FOR A FREE PRODUCT INFORMATION GUIDE

866-687-6224

DEALER INQUIRIES WELCOME!



Helping the family farm prosper by specializing in high quality forages and grazing since 1993.
96 Paradise Lane, Roriks, PA 17572

Specializing in High Energy Forages for Healthier Cows & Profits

Neptune's Harvest Organic Fertilizers:

Products from the nutrient rich North Atlantic Ocean. Plus many new products including Fertilizers, Animal Feeds, Repellents and more...

- Increase Yields
- Raise Protein & Nutrition Levels
- Breakdown Manure Faster
- Create Healthy Soils and Animals
- Plus Many Other Benefits

"Our Products Work"



Call for FREE catalog and SAMPLE

1 (800) 259-4769

www.neptunesharvest.com