

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

NODPA



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Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance's 7th Annual Field Days **August 17 & 18, 2007 at Freund's Farm Market, East Canaan, CT.**

“A wall of organic milk” or carefully planned growth? Organic standards are being flouted or “10,000 cow organic dairy certification withdrawn”? Is this the silver bullet for New England dairy farmers or is the market now saturated? Join well known journalist Sam Fromartz, USDA grazing specialist Kathy Soder and the farmers that do the work as they discuss, debate and plan for the future of organic dairying in the Northeast.

This year's NODPA Field Days will take you through two states and many different years of experience in organic dairying. The event will be hosted by Rick Segalla and Morven Allen who farm on either side of the Connecticut/Massachusetts border and will take place at the Freund family dairy farm market and greenhouse.

“This is a critical time for the organic dairy industry,” says Maine farmer and president of NODPA, Steve Morrison, “and this two day event will educate us all about what the future holds, and how we can participate in decision making and influence the future of our industry. It promises to be a lively couple of days filled with information, discussion, education and networking.”

Registration for the event will start at noon on Friday, August 17th, with a Field Trip at 1:30 pm to Segalla Farm, led by Rick Segalla, Lisa McCrory, Sarah Flack and Kathy Soder (USDA ARS). Rick operates his family's 900-acre farm in Canaan CT, milking 115 cows and raising an equal number of young stock. The farm has been in the family since the early 1900's and today it is a corporation owned by Rick and his siblings. The farm consists of 300 acres wooded land, and the remaining tillable/open land is used for corn silage (65A), alfalfa (76A), grass hay (200A), and pasture (160A). Rick has raised soybeans in the past, but had some issues with flooding the last few years, which devastated the crop. Most of the dairy cows are Holsteins, though there are some Holstein/Jersey and Holstein/Hereford crosses. Cows are housed in a freestall barn, bedded with sand, and milked in a double six herringbone parlor. At one time, he was milking 200 cows 3 times a day, but reduced his cow numbers to match the readily available pasture on the farm. Rick's basic philosophy to farming is to keep the operation simple and not push the cows for high production. **“You need healthy soils to produce healthy crops and pastures”, says Rick, “Once you have that, you are sure to have healthy cows.”**

Following the farm tour, folks will gather at Freund's Farm Market, East Canaan, for the trade show and socializing with organic cheese & crackers, vegetable platters and beverages. The organic beef barbeque will start at 5:30 and will feature local and organic food. Steve Morrison, NODPA President, will welcome the Massachusetts Commissioner of Agricultural Resources and Connecticut Commissioner of Agriculture which will be followed by Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director, with “NODPA Year in Review.” There will be reports from other regions plus a report on the activities of the Federation Of Organic Dairy Farmers.

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The main event of the evening will be a focused on the future of organic dairying in the Northeast. NODPA is a leading advocate for organic dairy farmers and there will be an open forum on the “Future Activities and Priorities for NODPA” facilitated by Ed Maltby and past NODPA coordinators, Lisa McCrory and Sarah Flack. This conversation will be open to everyone and some of the topics covered will be:

- NODPA’s scorecard—how well are we doing?
- What is NODPA’s future role?
- What services should NODPA supply for organic dairy farmers in the future?
- How can we support each sector of the organic infrastructure to ensure the sustainability of organics in the Northeast?”

“With Organic “Summits” happening across the country we wanted to provide a forum for the northeast organic community to discuss how we can work together to provide a sustainable organic infrastructure for the future” said Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director.

NODPA will hold its annual meeting on Saturday morning at 7:00 am and at 9am, Steve Morrison will welcome **Sam Fromartz** author of *Organic, Inc.* and well-known journalist with a blog at www.chewswise.com. Sam’s presentation will give his perspective on the future of organics with his interactive presentation called **“Organics, now and in the future – what should we plan for?”**

After a short milk break, **Kathy Soder** USDA- Agricultural Research Service will explain why farmers must **“Think Like a Cow”- Understanding Grazing Behavior**. Cows eat what cows eat – because cows are cows. Right? Well, not quite... Cows learn how, what, when, and where to eat in many different ways. They learn from other cows, they learn through trial and error. In addition, our management practices can affect pasture diet selection and grazing time. Kathy will show how understanding why animals eat what they eat, why they forage the way they forage and why they act the way they act helps us better manage our forage and livestock.

Feeding grain is a hot topic for all dairy farmers in the northeast and Kathy’s talk will be followed by a panel of northeast experts to offer their perspectives on the organic grain market and how to plan for the future. The panel of **Mary-Howell and Klaas Marten, Rick Kersbergen, Heather Darby and Rick Dutil** will share their knowledge on the topic of **“Organic grain –Where are we today, where do we need to be in 5 years and what will it take to get there?”** Having spent the morning thinking of how to feed cows, there will be a lunch buffet for humans, and attendees can either watch or take part in this controlled experiment!

The last activity of Field Days will be a tour of Maple Shade Farm, Sheffield, MA hosted by Morven Allen and led by Sarah Flack, Lisa McCrory and Kathy Soder (USDA ARS). Morven has a 1200 acre grass-based dairy that finished its transition earlier this year. Morven will explain how he financed the purchase and start-up of this farm deep in the Berkshires where land is expensive and in high demand. The tour will cover his extensive, intensively managed pasture, some of which is in the flood plain that experienced widespread flooding this year. What excites Morven is supporting the next generation of organic farmers, **“I started farming with just two cows and was lucky enough to buy land under the Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program and I want to ensure that other farmers have the same opportunities that I did.”**

This years’ event is sponsored by **Horizon Organic, Organic Valley Family of Farms, Stonyfield Farm Inc and Lakeview Organic Grain.**

NODPA thanks the **supporters** of the Field Days: Bay State Organics, HP Hood LLC, River Valley Fencing, PA Certified Organic, Upstate Niagara Cooperative, Inc., NOFA-VT, Acres USA, Dairy Marketing Services, Fertrell, NOFA/MA, Brookfield Agricultural Services, Kings Agri-Seeds, North American Kelp, Washington Homeopathic Products, Farming Magazine, CISA, NOFA-NY and Natural by Nature.

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What is NODPA?

The mission of NODPA: **enable organic dairy family farmers, situated across an extensive area, to have informed discussion about matters critical to the well being of the organic dairy industry as a whole.**

NODPA is the largest grassroots organic dairy farmer organization in the country that is dedicated to organic dairy farmers' interests, not to creating new bureaucracy. It is not aligned with any one processor or cooperative and is therefore able to represent the views of many different farmers.

- NODPA is able to promote the interest of all organic farmers in the northeast without favoring any one production system that meets USDA organic standards.
- By logging onto the ODAIRY and OMILK list serve, farmers can share information and make up their own minds on different issues.
- The annual NODPA Field Days provide an educational setting with good food and good company.

NODPA supports:

1. Dairy farms in the northeast that farm organically.
2. Farmers' ability to network, and to exchange ideas, information and news.
3. Being an active part of organizations that represent all organic dairy farmers in the nation.

NODPA started in February 2001 at a summit meeting of organic dairy producers in the Northeast. These producers came together to discuss critical issues within the organic dairy industry including maintaining a sustainable milk price, the National Organic Program, alternative milk markets, and building effective communication lines between fellow producers in the Northeast and beyond. Since that first meeting, NODPA has:

- Administered NODPA which is the largest grassroots farmer organizations in the country that is dedicated to organic dairy farmers' interests, not to recreating new bureaucracy.
- Provided leadership in analyzing the activities of the National Organic Program and communicating that information to farmers, processors, industry representatives and consumers.
- Represented the interests of organic producers at national meeting and work closely with its sister organization in the Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (WODPA), and the Midwest Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (MODPA).
- Organized an Annual Meeting and Field Days Event each year at different locations in the northeast.
- Produced and distributed the *NODPA News* quarterly newsletter that goes out to over 1,300 subscribers and many different casual readers at events.
- Moderated Odairy, the organic dairy electronic discussion group, which has over 850 subscribing members. To become an Odairy subscriber, email: odairy-subscribe@yahooogroups.com.
- Updated and maintained a web site filled with resources including educational information on animal health and grazing management, industry news, certification, classifieds, calendar events, and a business directory. (www.organicmilk.org, www.nodpa.com)
- Become an active member of the Organic Trade Association, the National Organic Coalition and the Accredited Certifiers Association and promote producers interests nationally and in Washington DC.
- Been instrumental in forming the national Federation Of Organic Dairy farmers.
- Worked constantly to retain the integrity and consistent application of organic dairy standards in order to uphold consumer expectations and provide a sustainable future.
- Started and administered NODPA's Farmer Emergency Fund to assist organic dairy farmers.