

N DPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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Organic Industry News

Who or what sets the organic milk farmgate price?

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

The last six months have seen many changes within the organic dairy landscape, with class action lawsuits and headlines about abuse of standards, consumer trust and corporate greed. What hasn't made headlines is that organic dairy farms are starting to lose money, with many producers putting off necessary investment in their operation and

essential family expenses, and some deciding to return to conventional production. Despite an ongoing dialogue between NODPA,

FOOD Farmers and the processors that

has spelled out the impact of large increases in cost of farm inputs, processors have offered less than a 4% annual increase in base pay price. The latest contracts include a dazzling array of seasonal bonuses and benefits that will vary with each farm, weather conditions, and the price of purchased feed, requiring a post graduate degree in accounting and a crystal ball to evaluate all the permutations that will allow the producer to assess the impact on their net farm income. One of the main reasons many producers transitioned to organics was to get a higher and more stable pay price; however, we now have complicated contracts and coop agreements that change from month to month, may require specific forms of farm ownership structures, some with ill-defined animal welfare standards, and other market conditions

that may be bound by enforced confidentiality clauses.

The organic dairy industry is built on strong partnerships between the processors and producers in the knowledge that an economically sustainable pool of producers will provide the security those processors need to expand their markets and product lines. In 2005, producers

faced a similar situation where they were losing money and the processors responded with a staggered increase of up to \$4 per cwt over a four month period. In

January 2006, the

base price plus the Market Adjustment Premiums (MAP) for New England and the Northeast was averaging \$26/cwt for Horizon, HP Hood and Organic Valley.

In January 2008, the New England base price plus MAP for Horizon is projected at \$26.25, for HP Hood \$26.90 and for Organic Valley \$27, with seasonal bonuses that vary from \$3 for 4 months to as little as \$0.50 for two months. The effect on net income of the seasonal bonuses are difficult to assess on a region wide basis as the impact is subject to many variables, including unpredictable weather or crop conditions, and the price of purchased feed. Moving into the Midwest, farmgate prices for producers drop by as much as \$4.50/cwt even though USDA studies show that operating costs are around the same as the Northeast.

(Continued on page 18)

From The NODPA President

By Steve Morrison, NODPA President

On behalf of the NODPA Board and staff I would like to wish you all a prosperous and happy New Year. Many of us are glad to see the end of 2007 which was a challenging year for processors, producers and regulators. An ambitious procurement program by processors combined with a rush by producers to complete transition under the 80/20 rule created an excess of organic milk for the first time since 2001. Processors were able to minimize their losses by selling into a high conventional market but increases in farm inputs, especially fuel and purchased feed, has hit producers' profitability hard. 2007 also saw the authority of the NOP eroded and consumers' confidence in the organic seal threatened when a consent agreement between Aurora Organic Dairy and the USDA invalidated the NOP notice of noncompliance.

In 2008 we need the processors to respond to our call for a 20% increase in the "base + MAP" and continue the work on standards which began at the summit between processors and producers in CO last June. I ask that all producers write to your processor about an increase in our pay price that reflects our increasing cost of production as soon as possible. NODPA's mission is to promote a sustainable floor price for wholesale organic milk pro-

duced on family farms which is the keystone to the future of my farm and other family farms in the country. NODPA will continue to take a strong, proactive position in advocating for a realistic increase in pay price that can offset the many increases in our costs. 2008 is bringing changes to NODPA. We welcome our Midwestern colleagues to the NODPA News and the opportunity to increase collaboration as independent producer groups with a common purpose. A letter from the Midwestern Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (MODPA) president as well as their contact information is included on the inside back cover of this issue.

2008 is a critical year for organic dairy producers, so stay connected with each other and your regional ODPAs. ♦

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a NODPA Rep. or volunteering
as a Newsletter Co-editor?
Contact Ed Maltby**

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From The NODPA Desk

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

Welcome to 2008, a “year of change,” or so the presidential candidates tell me. The weather is definitely turning into a traditional New England winter, fulfilling the old adage that if you wait a day the weather will change, going from a minus temperature to 50 + degrees all in one day, not healthy for man nor beast.

No change in the snail-like speed of the legal system.

As expected, the class action lawsuit reported so well by Sam Fromantz in the last issue of NODPA News, progresses slowly through the courts. A hearing is set this month on motions seeking to consolidate nearly a dozen lawsuits filed against Aurora Organic Dairy for labeling milk as organic without meeting federal organic standards. The Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation will hear arguments about the motions on January 30th in Phoenix, as lawyers seek to consolidate the lawsuits in one court either in Colorado or Missouri. Sandie Regan, an organic consumer from Crown Point, Indiana, and a party to one of the lawsuits, commented that, “I am willing to pay more at the grocery store for organic milk.” This typifies the support that consumers have for organic producers and organic milk that is produced following the letter and intent of the organic regulations. NODPA supports consumers in their dedication to ensure the continued integrity of the USDA Organic Seal.

No change in clarifying and defining the access to pasture rule. USDA NOP Deputy Administrator Barbara Robinson assured the NOSB in November that the USDA lawyers have approved the regulatory text of the proposed rule. Once the preamble text is finished, the new rule will travel over to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Natural Resource Division, Agriculture Branch for final approval prior to publication. As of January 9th, it hasn't yet reached the OMB, so don't hold your breath for any publication before St Patrick's Day. NODPA, partnering with the National Organic Coalition, will meet with OMB in the next week to highlight the importance of the rule to the future economic sustainability of family farms.

No change in pay price! As reported in the front-page article there has been no significant increase in the base pay price and market adjustment premium for 2008 and no clear idea, and information on, how the price is being set. What we do know is that organic dairy farmers are hurting and failing to “make it,” with some leading producers changing processors or returning to conventional production. Many dairy farmers looked to organic production as a way to save their family farms, sold on the promise of predictable and fair farmgate prices that would give them and their families an adequate net income for a reasonable lifestyle and the ability to reinvest in their farms. That promise is failing to materialize. The price of farm inputs is spiraling out of the

control with increases of 20% and 30% in grain and fuel. However processors have offered the equivalent of less than an annual 4% increase. Producers are “sucking it up” and have looked to their own self sufficiency; cutting back on grain feeding; delaying essential repairs and equipment upgrades; working longer hours to save on non-family labor, and changing whatever practices they can to “become more efficient.” While these band aids may allow families to stay in business, or survive until they can turn their cows back out to pasture, a 4% increase is neither sustainable nor a fair return on time and investment. This issue is not, and never has been, producers against one brand or another, it needs to be addressed by the whole industry. Producers across the nation, who sell to many different brands, have determined that there

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MISSION STATEMENT: To enable organic family dairy 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.

is a need for a 20% increase in pay price in 2008 to return their farms to the level of net income they had in 2006. FOOD Farmers sent that message privately to all processors, Aurora Organic Dairy, DMS, and DFA in November 2007. It was ignored. Now the message needs to be taken, with one voice, to the retailers and consumers before we see bankruptcies and dairies returning to conventional milk production, which would be devastating

to the sustainability of the organic dairy community.

What is changing is NODPA! We have increased the number of newsletters to 6 per year and are revitalizing our web page, www.nodpa.com. We are increasing our cooperative relationship with MODPA and welcome many organic dairies in the Midwest as readers. We hope that this relationship will grow and benefit us all as we work together for the benefit of a sustainable and viable organic dairy community. 2008 will see increased activity with both MODPA and WODPA under our FOOD Farmers banner with greater representation in Washington with our NODPA's membership of the National Organic Coalition. NODPA has also received funding to improve the very popular and active Odairy listserve, work on issues surrounding the sustainability of organic dairy producers and investigate some of the many legal questions that we receive from producers.

WOW look out 2008, here we come! ♦



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Organic Feed Outlook

By Ernest Martin

As we start the New Year, farmers across the nation are taking stock of their feed inventories. Both conventional and organic farmers have plenty of reasons to worry about their feed situation. With the current rush to convert to ethanol production, livestock farmers are competing with the industry for grain. It was first thought that this wouldn't affect the organic grain supply, but with conventional corn prices reaching \$4.00 per bushel* and soybean prices close to \$12.00, farmers are not likely to convert acres to organic production. In fact, some farmers are considering switching organic acres back to conventional production. This lack of acres being transitioned is putting a crunch on the existing grain supply. With the growing number of dairy and poultry operations transitioning to organic production, we are now seeing grain prices that seem extremely high. In Ohio this past year, we have seen corn prices as high as \$14.00 a bushel. How high can grain prices go before it is no longer economically feasible to feed our cows?

It seems that we, as farmers, need to focus on this issue of grain prices and availability as it is becoming serious. For this article, I did an informal survey and gathered these responses:

- Lowell Rheinheimer, Organic Valley's Feed Pool Coordinator, says we need to do something to

provide a reliable source of feed for our members. Organic Valley is in the exploratory stage of starting a whole new feed pool to serve its members and possibly non-members, too.

- There is a fair amount of effort being put into recruiting organic growers without providing them with a consistent market for their feed-stuffs. And, more needs to be done to recruit and educate interested parties in converting to organic production.
- In talking to a few producers in Wisconsin, it seems grain is in short supply there, too. One farmer has tried to find corn, and was willing to pay \$10/bushel**, but had a hard time finding it for under \$11.50. Another farmer was able to purchase a couple hundred bushels of unprocessed grain, FOB, for \$10.00.
- In Ohio, where we usually have sufficient grain production, we are feeling pressure due to growing demand from the East and as a result of 2007's severe drought in northwest Ohio. One grain farmer reported averaging only half of his normal yield per acre this past year.
- At our farm, we purchased ear corn at harvest for about \$9.00. The latest price for shelled corn was \$10.40 FOB and \$22.00 for soybeans. Both corn and beans have been on a steady upward trend.

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New Tools For the Organic Dairy Farmer!

*By Liz Bawden, NODPA News co-editor
and NODPA State Rep*

The USDA has acted on recommendations from the NOSB this month, and has published a rule allowing nine new tools for organic dairy farmers and their veterinarians. As of December 12, 2007 (not retroactively), these substances are added to the National List: atropine, butorphanol, flunixin, furosemide, magnesium hydroxide, peroxyacetic/peracetic acid, poloxalene, tolazoline, and xylazine. In addition, the NOP acknowledged that epinephrine is a nonsynthetic substance that is not prohibited (thus allowed without appearing on the National List) for FDA approved uses of treating anaphylactic shock in cattle, horses, sheep, and swine.

The USDA...has published a rule allowing nine new tools for organic dairy farmers and their veterinarians. In addition, the NOP acknowledged that epinephrine, a nonsynthetic, is not prohibited, thus allowed without appearing on the National List

Atropine – Used as an antidote for organophosphate poisoning, also can be an anesthetic. Must have a valid veterinary prescription; meat withdrawal is 56 days; milk discard is 12 days.

Butorphanol - Narcotic pain killer; used in surgical situations. Must have a valid veterinary prescription; meat withdrawal 42 days; milk discard 8 days.

Flunixin - Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory, also known as Banamine, used to treat fever, pain, inflammation, and the effects of endotoxins. NOP requires double the FDA withdrawal times.

Furosemide - Diuretic. Used for udder edema. NOP requires double the FDA withdrawal times.

Magnesium hydroxide – Used as an antacid and laxative. Must have a valid veterinary prescription.

Peroxyacetic/peracetic acid - Used for sanitizing facilities and processing equipment.

Poloxalene - May only be used in the emergency treatment of bloat.

Tolazoline - May only be used to reverse the effects of sedation and analgesia caused by Xylazine. Must have a valid veterinary prescription. Meat withdrawal 8 days; milk discard 4 days.

Xylazine - Sedative. May only be used in the existence of an emergency. Must have a veterinary prescription. Meat withdrawal 8 days; milk discard 4 days.

Also clarified were questions regarding "excipients", inert ingredients in some medical formulations that improve the delivery of the active ingredients. These

could include fillers, extenders, dilutents, wetting agents, solvents, emulsifiers, sustained-release matrices, etc. Excipients will be allowed only for use in the manufacture of drugs, not allowed to be added to feed or feed supplements. Allowed excipients will be those identified by the FDA as Generally Regarded As Safe, or otherwise approved by the FDA. As always, talk to your certifier before using a new product to make sure it will be allowed.

In the same bulletin of the Federal Register, the NOP revised their initial decision to reject Moxidectin as an antibiotic, and said they were initiating "proposed rulemaking to authorize Moxidectin as a livestock medication to control internal parasites". It is NOT allowed yet, but it would appear that it's likely to come. (We'll hope it will be faster than the

pasture policy!)

A big vote of thanks to Dr. Hubert Karreman, Kevin Englebert, and the other members of the NOSB for their efforts in pushing forward these recommendations! ♦

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Pennsylvania's Milk Cover-Up – and Reconsideration

By Samuel Fromartz

In a controversial decision, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture announced in October it would severely restrict the wording on milk labels – including those from organic milk processors. The department told 19 dairies that they could not use language such as "Our farmers' pledge: no artificial growth hormones," or "From cows not treated with the growth hormone rBST," starting January 1, 2008.

This decision marked the first time that a state had ignored federal labeling guidelines and forced a far more restrictive standard on its dairy producers.

It blocked the rights of organic processors to describe production practices mandated by law. It undermined processors in the conventional market selling milk produced without artificial hormones. And it undercut a clear trend in recent years: the desire by consumers to seek out milk produced without synthetic growth hormones.

But an 11th hour protest from consumer groups, farmers and dairy processors and associations put the decision on hold for at least a month.

Surveys clearly show consumers desire more transparency — not less — on milk labels. Lake Research Partners found 80 percent of consumers supported the labeling of rBGH-free milk products. The Natural Marketing Institute found that 53 percent of shoppers look for dairy products free of artificial hormones. And Opinion Research found 81 percent would prefer to buy dairy products derived from cows that do not receive synthetic hormones, assuming little or no pricing difference.

So why is Pennsylvania swimming against the tide? Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary Dennis Wolff said the action was promoted by concerns among a panel of "consumer groups," farmers and processors, though the action was entirely in line with the policy position of Monsanto, which makes synthetic bovine growth hormone (rBGH or rBST). Although the Food and Drug Administration approved rBGH in 1993, it has been banned in the European Union, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. It is also banned in organic systems. Pennsylvania is the fourth largest dairy state, with an estimated 560,000 cows, according to figures cited on Voices of Central Pennsylvania, a web site. An estimated 30 percent, or 168,000 cows, are injected with Monsanto's synthetic growth hormone, Posilac.

Wolff argued that since the synthetic bovine growth hormones are indistinguishable from naturally occurring hormones and cannot be detected in milk, a label that

indicates their absence would be impossible to verify. All milk is also tested to be free of antibiotics, so there's no reason to label their absence either.

But Pennsylvania's action also limited statements about production practices, making it impossible for consumers to identify producers who follow a regime they agree with. Based on the ruling, a farmer cannot say on a Pennsylvania milk label, "I don't use rBGH or antibiotics on my farm" – even though this statement may be factually correct.

Organic milk companies have not been exempt from the action. Horizon Organic has gotten letters from the state objecting to its labeling

On organic farms, such production claims can be verified through the yearly visits by inspectors. Conventional milk producers can also issue legal affidavits about their practices under penalty of fraud. But Pennsylvania closed off this avenue by saying that such affidavits were now unacceptable as a basis for

label claims.

Organic milk companies have not been exempt from the action. Horizon Organic has gotten letters from the state objecting to its labeling.

This debate isn't new, but it has gained steam as companies, responding to consumer demand, sought out milk produced without rBGH and crimped Monsanto's market for the drug. Dean Foods, the largest milk processor in the nation, has switched some plants to rBGH free milk production. Starbucks, Safeway, and Kroger are going that way too; Chipotle Mexican Grill had announced plans to convert its entire cheese supply by the end of the year. Many natural food stores have long sold milk produced without synthetic hormones.

By stating they avoid milk produced with rBGH, these companies are following federal directives on the matter. As early as 1994, after the Food and Drug Administration approved Monsanto's synthetic growth hormone, the FDA allowed production claims, such as "from cows not treated with rBST" – precisely the wording used by many organic dairy processors.

For the past several years, Monsanto has sought to limit these absence claims arguing they disparage com-

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(Continued from Pennsylvania's Milk Cover-Up, page 7)

peting milk. In 2003, Monsanto sued Oakhurst Dairy in Maine over a label statement that read, "Our farmers' pledge: no artificial growth hormones." The suit was settled out of court, when Oakhurst added the language: "FDA states: No significant difference in milk from cows treated with artificial growth hormone."

Last year, Monsanto appealed to the FDA to review the approved label wording for rBGH and also sought action from the Federal Trade Commission regarding advertising of rBGH free milk.

The FDA declined to act, noting that it would only intervene in cases where fraudulent claims – as opposed to product descriptions – were made on the milk label. In dismissing Monsanto's complaint, the FTC also found no instance where a national company made false claims about rBST.

Having failed in the federal arena, it now appears Monsanto is lobbying state governments to cover up the labels and reduce consumer choice. Pennsylvania was the first to fall, but in a particularly encouraging development, many consumer groups joined with dairy processors objecting to the action. Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture also initiated a letter writing campaign to the governor, who was caught off-guard by the Agriculture Commissioner's decision.

The governor put on the brakes in December, reconvening a committee to consider the matter. Any action of label would be delayed for at least another month. But if Pennsylvania decides to go forward in February – and other states follow suit – a farmer's right to free speech and consumer's right to choice will be dealt a blow. Expect more news on letter writing campaigns and possible law suits ahead.

Samuel Fromartz is the author of Organic, Inc.: Natural Foods and How They Grew (Harcourt, 2006). His website is at <http://www.fromartz.com> and he blogs at <http://www.chewswise.com>. ♦



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The AgroFuels Craze

*By John Kinsman, Adapted from the June 2007 magazine
"GRAIN" (www.grain.org)*

What is behind the rapid expansion of biofuels across much of the globe? In the process of gathering material from colleagues and social movements from around the world, the editors of GRAIN discovered that the stampede into biofuels is causing enormous environmental and social damage, much more than they realized earlier. Precious ecosystems are being destroyed and hundreds of thousands of indigenous and peasant communities as well as family farmers are being thrown off their land. Many of us believe that the prefix bio, which comes from the Greek word for "life", is entirely inappropriate for such anti-life devastation. So, following the lead of non – governmental organizations and social movements in Latin America, they will not be talking about biofuels and green energy. Agrofuels is a much better term to express what is really happening: agribusiness producing fuel from plants to sustain a wasteful destructive global economy.

The agrofuels lobby and the Inter-American Development Bank are targeting several hundred million hectares of land for agrofuels production in Latin America, Southeast Asia and Africa. We are talking about expropriation on an unprecedented scale. With millions of people hungry and starving in these countries, diverting land away from food production is a crime of horrifying proportions.

We must all be taking a closer look at the way corporations are using this stampede into agrofuels to extend their takeover of world farming. We are experiencing a veritable frenzy of investment as companies from different sectors leap on the bandwagon. An unparalleled process of mergers, takeovers, and alliances is tightening the grip of a relatively small group of huge interlinked agri-industrial groups. Many analysts believe that the market is heading for a crisis of over production. Once the bubble has burst, only the most powerful groups will remain, thus furthering the process of concentration.

The conclusion is pretty much the same around the world: the push for agrofuels amounts to nothing less than the reintroduction and reinforcement of the old colonial plantation economy, redesigned to function under the rules of the modern neoliberal globalized world. Recent studies show that the slave-like working life of sugar cane workers in Brazil is 10 to 12 years; the same as overworked slaves during the slave era in the United States.

One of the main causes of global warming is agro-industrial farming itself, and the global food system

(Continued on page 17)

Big Brother in the Barnyard

By John Peck and John Kinsman

A few years ago farmers were informed of the USDA's National ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM (NAIS). We were led to believe that it was a grand plan to protect us from the Bio Terrorists, Mad Cow, Avian Flu and a whole host of other dangers. Enticed by millions in federal dollars, some states are moving full speed ahead with their own mandatory NAIS programs even though it remains "voluntary" at the federal level. For instance, in Wisconsin premises registration, stage one of NAIS, has been subcontracted (along with millions in taxpayer money) to the private Wisconsin Livestock Identification Consortium (WLIC). Dairy farmers were warned that they would lose their milk license if they were not registered by May 1st, 2007, but widespread noncompliance and grassroots resistance forced the state to back off on this deadline.

Meanwhile, Wisconsin farmers who were registered against their will by cheese plants fearing loss of milk supply remain unsuccessful in their repeated attempts to be removed from the "voluntary" NAIS database. Many farmers, particularly the Amish, have been opposed to NAIS from the beginning as a violation of their religious freedom. In response, Free Wisconsin Pastures has been formed by Family Farm Defenders with the support of the Center for Law and Religious Freedom to pursue a legal challenge to Wisconsin's mandatory premises registration legislation.

In June 2007 James Landis, a Mennonite farmer in Pennsylvania, filed a lawsuit against the state's Department of Agriculture, claiming that premises registration violated his religious freedom. Mr. Landis had been blocked from selling his Muscovy ducks in New York City because he was not part of the "voluntary" NAIS program. Later in 2007 beginning dairy farmers in Wisconsin had been notified by the Department of Agriculture that they will not be issued a license to sell milk if they do not register their premises.

Michigan has been particularly aggressive at registering farmers against their will and the electronic microchip (RFID) tagging of all cattle – stage two of NAIS – was mandated by March 2007. On September 18th, Sheriff George Lassiter warned grass-based UP farmer, Greg Niewendorp, that the Michigan Department of Agriculture had actually issued a warrant for agents to enter his property, conduct TB tests, and microchip his 19 cows without his permission.

Michigan has been particularly aggressive at registering farmers against their will and the electronic microchip (RFID) tagging of cattle...was mandated by March 2007

Meanwhile, a September 9th, 2007 AP story by Todd Lewan confirmed what many have suspected for awhile, namely that implanted RFID microchips cause cancer. When the FDA approved RFID chip as "safe" for humans in January 2005, the agency basically ignored veterinary and toxicology studies dating back to the 1990's, linking chip implants to malignant tumors in lab mice and rats. Shortly after FDA approval of RFID chips, Tommy Thompson left his post as Bush's Secretary of Health and Human Services, to become a board member of VeriChip Corp. and Applied Digital Solutions. It would be ironic – to say the least – if NAIS ends up causing more cancer than it pretends to prevent.

For more information, go to the website:

www.NoNAIS.org

John Kinsman is an organic dairy farmer located in Southwestern WI, John E. Peck, is the Executive Director, Family Farm Defenders - P.O. Box 1772, Madison, WI 53701 tel./fax. 608-260-0900

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Livestock Issues Discussed at the NOSB Meeting, November 2007

By Emily Brown Rosen

The NOSB met from Nov. 27-30 in Arlington VA and tackled a number of issues of interest to livestock producers. As usual, it was a forum for the public to express their views, and also to hear from NOP as to their current thinking and latest actions.

NOP Update

Most importantly, NOP Deputy Administrator Barbara Robinson gave an update on progress on the pasture and replacement animal rules, stating that: "We have made significant progress in rule making." She explained that for the proposed rule on pasture, the rule text was done, and they were finishing the preamble analysis that is required to deal with various federal regulations, such as the Regulatory Flexibility Act, Paper Work Reduction Act, etc. USDA attorneys have given clearance on the regulatory text part. Once the other parts are finished, it must go to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review, which she described as "a tough sell." It is considered a "significant" rule, which means OMB scrutinizes it harder, and can take up to 60 days to review it. She is

planning to meet with OMB to help facilitate the process. A separate rule on origin on livestock (dairy replacements) is in the works, but is not as far along. The NOP hopes to publish it right after the pasture proposed rule.

Robinson also announced plans for a new "electronic reading room" that will publicly post all official communications related to certification, including audits, appeals, complaints, notices of noncompliance, audit reports, appeals, complaints, NOP responses, etc. She acknowledged that NOP has not been operating transparently enough, and said "we have contributed to a growing climate of mistrust by not publishing this information." Currently the NOP is overwhelmed by Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests for this type of information, and this is absorbing a huge amount of staff time. She hopes to have this reading room started early in 2008. Hopefully this new practice will illuminate issues in a more timely manner regarding compliance problems, (such as the recent Aurora Dairy consent order) and provide certifiers and farmers with access to current NOP rule interpretations.

J. Burton Eller, Deputy Undersecretary of Agriculture for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, also spoke about the National Animal ID program. This is now a voluntary program and is underway, with many premises registered, and RFID tags are being used in ears. He reminded the audience that this program was started to help with BSE (mad cow disease) trace back, but he thinks it could be useful for identifying organic animals, as well as grass-fed animals. The system is set up in a way that could handle these categories easily, and he sees this as a foolproof way to guarantee an audit trail and prevent fraud.

Animal Welfare

The Board hosted two specially invited guests to speak about animal welfare. The first was Kathleen Merrigan, former NOSB member, and then the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service Administrator during the time of the final NOP rule publication, currently a professor at Tufts University. She urged the board to be active on this topic, saying "The time is right to work on this now." She noted it is much better to work on the issue before more unregulated growth in the industry occurs. She suggested staking out a simple position on five basic standards that could be easily incorporated:

Poultry - Layer birds must have perches.

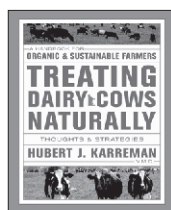
Poultry - Induced molting by feed and water withdrawal is prohibited

Beef cattle- In feedlot situation, must have enough space to lie down

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(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from Livestock Issues NOSB Meeting, page 10)

Beef cattle - Tail docking should be prohibited.
Swine – gestation crates should be prohibited

Some board members thought that NOSB could go further than this, and that consumers assume these positions are already covered. (Most certifiers would agree they are incorporated). Hue Karreman, livestock committee chair, indicated that welfare issues are high priority for his committee.

A second presenter on welfare was Margaret Wittenberg, Vice President of Whole Foods Markets. She described the Whole Foods program to develop and implement a five-level labeling program to rate suppliers for animal welfare. They sponsored a multi-stakeholder group, including animal advocates, producers, scientists, auditors, and staff to develop standards. They also started a foundation that funds research on alternative production methods. They have recently decided to establish a new certification organization that will be independent from Whole Foods in order to certify to these standards.

She urged these standards to be used as a model for organic standards, however it is not clear how a multi-level approach could work for organic regulations. WF standards will be published once the program is launched in 2008.

Aquaculture

The first day of the meeting was dedicated to a special symposium on organic aquaculture, with a focus on two unresolved issues: can organic farmed fish be raised in net pens in open water, and can they be fed non-organic fish meal. The fish meal issue has ramifications for all livestock, as this would require an exemp-

tion to the OFPA requirement that organic livestock must be fed 100% organic feed. Industry experts who presented at the symposium generally thought it would not be possible to raise most species without some amount of fish meal and fish oil in the diet, though there were presentations on a number of alternative plant and microbial sources of essential lipids. Environmental groups cautioned against the depletion of wild fish stocks for feed, contamination of fish meal as feed, and dangers to native species from parasites and pollution spread by fish farmed in pens in oceans and rivers. The NOP indicated they have not moved forward yet on rule writing for initial NOSB recommendations to allow fish raised in ponds or closed systems with organic feed. Once standards are written for organic aquaculture, any fish meal used as livestock feed will need to be only from organic sources. NOSB expects to make final recommendations on these issues at its next meeting, in May 2008.

Emily Brown Rosen is Policy Director for Pennsylvania Certified Organic, an accredited certification agency. She has also worked for NOFA-NJ and OMRI in technical support and materials review for organic farmers and handlers. ♦

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MOSES Launches New Midwest Organic Farmer Mentoring Program

By Harriet Behar, MOSES Organic Outreach Coordinator

A new Midwest initiative that links up experienced organic farmer mentors with farmers wishing to begin organic production has been launched by Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES). This one-year pilot program will team nine successful organic farmers with two transitioning farmers each and provide mentoring in dairy, fresh produce, and field crops. Recruitment of both mentors and farmers in the Upper Midwestern states, who are interested in having an experienced mentor or being mentored, is occurring during late December 2007 and early January 2008.

Experienced organic farmers have repeatedly stated their long-term success relates back to their own mentoring by an organic farmer when they were getting started. Having access to a mentor provides both guidance and encouragement and reduces the

Having access to a mentor provides both guidance and encouragement and reduces the stress involved when transitioning to a

stress involved when transitioning to a new system of production. The Midwest program is being coordinated by Harriet Behar, long-time Wisconsin-based organic inspector who directs the MOSES Outreach Program. The new MOSES initiative is patterned after a successful California pilot program that started with nine mentors and has now been expanded to provide up to 25 organic farmer mentors.

In addition to the one on one mentoring, both mentors and mentees will be attending the Organic Farming Conference and the Organic University in 2008 and 2009, held in late February in LaCrosse, WI. The MOSES outreach coordinator, Harriet Behar, will be keeping in touch with all participants, making sure they are aware of other organic educational activities available in their region, including field days and workshops. Harriet will also be available to answer any questions.

Mentors will complete a profile form and new organic farmers will complete an application, helping MOSES pair them up according to type of production and region. This program is different from internship programs; the new farmer is not required to help on the mentor's farm, unless they both feel this would be beneficial. Instead, the mentor will visit the mentored farmer's home at least once and be available for phone calls and emails as mutually agreed. This mentorship will last at least one year, and will be for producers in one of the following three categories: Crops, Dairy or Vegetables. The mentor will receive expenses and a stipend per each mentored farmer they help. The mentored farmer will be asked to pay a small fee. Since this is a pilot project, all participants will be asked to cooperate in providing progress reports in order that MOSES can document what works well and what may need to be changed. This information will be used in developing future mentoring initiatives.

For more information contact Harriet Behar, MOSES outreach coordinator, 608-872-2164, harriet@mosesorganic.org, 43299 Patton Road, Gays Mills WI 54631. Or click on the MOSES mentoring project link on our website (www.mosesorganic.org) for profile or application forms. Please send all correspondence to Harriet, although other MOSES personnel can answer questions as well.

Thank you for your interest! ♦

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Japanese Millet and Camelina: New Crops on our Farm

By Brent Beidler

Regina and I purchased our 145 acre dairy farm in Randolph Center, Vermont in 1998. It was during our first year on the farm that we experimented with a new crop called Japanese millet. I had hired an older, local farmer for some tillage as I wanted to plant a summer annual crop for supplemental grazing during the middle portion of the summer when perennial pasture growth slows down. The neighbor recommended that I try Japanese millet as he had found it to be a palatable feed that was more tolerant of wet soil conditions than sorghum/sudan. Japanese millet forage is also not subject to the prussic acid poisoning concerns and can be safely grazed or ensiled even if drought stressed or frosted.

We typically have planted a small portion of our pastures to millet each year. We find it to be a good complement to the grass/clover pastures that are the mainstay for our 40 cow milking herd. During the hot summer days the cows can quickly fill up on the 12-24 inch tall plants then retreat to the shade for a few hours. We generally alternate every 12 hours between millet and perennial pastures as this gives a balanced menu for the herd. The millet is planted in early to mid June after the soil temperatures have warmed above 60 degrees. It is possible to take a cut of hay or graze the field before preparing the seedbed. The normal seeding rate for a monocrop of the forage is about 25 lbs/Acre. The millet generally grows quickly and is ready to graze in 40-50 days after planting. We start grazing when the millet is about 18 inches tall and try to leave a 6 inch residual height so that the plants can regrow quickly. The plants will continue growing until killing frost. In addition to grazing we have sometimes made wrapped round bales of millet and found it to be a high energy feed source.

During the 2007 cropping season we started growing millet for seed as well as forage. We were aware that

there are no certified organic seed sources and hoped to grow our own seed as well as develop a potentially new enterprise for the farm. We received a Farmer SARE grant to study millet seed production in the Northeast. Heather Darby, UVM professor and extension agronomist, served as an advisor to the project. The experimental aspect of the grant looked at the mechanical harvesting of the seed. We tried two harvest methods – a) direct



Cows grazing millet

harvesting with a combine or b) swathing and drying the crop before combining. We found that it was possible to direct harvest the crop without the added step of windrowing. We were surprised that it took until mid October for the millet seed to ripen and dry down enough for harvest. We also baled up the straw and it is providing wonderful bedding for the milking herd this winter. We were pleased with our first year effort at seed production and now are in the process of cleaning and bagging seed to sell.

Another new crop that we planted for the first time this year was camelina. Camelina is an oilseed crop valued for its omega-3 attributes and as a possible source for biodiesel. It contains 34 -36 percent omega-3 oil and can be safely stored at room temperature without going rancid. Camelina originated in Northern Europe and has been used there for centuries. In recent decades camelina production has been overshadowed by the development of higher yielding oil crops like canola.



Harvesting millet

Our milk coop, CROPP/ Organic Valley has been investigating camelina as a potential biodiesel crop for its farmers. In addition to providing oil, the meal byproduct

makes camelina production particularly attractive to livestock producers. Camelina was selected over other oil crops because it is widely adaptable and more weed suppressive which makes it suitable for organic production. In addition it is well known that many other oilseed crops like canola and soybean are dominated by GMO genetics. CROPP looked to camelina to be a non-GMO alternative

(Continued on page 14)

(Continued from *Japanese Millet and Camelina*, page 13)

that perhaps would “fly below the radar” of the biotech giants and not be subject to contamination concerns. I have, however, recently learned that GMO camelina varieties are being developed to exploit the high omega-3 properties.

CROPP provided camelina seed for experimental plantings on 5 farms around the country. On our farm we planted a small half acre plot on May 5th with a seeding rate of 10 lbs/A. The seed is tiny, resembling alfalfa, but it emerged very quickly and competed well with weeds.

We harvested the crop in late August and had a yield of about 1200 lbs/acre. There was considerable amount of seed lost due to the small field size and combine adjustment losses. Some of the seed was pressed for oil at Stateline Farm in North Bennington, Vermont. John Williamson (owner of Stateline Farm) has been growing different oilseed crops on this farm for a few several



camelina seed heads

years. John was happy to try pressing the camelina. He was pleased with the oil yield and pressing characteristics of camelina and is going to grow some himself next year.

The cows at our farm have recently been trying out the high protein camelina meal as a supplement. They find it palatable and we hope to have a sample tested for nutrient composition in the near future. The humans on the farm are also trying out the camelina oil for salads and cooking.

We are encouraged by the camelina experiment and have enough seed saved for a much larger planting in 2008. We are happy to share more specifics about our experiences related to these crops to anyone with interest.

Brent and Regina Beidler are certified organic dairy producers in Randolph Center, VT and Heather Darby is a UVM Extension Agronomist and Nutrient Management Specialist located in St Albans, VT (heather.darby@uvm.edu, Phone:(802)524-6501) If you are interested in purchasing certified organic millet seed, contact Brent and Regina Beidler, Beidler Family Farm, Randolph Center VT, (802) 728-5601, bbeidler@verizon.net ♦

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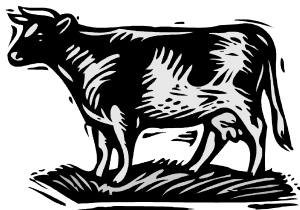
(Continued from Organic Feed Outlook, page 4)

No one knows what will happen later this summer, but many fear that farmers will have to reduce grain feeding or simply run out. Now is the time to seriously focus on access to organic grain so that our organic dairy operations won't be hurt in the future and that organic grain producers have the security of knowing that there will be a steady demand for their grain, as well as a solid infrastructure for distribution.

Ernest Martin is an Organic Valley Dairy Producer in North Central Ohio. He and his wife, Norma, own and operate a 70-cow grass based dairy with the help of their 6 young children, ages 2 to 13. Ernest serves on the MODPA Board of Directors.

*A bushel of soy beans weighs 60 pounds, making a ton equal to 33.3 bushels.

**A bushel of dry shelled corn weighs 56 pounds, making a ton equal to 35.7 bushels. ♦



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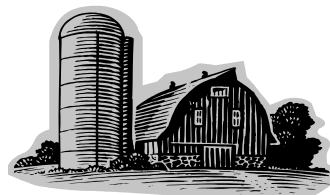
Horizon Organic® Presents First-Ever Organic Workshop at FFA

Many of Horizon Organic's farmer partners across the United States have children who are involved with Future Farmers of America (FFA). In support of these families' involvement with FFA, the Organic Stewardship team at Horizon Organic began negotiations with FFA for program development that would bring information about organic agriculture to high school educators.

At this year's 80th National FFA convention in Indiana, Horizon Organic presented two workshops on "Organic Farming: From the Soil to the Standards." Horizon Organic's presentation was the first time in FFA history that a professional development workshop focused on organic. Themes for the presentations were a brief history of organic, the creation of the National Organic Program, organic certification process, and an overview of what is required on an organic operation. Robyn Nick of Horizon Organic was joined by Elizabeth Martens, a high school sophomore at Penn Yan Academy in New York, and daughter of Klaas and Mary-Howell Martens. Elizabeth is a member of the Penn Yan FFA; her presentation focused on the FFA

Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) she had completed, and her work with organic dairy heifers. For those of you who don't know the Martens family, Elizabeth lives on a 1,400 acre certified organic crop farm, and bought her first 2 calves when she was 12. Two years ago, she partnered with her older brother to buy eight more heifers, receiving money for the project through an FSA youth loan. She successfully paid off her first loan and is now in the process of paying off her second loan. She currently has 17 organic cows.

Those attending the workshops appreciated Horizon Organic's willingness to educate about organic agriculture, as well as the opportunity to meet a bright and talented FFA student, who is deeply involved in organic agriculture. "It was a great opportunity to show teachers how their students can learn about and get involved in organic farming," said Elizabeth. ♦



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(Continued from *The AgroFuels Craze*, page 8)

associated with it. Although it is scarcely ever mentioned, farming is responsible for almost 14% of greenhouse gas emissions. Within farming, the largest single cause is the use of chemical fertilizers, which introduce a huge amount of nitrogen into the soil and nitrous oxide into the air. And a large part of global transport, which is responsible for a further 14% of emissions, stems from the way in which the agro-industrial complex moves large quantities of food from one continent to another. It is abundantly clear that we can halt climate change only by challenging the absurdity and the waste of the globalized food system as organized by the transnational corporations. Far from contributing to the solution, agrofuels will only make a bad situation worse.

John Kinsman is a 4th generation farmer from Saul County in Southwestern Wisconsin. He presently serves as secretary of the Midwest Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (MODPA) board, president of Family Farm Defenders, secretary of the National Family Farm Coalition and board member of American Raw Milk Producers Pricing Association. An organic dairy farmer, his operation also includes managed organic forestry acres. Rotational grazing has been part of the operation for over 40 years. ♦



More Organic Milk Sought in Northeast

Farms should be sure to have a market secured before beginning the 12 month herd transition.

CROPP Cooperative~Organic Valley Family of Farms, the nation's largest farmer owned organic marketing cooperative continues to grow its dairy producers base now and into the future in New York, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia and all of the New England States. Current market conditions underscore the need for our founding principles of supply management. Near term, we have ample milk supply and we are now directing producers interested transitioning to organic dairy production to begin their 12 month transition no sooner than the Fall of 2007. We offer a stable, competitive organic milk pay price once certified organic and a complete year of Transitional Funding for new farmers during herd's transitional year as well as Staff Veterinarians, Farmers Relations staff support, the Organic Trader, and inclusive communications. In addition, our Farm Resource department can help refer, source and finance feed purchases for your operation.

In New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia contact Peter Miller, Northeast Region Dairy Pool Coordinator, at (888) 444-6455, x3407 to leave a voice message, or mobile at (612) 801-3506, peter.miller@organicvalley.coop. In New England States contact John Cleary, New England Dairy Pool Coordinator, at (888)-444-6544 x3330 to leave voice mail, or mobile at (612)-803-9087, or email at john.cleary@organcivalley.coop

HP Hood continues to look for high quality farms for our organic milk supply. We are eager to talk to farms that are ready to begin their herd transition in the fall of 2007. Our routes encompass a number of Northern Tier States (ME, NH, VT, NY, PA, OH, MI, WI, MN, IA) and we would like to hear from you. Our support of sustainable agriculture, a signing bonus and transition assistance have helped many already. Please call Karen Cole, HP Hood Milk Procurement, karen.cole@hphood.com or at 1-866-383-1026.

Upstate Niagara Cooperative, a dairy farmer owned, full service cooperative headquartered in Buffalo, NY is continuing to **grow** its supply of organic milk. The members of Upstate Niagara Coop

own and operate 4 milk plants in Buffalo, Niagara Falls and Rochester. Our members are interested in producing organic milk and processing organic dairy products. We currently process & package fresh, not ultra-pasteurized organic milk in our Rochester Milk Plant. If you are interested in learning more about Upstate Niagara Coop, please visit our website at www.upstategfarms.com or contact me. Enjoy your day.....Bill Young 800-724-6455 byoung@upstateniagara.com

LOFCO continues to look for milk in PA/MD, particularly southeast PA. The market is strong. Please contact Levi Miller at 717/661-8682 or Jerry McCleary at 717/577-8809.

Dairy Marketing Services (DMS) continues to market more than 50 percent of organic milk in the Northeast. DMS was established to deliver efficiency in services and enhance returns from the market directly back to producers at a minimal cost. It offers a wide range of services to producers such as health insurance and workers compensation through Agri-Services Agency, leases and loans from Agri-Max Financial, farm inputs and supplies through Eagle Dairy Direct, and herd management software from Dairy One. For more information, please contact Dave Eyster at 1-888-589-6455, ext. 5409 or david.eyster@dairymarketingservices.com.

Horizon Organic continues to grow its producer partner network in the East and Midwest. Horizon Organic offers competitive pay, transitional funds during the 12 months transition of the herd and long-term contracts. Producers in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Michigan, Virginia and Kentucky contact Cindy Masterman 888-648-8377; New York, Maryland, Ohio and Pennsylvania contact Peter Slaunwhite 800-381-0980; Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois and Indiana contact Mike Bandstra 877-620-8259.

United Ag Services in Seneca Falls, NY is looking for organic milk in NY and northern PA. Please call 800-326-4251.

Any buyers looking for organic milk who would like to be listed in this column for the March 2008 issue, please email the desired text to Ed at ednodpa@comcast.net or call 413-772-0444 by February 18th 2008

(Continued from Organic Milk Farmgate Price, page 1)

The determination of pay price in other parts of the country follows the same pattern as in the Northeast, with little variance between processors. There are many “farmyard” deals that are made for higher base prices if producers are nearer to milk processing plants or on a route that is under-subscribed. Some of these deals are reported to be as high as \$30 per hundred as a base price plus MAP and have confidentiality clauses to prevent producers exchanging information, which seems to happen anyway. Processors also “exchange” milk with each other from areas in surplus (the west for example) to satisfy markets in the east.

Table 1: Overview of pay-price in New England

	Horizon Organic		Organic Valley*		HP Hood	
	2006	2008	2006	2008	2006	2008
Base price	24.00	25.00	26.00	27.00	26.00	24.90
MAP	2.00	1.25			-	2.00
Short (2 to 4 months)	1.50	3.00		**	2.00	2.00
Long (8 months)	0.75	1.50				
Trucking charge/yr	-	-	\$900	\$900	-	-
Average year round price***						
Long program	26.50	27.25				
Short program	26.50	27.25	26.00	27.00	26.50	27.40

practices and the breed of cows, components and seasonal and quality payments can increase gross income by as much as \$3/cwt.

Table 2: Component payments by company measured by \$/lb

	Organic Valley	Horizon Organic*	HP Hood	FMMO- Nov 07	
	2008	2008	2008	2006	2007
Butterfat	2.0	1.82	FMMO	1.39	1.41
Protein	1.86	1.56	FMMO	2.24	4.31
Other solids	1.65	0.25	FMMO	0.23	0.25

*Horizon offers a choice of 3 programs, one just for butterfat (\$0.13 BFD/.1 point+/-3.5%BF), one as above and one using the FMMO.

*OV has a Lab Pasteurization Count (LPC) payment of 0-51 @ \$0.50/cwt; 15-100 @ \$0.25/cwt. LPC is a laboratory test involving heat treatment of bulk milk samples at 145°F for 30 minutes.

Each company has its own transition incentives and programs that provide other than cash benefits. Space limits a full description of these programs but they include Horizon Organic’s HOPE program and Organic Valley’s centralized grain purchasing and veterinary helpline, plus support staff from all companies.

*Organic Valley requires producers to purchase preferred stock equivalent to 5.5% of their annual base gross income; historically this investment has a 8% return on required amount in Class B Stock. Profit sharing is activated if Organic Valley’s 2.2% profit goals are met or exceeded.

**\$1.00/cwt for milk produced in Oct, Nov, Dec, provided the average is greater than the average for May, June, July.

*** Seasonal bonus paid is multiplied by the number of months and divided by a complete calendar year. Components and quality pricing varies with each company. Organic Valley is the only company to deduct money for poor quality. With components, pricing varies from using the Federal Milk Marketing Order (FMMO) to a fixed price within the contract. Depending on farm operating

Table 3: Quality premiums offered by company measured by \$/cwt

Volume Premium	HP Hood	Horizon	Organic Valley*
>750 cwt/ month	\$0.15	\$0.15	None
>1,500 cwt/month	\$0.30	\$0.30	None
>3,000 cwt/month	\$0.50	\$0.50	None
Low Standard Plate Counts			
>9 and <16,000	\$0.05	\$0.05	11-20,000@\$0.10
>5 and <8,000	\$0.15	\$0.15	0-10,000@\$0.25
<6,000		\$0.28	
4,000 or less	\$0.25	\$0.37	
Low P. I Counts			
>17 and <32,000	\$0.20	\$0.28	\$0.25
>9 and <16,000	\$0.35	\$0.56	0-15,000@\$0.50
<12,000		\$0.84	
<8,000	\$0.75	\$1.25	
Low Somatic Cell Counts			
>251,000 and <300,000	\$0.25	<300@\$0.38	
>201,000 and <250,000	\$0.50	<225@\$0.75	\$0.48
>151,000 and <200,000	\$0.75	<175@\$1.13	
<150,000	\$1.00	\$1.50	\$0.96

(Continued on page 19)

(Continued from Organic Milk Farmgate Price, page 18)

How is the farmgate price set?

- Not by Government - Organic milk is neither directly subsidized nor supported and its farm gate price is not set by the federal government, despite the fact that all processors, with the exception of Aurora Organic Dairy, pay into the federal pool.
- Not by the retail price - The farmgate price bears no relationship to the retail price, which is set by supermarkets based on competitive wholesale pricing between processors, in-store promotions and an average margin of 31% for their operating expense and profit. The same ½ gallon of milk can vary by as much as \$2, retail price, within a 5 mile radius.
- Not as a percentage of retail price - In most years, organic dairy farmers receive a smaller percentage of the consumer dollar than the conventional farmer, 34% for organic compared to 41% for conventional (based on a farmgate price of \$15 and a retail gallon price of \$3).
- Not by Parity Pricing - Parity price for November 2007 was \$41.20 (up \$.50/cwt from Oct. '07) for Midwestern milk; with regional premiums added to that, bringing it up to about \$45/cwt in the Northeast.
- Not by comparison to conventional dairy - Conventional farmgate prices rose by as much as \$10 per cwt in 2007 without any increase in the organic farmgate price.
- Not by supply and demand - Consumer demand for organic dairy is still growing by at least 20% a year while family farm organic dairies are losing money and returning to conventional production.
- Not by national negotiation - Most contracts are with individual farms except those that are contracting with Dairy Marketing Services, and a majority of producers have confidentiality clauses.
- Not by costs of production - The pay price offered for 2008 is evidence enough.

It should be enough that producers clearly state their case, providing evidence of increasing costs of farm inputs, for processors to respond to their member-owners and farm partners and negotiate an increase in the base pay price that will keep farm families in business. Individual producers have tried and failed with this approach as have formal and ad hoc groups of producers across the country, and FOOD Farmers has presented a national voice of concern which has so far been ignored.

Why is a 20% increase needed?

NODPA and FOOD Farmers have been proactive in asking for a 20% increase in base price incorporating the MAP and the retention of quality and component programs. This increase would return producers to the same level of profitability they had in 2006. Producers have also volunteered to work with consumers in explaining any increase in retail price that might be necessary to save family farms from bankruptcy.

In order to highlight the effect of low pay prices on farm profitability, we have used the research by USDA Economic Research Service (ERS) completed in 2007 using 2005 data, and the ongoing multi-agency study led by the Universities of Vermont and Maine to supplement the anecdotal information supplied by producers. Both these studies reported similar data for northeast organic dairy farms. Table 2 uses data from the ongoing study in Vermont and Maine and makes projections for 2006-2008 based on existing market knowledge. "Farmgate milk sales" assumes up to \$3 for a combination of components, quality and seasonal payments, and is representative of actual farmgate prices.

The table reflects the large increase in purchased feed and energy costs documented by many agencies. We use the actual percentage increase between 2004 and 2005 as the

(Continued on page 21)



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organic farmers,
for all that you do.**

**From all the folks at
Stonyfield Farm**



(Continued from Organic Milk Farmgate Price, page 19)

basis for increases in other line items.

It is evident that in 2006 there was profitability before taking depreciation or equipment/facility replacement into account. In 2007, the increase in income from bonus programs has mitigated losses for those farmers with high component herds who are being paid for components based on FMMO. The final column shows a 20% increase in the base pay price plus assumes an extra \$3/cwt from bonus programs which brings producers back to the level of profitability they had in 2006.

Is it the same old story?

Recently, I was at a meeting of producers where price was being discussed and an Extension educator remarked

If processors truly value their producer-partners and member-owners, now is the time to negotiate realistic increases to pay price that reflect the very real cost of doing business and maintaining the family farm...

that, "dairy farmers have been losing money for many years but still continue to farm, why should organic dairies be any different?" Is organic dairy going to be business as usual with cyclical changes in profitability bringing about family farm crises and a continued movement to larger organic dairies who can take advantage of economies of scale? Production costs are not going to be reduced in the foreseeable future and producers have no control over the cost of purchased feed, fuel, labor, utilities and essential repairs to equipment and facilities. If processors truly value their producer-partners and member-owners, now is the time to negotiate realistic increases to pay price that reflect the very real cost of doing business and maintaining the family farm, restoring confidence in organic dairy, and encouraging new entrants. ♦

Table 4: Organic Dairy income and expense per cwt based on a 50 cow herd

	Actual		Projected on actual pay price			20% increase on base pay price
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2008
Farmgate milk sales	22.97	24.94	28.00	30.00	31.50	35.00
Cattle	1.08	1.29	1.55	1.86	2.23	2.23
Crop sales	0.11	0.19	0.29	0.43	0.64	0.64
Other	1.67	1.78	1.87	1.96	2.06	2.06
Total Income	25.83	28.20	31.70	34.25	36.43	39.93
Expenses						
Auto + truck exp	0.40	0.37	0.39	0.41	0.43	0.43
Bedding	0.43	0.51	0.56	0.62	0.68	0.68
Custom hire	0.37	0.58	0.70	0.84	1.00	1.00
Total feed cost	9.10	9.25	10.18	13.23	17.20	17.20
Fuel, oil, utilities	1.58	1.99	2.29	2.63	3.03	3.03
Interest	1.04	1.10	1.16	1.21	1.27	1.27
Labor	2.10	2.44	2.68	2.95	3.25	3.25
Marketing	0.44	0.42	0.44	0.46	0.49	0.49
Real Estate Tax and Insurance	1.18	1.17	1.21	1.24	1.28	1.28
Rent	0.10	0.43	0.45	0.47	0.50	0.50
Repairs	1.31	1.90	2.09	2.30	2.53	2.53
Vet, medicine, breeding, DHIA	0.79	0.83	0.87	0.92	0.96	0.96
Other: misc	0.21	0.56	0.59	0.62	0.65	0.65
Total Expenses	19.05	21.55	23.60	27.89	33.25	33.25
Depreciation	2.81	2.81	2.81	2.81	2.81	2.81
Net farm income	3.97	3.84	5.30	3.54	0.37	3.87
\$40,000 owner draw	6.29	6.64	6.68	6.68	6.68	6.68
Net Farm Income	-2.32	-2.80	-1.38	-3.14	-6.31	-2.81

Organic Production

Feature Farm

Kimball Brook Farm Cheryl and JD Devos North Ferrisburg, VT

Cheryl and JD Devos are one of VT's largest organic dairy farms, milking a total of 225 dairy cows year round and farming 965 acres in North Ferrisburg, VT. Their farm has been in JD's family since 1968 and has been under Cheryl and JD's ownership and management since 1997.

Almost 300 acres is used for pasture for the cows and heifers, they grow about 120 acres of corn silage, 380 acres is in hay production and 100 acres is wooded land. They rent about 425 acres and own 540 acres, which includes two farms; one for the dairy herd and a second providing pasture and housing for the heifers and dry cows.

Many of the cows on Kimball Brook Farm are descendants of cows brought from Monroe, NY where JD's grandfather started a farm in the early 1950's. Most of the cows are grade Holsteins; 10% of the herd is Jersey/Holstein crosses and 5% are Jerseys. The crosses and Jersey cows have come into the herd starting when Cheryl and JD transitioned their herd to organic production in 2004. To avoid possible calving difficulties with their first calf heifers, they decided to breed to Jersey bulls for easier calving. They use a bull when the heifers are out on pasture and AI in the wintertime.

Their transition to organic was well planned and took 3 years, as much of their land needed to transition for the full 3 years. Initially, their reasons for getting certified organic was purely financial as the price for conventional milk was very low and they were getting fed up not being able to pay some of their bills. In the Fall of 2003, Cheryl attended a workshop offered by NOFA-VT on transitioning to organic dairy production. It was after that meeting, that Cheryl knew that they should go organic. She then had to convince her husband and together they put together a business plan and

presented it to the bank for approval prior to spring planting. Cheryl and JD started shipping milk to Horizon Organic in May 2005.

Production per cow is 18,000. They have used DHIA for the past 8 years as a tool to monitor individual SCC, help with culling decisions and are hoping to add some additional record keeping and monitoring to determine effectiveness of their herd health treatments, such as metritis and its relationship to ongoing reproductive health post treatment.

Last year they had enough surplus cattle that they were able to sell 25 milking cows and heifers. In the past, they have sold at least 10 dairy animals each year. They feel that they are keeping their cows longer now and

can see the potential generating additional income selling surplus organic dairy stock.

Housing for Cows, Calves and Heifers

The cows are housed in a freestall barn and have access to pasture during the daytime from May to November. Dry cows and heifers 6 months of age and over have freestall housing at a second farm adjacent to the home farm. During the grazing season (May – November) these groups of animals are on pasture 24 hours a

day. Heifers 3-6 months of age are kept in a bedded pack located at the dry cow/heifer

barn and calves from birth to weaning are raised in individual pens. Calves are weaned when they run out of room in the individual pens, which can be anywhere from 3-5 months. When calves are getting ready to wean, dividers are taken away, turning the pens into double occupancy pens, which allows the calves to socialize and go through the weaning process with a pal. This also prepares them for the dynamics of living in a larger group when they transition to the bedded pack.

Grazing System

Over the last 4 years, Cheryl and JD have been working with NRCS and the VT Agency of Agriculture in developing fencing, laneways, water systems and an effective grazing plan on their two farms. The programs that they have signed up for (CREP and EQIP) provided them with a 70 % – 90% cost share, making their endeavor much more affordable. In ex-

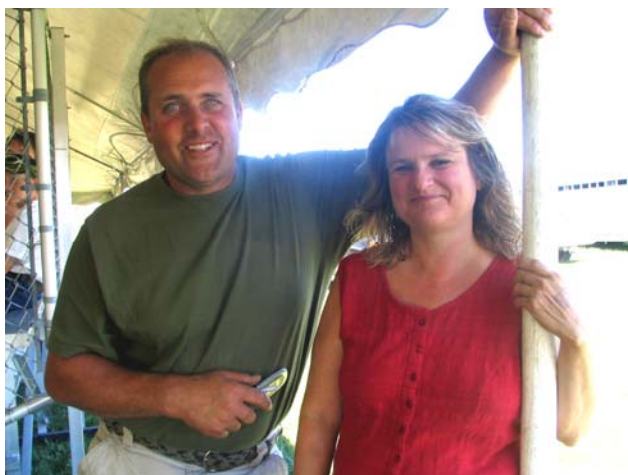


Photo by Robin Reid

(Continued on page 26)

Hardy Livestock in the Land of Ice, Snow and Freezing Wind

By Dr Will Winter

Winter in the northern climes is a rough time for all of us. People suffer from “colds”, flu and a variety of upper respiratory symptoms, including those that can get worse, going to bronchitis, “walking pneumonia” and, worst case scenario, full-blown pneumonia. Children, the elderly and those who are immune-compromised suffer the most, and pneumonia was once the most common cause of death in the US.

Livestock also suffer and the reasons for that are multiple and cumulative. Quite often the animals in the herd or flock are bunched up during times of cold weather and have more contact and therefore more germ transmission. They also share more contact at feed bunks, hay racks and water troughs. When we look at the cause behind the cause, however, we see that erosion of the immune system underpins almost all infectious disease.

Cold Weather Blues

When it comes to basics, it might be said that the most disease-producing factor in cold winter weather could be just plain lack of energy in the forages. This tends to be the most common *limiting factor* in livestock production year-round but it shows up in many ways in the winter. Animals fed low-energy feed-stuffs use what energy they have digesting food and the overall result is a greater likelihood of diseases and reproductive problems. These animals are often cold and miserable all winter and can expire during a blizzard or ice storm as they have no reserve. Dairy animals that are milked year-round will usually show a drop in milk production which can be taken as an immediate indicator of problems. The brix Index of forages is the guideline of utmost importance and many believe it's the most informative test for the money. Many farms, especially as they begin to remineralize their soils, struggle to maintain a 3-4% brix level. This is just plain too low and it's amazing how many farm problems of all sorts go completely away as the average brix levels exceed 10%, with 12% commonly considered to be the gold standard.

Another simple weakening factor is just plain lack of drinkable water. For those of us living in the north-land, maintaining ice-free water in adequate supply is a daily headache. Modern tank heaters, frost-free water nozzles and buried PVC pipe have done wonders for easing the burden.

Obviously most winter forages tend to be deficient in adequate vitamins, enzymes, nutrients and overall

plant vitality. Stored forages are almost always inferior to grazed fresh forages and each form of storage has it's plusses and minuses. Dried hay and dried concentrates protect most nutrients but in wet years it's impossible to guard fully against mold contamination.

A common mold is the *Fusarium* family which, unlike *Aspergillus* aflatoxins, don't kill suddenly and viciously, but they smolder inside the body. These mold toxins rob health by stealing immune strength and undermining fertility. *Fusarium* toxins lead to an insidious health problem commonly called “Lazy Leukocyte Syndrome” which basically consists of an army of white blood cell defenders that are worthless against infection.

Animals trying to function in the higher latitudes also suffer from lack of sunlight, more specifically ultraviolet light, that force needed to generate adequate levels of vitamin D3. Experiments conducted at Randleigh Farms back in the 1950's proved that exposing cows to uv lamps during milking or barn time radically improved their health. Interestingly, this milk would also have more health-giving vitamin D3 levels producing healthier calves and more health for the human customers.

Another fat-soluble vitamin essential for good membrane and immune integrity is vitamin A. Formerly called the “anti-infective” vitamin, A is needed for membranes of the respiratory tract as well as the eyes. Lowered vitamin A predisposes to shipping fever, pneumonia, scours and pinkeye. While prime pasture grass and legumes is loaded with the carotenes that are converted by the body into vitamin A, the stored forages suffer a loss with hay being the most likely to lose vitamin content. Hay that was heated from being put up too wet loses carotenes as does all hay stored over 300 days. Silage or baleage is the best storage technique to preserve carotenes and good fermented feedstuffs will retain 90% of the carotenes. Alfalfa and clovers contain the highest levels of carotenes as compared to grasses whereas orchard and canary grass are the highest of the common grasses. It's important to note that animals that are pregnant in the

(Continued on page 24)

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(Continued from *Hardy Livestock*, page 23)

winter have variations in immune integrity during gestation the most important of which is a severe dip just about 2 weeks before parturition. During this window many pathogens that will later cause mastitis or uterine infection penetrate the immune shield. Wise herdsman will augment the feed, vitamins and care during this period of vulnerability.

Cold Weather Husbandry

As stated before winter is the time to pour it on with good forages and good management. This would include prevention of mud problems, wind shelter and fresh drinkable water. It's also a time where making sure that adequate minerals and vitamins are being provided. Think of it as an insurance policy. If you are sure you have no deficiencies and if you haven't had a vet bill in 50 years, well, that is a good sign you are on track and can probably quit reading. If, on the other hand, you are unsure, or especially if you are having the occasional problem with ringworm, lice, foot rot, pink-eye or other issues, then these recommendations probably apply to you.

KELP- nothing says love to the immune system like delivery of all the parts required to make the body im-

mune. I like to use a good brand such as Thorvin, and offer it free choice in a covered mineral feeder at all times. It's acceptable to mix the kelp with a good granular mineral salt such as Redmond's, and they can be mixed 50:50.

DESERT DYNAMIN- A trace-mineral bearing earth-mined clay that can be offered to the herd or flock free-choice at all times. This is an excellent buffer for pH issues and it will absorb mold toxins or other pollutants in the body. It's a bouillon cube of minerals for the body.

CALCIUM-PHOSPHORUS TRACE-MINERAL MIX- This is most often in a 2:1 ratio and contains other macro minerals as well. A smart feed mill will augment the so-called immune minerals as well and these include IODINE, SELENIUM, COPPER and ZINC.

These ratios can be found from modern sources online or from books and we can list the recommended levels to maintain. For an inexpensive and simple source, one can use the product called HEMOCELL-100 as a trace mineral pre-mix pack and this can be mixed in with the larger and cheaper ingredients. (Hemocell-100 may also be used as a direct free-choice supplement or top-dressing if there is an on-going herd health problem, or given to certain individuals with health problems).

ESSENTIAL TRACE MINERAL LEVELS- For cattle, we like to maintain these levels of the "limiting factor" health and immunity minerals, Calcium = 7,500-8,500 mg/day, Phosphorus = 400 mg/day, Magnesium = 5000-10,000 mg/day, Copper = 150-250 mg/day, Zinc = 1200-1600 mg/day, Selenium = 4-6 mg/day, Iodine = 25-28 mg/day, Manganese = 1200 mg/day.

Maintaining herd health in the winter is one of the ultimate challenges of holistic management. Each step taken brings the farm more into alignment with profitability and success. No body gets it 100% right all the time but then again, no one ever said it would be easy!

William G. Winter, DVM is a free-lance journalist and teacher. He is primarily interested in awakening the world to the human health benefits and the environmental bonus that comes from raising 100% grass-fed livestock using sustainable practices and the magic of holistic herd health. He is also the herd health consultant for producers of livestock for Thousand Hills Cattle Company and lives in Minnesota where the grass grows green and lush, and all the producers children eat right and are therefore above average. Contact him with your concerns, grand concepts, and rave compliments at holistic@visi.com or www.willwinter.com. ♦

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(Continued from *Feature Farm*, page 22)

change for the cost share assistance, they agreed to fence out 50 feet on either side of a large brook that travels through their property as well as taking out some pastures prone to flooding and planting trees in some of the wetter areas.

The fencing was completed for the dairy cows on the home farm first and then they developed the pasture infrastructure for the heifers and dry cows on the adjacent farm. They have high tensile perimeter wire with single strand divider fences and water tubs in each pasture.

When they were in their third year of grazing, they felt like they were really getting the hang of their pasture system and stopped supplementing their heifers with round bales. Now the older heifers survive on pasture alone from May to November; they are kept out with a bull and are rotated onto new pasture at least once a week.

Heifers 6-12 months of age are just learning how to graze so are placed in paddocks where they have the ability to come back to the barn twice a day and get

grain. This gives them the opportunity to see these heifers regularly and make sure that they are growing well and learning how to graze.

The milk cows are moved to new pasture daily but they do not graze at night because they find it too challenging to move the cows in the darkness of early morning. The cows are fed a TMR to complement the pasture, which consists of corn silage, haylage and grain.

Developing a rotational grazing system has made a large difference to their pastures and their herd health. Cows, since going out on pasture are healthier, and have muscle tone, contributing to overall health and longevity. They also see a lot of clover coming in their pastures where there wasn't any before, rely less on stored feeds and enjoy seeing

some of their younger dairy cows running back to the barn at a gallop when it is milking time.

Livestock Health, Prevention and Remedies

Cheryl and JD have been very happy with their milk quality, which averages 130,000 SCC. To maintain high quality milk, they use a quarter-milker on the high count cows. The milk from the quarter milkers gets pasteurized and fed to calves. For udder prep, they use an iodine dip for pre and post dipping and make sure that the udders are *very* clean.

All animals are fed kelp, which is mixed into their grain or in the TMR as a preventative treatment and nutritional supplement.

When the dry cows are close to calving, they are moved to a freshening pen in the heifer barn until they calve. They make sure that the calf nurses or gets fed colostrum from the cow right away. The cow stays with the calf for 3-5 days and they don't milk out the cow at all, letting the calf do the work. This gives them a chance to watch the cow, make sure she is eating well, make sure she has cleaned and give the cow any attention she may need. If the calf is not drinking, they will milk the cow and either give the calf the milk with a bottle or tube. A lot of cow and calf problems have been prevented since they have implemented this routine.

At birth, all heifers get a Poly Serum (blood serum vaccination) and are dipped with iodine. At weaning, they are given a shot of Bovishield and then given a booster (1-2 months apart) before going outside to the freestall at 6 months of age. All calves 6 months and older receive another shot of Bovishield and pink eye vaccination.

(Continued on page 27)



Photo by Robin Reid



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(Continued from *Feature Farm*, page 26)

tions in the spring before going out to pasture.

Once the cow is moved to the dairy barn, she is fed a total mixed ration (TMR) and they are no longer able to monitor her intake. To keep an eye on the fresh cows, they take their temperature at milking time until there is a consistent normal temperature. If there is an abnormal temperature, they call their vet right away.

Treatments

For metritis, they infuse the cow with hydrogen peroxide; 120 cc's infused every 2 days. Their vet comes to check on the cow once a week until she is well. This treatment is so successful that their vet is using it with conventional clients too.

For a retained placenta, they use a calcium electrolyte within 8-10 hours after calving. They had been using aloe and garlic, but this was not working for them.

They treat pneumonia with aloe, garlic, and Poly Serum (75 cc's for a calf, 100 cc's for a cow) which works well if the pneumonia is caught early. As a last resort, they will turn to antibiotics and take the animal out of the herd (this is rare).

For calf scours, they use a Crystal Creek product called Bright Star, electrolytes, aloe & garlic, and yogurt. The biggest preventative for calf scours is to make sure the calves get colostrums right after birth as these calves are more likely to survive a calf scour episode later in life.

Mastitis cases are rare, but when one crops up, they use Crypto-Whey from Crystal Creek, Udder Comfort to massage into the udder and for a really hard quarter, they will put aloe in the quarter.

Resources, Mentors, Books

JD and Cheryl try to go to at least one or two workshops a year to stay on the learning curve. Books that they turn to when they need to look up a case or determine an effective treatment is Dr Karreman's book *Treating Dairy Cows Naturally* and Dr Detloff's book *Alternative Treatments for Ruminant Animals*. They feel their veterinarian, Kent Anderson, is a great support; he encourages high forage rations and has been actively learning about organically approved treatments and management practices. The practice Kent Anderson works for, (Valley Wide Veterinary Practice) is going to start stocking a lot of Dr Karreman's products at the office and on the truck.

Challenges

Cheryl and JD struggle with maintaining the herd size that they need to address their debt load and having enough pasture for their dairy cows to comfortably meet the recommended 30% dry matter standard. If it was

their choice, they would be milking fewer cows, but that is not something that they can do right now due to debt service. Recently a neighboring piece of land came up for sale, which would have added another 50 acres of pasture to their farm, but they were outbid.

The price of milk is not keeping up with the price of grain, fuel and other fixed prices; cost of sawdust alone has increased by 50% in one year alone. Cheryl and JD agree that a 20% increase in pay price needs to happen.

2.5 Years Into It

After over 2.5 years of shipping organic milk Cheryl says that being organic is not about the money anymore; 'It changes your whole head about things', she says. The majority of their groceries are organic now, and they think a lot more about the impact of their decisions and its affect on the environment. Cheryl has even switched political parties (we will leave the readers guessing which way the pendulum swung on that one). ♦

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3. Are you managing livestock or poultry and generating more than a few cubic yards of soiled bedding and manure daily? Yes/No
4. Are you a vertically integrated farm with cheese making or value added processing taking place on farm? Yes/No
5. Do you have greenhouse operations on your farm? Yes/No
6. Are you currently composting? Yes/No
7. Would You Like a Source of Free Heat For Your Farm? Yes/No
8. Would You Like an Additional Revenue Base for Your Farm? Yes/No

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Research and Education

Upcoming Conferences and Workshop for Organic Dairy Farmers

Wisconsin:

Largest Organic Farming Conference in the US Held in La Crosse, Wisconsin, February 21-23, 2008.

Sponsored by the Wisconsin-based Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES), the conference is celebrated as the foremost educational and networking event in the organic farming community.

With over 60 different workshop sessions and 130 exhibitors, there is something of interest for everyone. Workshops are often led by farmers themselves – the farmer-to-farmer approach is appreciated by those attending. For those interested in one specific topic, the Organic University is held on Thursday, with intensive, day-long courses in ten different areas of organic farming. And for the first time in 2008, the conference will be hosting the Organic Research Symposium where current research on organics will be presented. This will be a fantastic opportunity to get the latest information

from cutting-edge researchers who are showing the world the real, positive value of an organic approach to farming. Each Research Symposium session will include an open discussion with the presenters in their specific area of research interest.

Keynote speakers this year will address various aspects of organics and how to find good food, food truth, and justice for all. Thursday's general session will feature several young organic farmers and researchers talking about what the next generation of organic farmers will look like from their perspective.

To request a conference flyer with complete information, contact the MOSES office. Email: info@mosesorganic.org, or call 715-772-3153. All information and registration details are also available at www.mosesorganic.org.



(Continued on page 34)



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Commentary

'Commentary' is an open forum for sharing thoughts, opinions, concerns, and whatever else inspires you. Please send your submissions, up to 1,000 words, to the Editor (see page 2 for contact information). The views expressed below are those of the author(s) and in no way represent the official views of NODPA or any of its representatives.

It's Not Pasture, It's Not Origin of Livestock What's at Stake for the Organic Farming Community

Yes, seeing the requirement to graze organic ruminants judiciously enforced by certifiers and the USDA is vitally important to maintaining a level, competitive playing field for dairy producers. Undoubtedly, dairies bringing in semi-loads full of conventional replacement cattle, to feed their high-production, unsustainable operations, is a disgrace. It also competitively disadvantages family farmers. However, it is important that dairy producers not be so myopic that, as a community, we can't see the forest for the trees.

Pasture violations and abuses in transitioning cattle are just symptoms of the real problem: a switch from family-scale milk production in this country to what is commonly referred to as "factory farming."

This trend, which greatly accelerated in the 1980s, has resulted in many of your neighbors losing their livelihoods. Families milking 30, 50, 100, or more cows just couldn't compete with the industrial-scale dairies that sprang up in western states. These facilities were fueled by relatively cheap investment funds, cheap subsidized feed, inexpensive and plentiful migrant labor, subsidized irrigation water, and federal/state grants for expansion. Many dairy farms died a slow death, adding more cows but never quite making ends meet.

When commercial-scale organic dairy marketing began in the late 1980s, it was founded on the premise that farmers would be fairly compensated for a change. It was certainly founded on a different kind of ecological stewardship ethic, and a very different animal husbandry ethic, but fair pricing for farmers was always part of the deal.

As the majority of agriculture shifted to a high-technology, high-investment, high production-model, based on confinement of livestock, pharmaceutical and agrichemical fixes, and the promise of genetic engineering and cloning, consumers were willing to invest in a different production paradigm.

Consumers don't initially jump on this bandwagon

because they are concerned with farmers getting fairly compensated. They first choose organics for self-serving reasons; they are concerned with the health and well-being of their families.

But organic consumers are willing to gladly pay higher prices for organic food because they think they're also supporting something good for society. Consumers are buying the story behind the organic label! For many, being more conscious about the foods they provide their family gives great meaning and a spiritual connection to what they eat.

By maintaining that story, and the integrity of the organic label, we will preserve this unique marketplace relationship between farmers and consumers.

Okay folks, that might all sound fine and dandy, but we're up against giant corporate agribusiness, which is now invested heavily in organics—and the USDA that has for 17 years sold out organics.

Our philosophy at The Cornucopia Institute is that we cannot trust these economically powerful entities to protect the farmers and consumers who built the organic industry. History over the last century is clear. Farmers trying to play the game by *their* rules have been universally screwed. Organics is an alternative economy. We have created our own rules, and it's been a good busi-

(Continued on page 30)



Improved varieties of organically grown forage seed for higher levels of forage, less expensive grain, better profits and healthier cows




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(Continued from Commentary, page 29)

ness environment for the past two decades. And it's worth fighting like hell to retain the economic promise for farmers.

Pasture

It's been over seven years since the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) first asked the USDA to crack down on scofflaws producing organic milk without grazing their animals. It's nearing three years since the NOSB last passed a resolution and the National Organic Program (NOP) committed to promulgating a rule change aimed at facilitating enforcement. Meanwhile, the number of "organic" CAFOs has risen from one to at least 15. It has been our position all along at The Cornucopia Institute that new rulemaking wasn't necessary. We need the USDA to display intestinal fortitude and enforce the current standards. Our thesis was proven accurate this year when the 10,000-cow Vander Eyk dairy in California lost its certification, and Aurora's dairies in Colorado and Texas were targeted for decertification, in part, for woefully inadequate pasturing.

The current rule is enforceable if certifiers and the USDA care to enforce it. The vast majority of certifiers and dairy producers in this country fully understand what is expected of them and comply, voluntarily. Can you

milk three times a day and really graze?

The same USDA that has allowed Aurora to stay in business, and has refused to address improprieties in other large factory-scale farms, is the same outfit we are trusting to write new and better rules for reining in abuses.

Do you really trust the USDA to do this—or are they simply *running out the clock*? It will not surprise us if, together, we all need to mount an aggressive protest telling the Department that their new rules, whenever released, might actually make enforcement matters worse, not better. And then where will we be? Groups like NODPA and Cornucopia, and our memberships, which greatly overlap, need to keep pressing the USDA for good rulemaking and enforcement. But it would be unwise for us all to have our eggs in this one basket.

There is a higher authority on issues of organic integrity than the USDA—the organic consumer! Our legal complaints against Aurora, and the lack of *real* enforcement by the USDA, have resulted in a flurry of lawsuits against both the dairy and retailers selling their product.

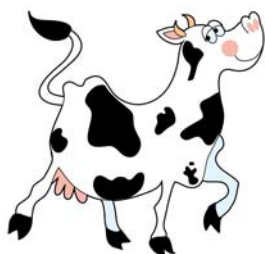
Some of Aurora's major customers are now finding alternative suppliers. Won't it be ironic if the USDA's sweetheart deal with Aurora, allowing them to continue marketing "organic" milk, is superseded by millions of dollars in potential lawsuit damages, and additional millions lost from customers who have bolted? Could it force Aurora out of business?

Origin of livestock

The USDA has allowed large dairy operations to purchase conventional cattle and "transition" them to organic production on a continual basis. Many industry observers have argued with this interpretation. It betrays the ideals of organics placing competent organic managers at a competitive disadvantage. One sound bite I have given the media in the past is, "Real organic farmers don't buy replacement heifers ... they sell heifers!"

Maybe rulemaking should also exclude bringing in replacement heifers, year after year?

Mark A. Kastel,
Senior Foreign Policy Analyst,
The Cornucopia Institute. ♦



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**On behalf of our families, consumers,
and the earth we live on,
we thank all organic farmers
for being stewards of our land.**

**What you do matters.
It matters for our children.
It matters for our animals.
It matters for our land,
our air, and our water.
And it matters to us.**

**Here's wishing you a
happy and healthy 2008.**

www.horizonorganicfacts.com

Calendar

NOFA-NY's 26th Annual Winter Farming and Gardening Conference – Organic Solutions! How Farmers, Gardeners and Communities Nurture our Environment
January 25-27, 2008

Saratoga Hotel & Conference Center, Saratoga Spring, NY

See page 34 for more details

For more information, go to www.nofany.org or call 607-652-6632

Neal Kinsey's Advanced Soil Fertility Course
February 5-7, 2008

Penn State Conference Center State College, PA
Organized in conjunction with PASA's 17th annual Farming for the Future Conference.

Following the Albrecht Methods for soil testing and soil nutrient use, this advanced course is appropriate for those who have complete Kinsey's introductory soil fertility course or have a strong working knowledge of the terminology and principles set forth in *Hands-On Agronomy*.

For more information or to register, go to www.pasafarming.org or call 814-349-9856

PASA'S 17th Annual Farming for the future Conference
February 7-9, 2008

Penn State Conference Center, State College, PA. For more information or to register, go to www.pasafarming.org or call 814-349-9856

See page 34 for more details

NPSAS 29th Annual Winter Conference: "Still Growing From the Ground Up"
February 8 & 9, 2008

Best Western Seven Seas Hotel in Mandan, ND
John Doran and Fred Kirshenmann will give the keynote addresses. See <http://www.npsas.org/events.html> for more information and registration or call 701-883-4304.

Wisconsin Grazing Conference and Tradeshow
February 14 -16, 2008

Holiday Inn, Stevens Point, WI

See www.grassworks.org for more information.

26th Annual NOFA-VT Winter Conference
February 16-17, 2008

Vermont Technical College, Randolph Center, VT

See page 34 for more details

Contact: Meg Klepack, info@nofavt.org, 802-434-412

19th Annual Organic Farming Conference
February 21-23, 2008

La Crosse, WI.

See page 28 for more details

info@mosesorganic.org, call 715-772-3153

Organic University
February 21, 2008

La Crosse, WI.

See page 28 for more details

info@mosesorganic.org, call 715-772-3153

Organic Research Symposium
February 21 – 23, 2008

La Crosse, WI.

See page 28 for more details

info@mosesorganic.org, call 715-772-3153

Maximizing Milk on Home Grown Grains and Forages

March 13 – Newport, VT

March 14 – Highgate, VT

March 18 – Springfield, VT

March 19 – Rutland, VT

This traveling one-day workshop, organized by NOFA-VT and UVM Extension, is designed to meet the needs of dairy producers wanting to maximize the use of their forages systems and/or learn about incorporating home grown grains to offset the costs of purchased feeds.

For more information, contact NOFA-VT, 802-434-4122 or UVM Extension, 802-524, 6501

Northeast Grasstravaganza 2008
March 28th and 29th, 2008

Holiday Inn Arena, Binghamton, NY

Featuring a symposium on grazing behavior research and practical application with Kathy Voth, Darrell Emmick, and NY farmers who have learned how to use grazing behavior to their advantage!

For more information contact Central NY RC&D, 607-334-3231 ext.4 or email Phil Metzger - phil.metzger@ny.usda.gov

Classified Ads

Organic Field Crop Seed for Spring 08

Looking for other producers interested in undertaking a cooperative seed-purchasing venture.

Blaine's Best Seeds in Rugby North Dakota has a wide variety of seeds and varieties including flax, barley, peas, oats, canola, and hullless varieties of oats and barley. Legume seeds include alfalfa, clover, sweet clover and there are some grass seed varieties as well. Prices are excellent even with the added shipping. Seed quality and germination is unsurpassed.

We need to come up with a 25-ton load to get a good freight rate. Already have 5-7 tons worth of seed order accounted for.

If you are interested, call Jack Lazor, Butterworks Farm as soon as possible. Phone number: 802-744-6855, Cell phone: 802-999-7722

For Sale

Organic open pollinated seed corn – Early Riser Variety – 80 days with yellow-orange colored hard textured kernels – good for silage or grain.

(Continued on page 36)

Advertise With Us!

NODPA News is Published Bi-Monthly

January, March, May, July, September & November

Full Page Ad (7.5"W x 10.25" H) = \$450

1/2 Pg Ad (7.5" W x 4.5" H) = \$230

1/4 Pg Ad (3.5" w x 4.75" h) = \$130

1/8 Pg Ad/Business Card (3.5" w x 2.25" h) = \$60

Classified Ads: Free to Northeast organic farmers. All others \$10 for the first 30 words; \$.10 per word over 30

Deadline for the next issue is February 15, 2008

For advertising information call Lisa McCrory 802-234-5524 or email lmccrory@together.net

Please email your electronic ad (.eps, .tiff, .jpg, .gif) to webmaster@davishilldesigns.com or send your ad to: Lisa McCrory, NODPA Newsletter, 341 Macintosh Hill Rd, Randolph, VT 05060

Note: Ads requiring typesetting, size changes or design work will be charged additional fees, according to the service (minimum charge \$30.00). **Please send a check with your ad.** (made payable to NODPA)

Net Update

Recent Discussions On ODairy

By Liz Bawden

Not surprisingly, there was much discussion over the current disparity between cost of production and the pay price. NODPA and other groups of organic dairy farmers across the country agreed that a 20% increase in the pay price would just cover our increased costs of production. Farmers expressed their frustration over increased costs in feed, fuel, and most everything else.

Several posts stressed the importance of soil calcium and the anions that make it available. According to the information given, soil calcium is made available by anions such as sulphur and boron. Sulphur encourages the biological activity in the soil, and boron helps the cows' absorption of calcium from forages. Gypsum was mentioned as a great way to supplement both calcium and sulphur at the same. The additions to the National List were a source of good news. The addition of these medications to alleviate pain and suffering in emergencies are a welcome addition to our medicine chests!

There was a long discussion on heat recognition; some farmers had difficulty breeding cows for a certain calving window. Some had cows that did not have strong behaviors during their heats, so were difficult to detect. There was some good advice: look for clear discharges or blood (to chart cycles) first thing in the morning when you enter the barn while the cows are still lying down, run a steer with the cows if you have very few animals, and just plain paying attention to behavior changes.

A farmer asked for suggestions about planting reeds canary grass in a permanent pasture, and the responses were mixed. Some expressed concern over the invasiveness and unpalatability. Others suggested planting the new lower alkaloid varieties for improved palatability. One post suggested the use of kura clover mixed with the newer reeds canary grass as a pasture mix, since they are both aggressive once established. Ice storms through Pennsylvania introduced some farmers, who normally do not have this problem, to the struggle of feeding frozen round bales. Strategies for cutting off the frozen sections were discussed; but whether it is with a utility knife, axe, sawsall, or chain saw (not recommended), it is all lots more work added to routine chores.

Herpes on teat ends was a problem on one farm. A veterinarian responded saying that there are 3 pre-disposing factors: cold weather, udder edema, and first-lactation heifers. He recommends treating the udder edema with natural diuretics like Juniper berries, and increasing circulation with liniments. He recommends natural udder salves with aloe or beeswax to soothe sores along with tea tree oil to prevent secondary infection. Another farmer who has had this problem worked with their certifier to allow a chlorohexadine teat dip until the warm weather came.

To subscribe to ODairy, follow the instructions on our website, www.nodpa.com or email: Odairy-subscribe@yahoo.com

OMILK

FARMERS ONLY – Join the Omilk email discussion, send a letter of introduction to: wrightwaydairy@yahoo.com ♦

NODPA Website Redesign!

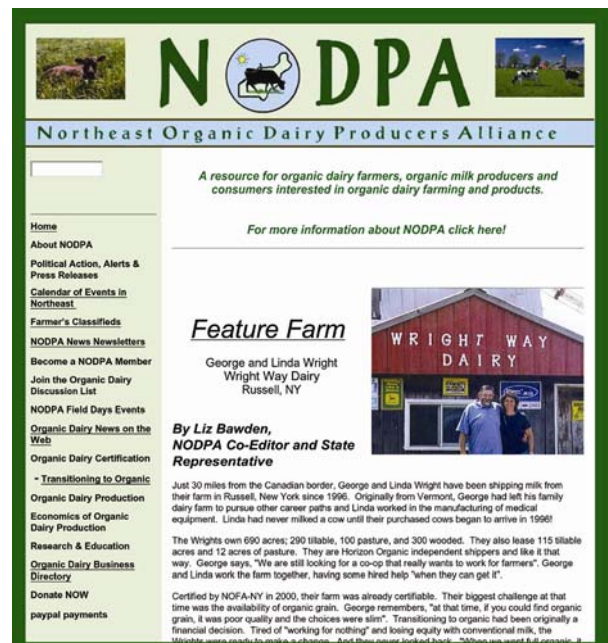
By Lisa McCrory, NODPA News Editor

Over the past few months we have been working hard on giving the NODPA Website a new look. The website will be easier to navigate and will continue to provide up to date information, resources, and links to other valuable websites.

Features will include:

- Political Action, Alerts and Press Releases by NODPA and FOOD Farmers
- Organic Dairy News
- Organic Dairy Transition and Certification info
- Organic Dairy Production pages to include: live-stock health, grazing, growing forages and grains, soil health, economics of organic dairy and more.
- NODPA's Feature Farms: a web page complete with stories about many of our organic dairy producers featured in past issues of the NODPA News.
- NODPA News Newsletters
- NODPA Field Days Events containing photos and a summary of what happened at each of our annual Field Days Events from 2001 to present.
- Link to ODairy Archives.
- Organic Dairy Business Directory – promote your business for just \$50 a year!
- Farmer's Classifieds – FREE to producers!
- Calendar of Events
- NODPA Membership

Our new look will be launched on February 1, 2008, so make sure to visit our website and let us know what you think. There will be parts of the website that will still be under construction, but we are sure you will like what you see. ♦



(Continued)

*from Upcoming Conferences, page 28)***New York**

Organic Solutions! How Farmers, Gardeners, and Consumers Nurture our Environment, January 25 – 27, 2008. This year's NOFA-NY conference features exciting guest and keynote speakers **Terry Wollen**, Director of Animal Well-Being and Staff Veterinarian with Heifer International, Little Rock, AR and **Dr. Ann Wells**, Springpond Holistic Animal Health, Prairie Grove, AR.

On Friday, January 25, the conference offers five intensive full and half-day workshops for livestock, dairy, and grain farmers to explore select topics comprehensively. Learn about farming with animal power in a hands-on full day workshop with Donn Hewes and Maryrose Livingston of Northland Sheep Dairy. Transitioning organic dairy farmers can learn more about financing and managing animal nutrition during the one-year organic transition from animal nutritionist, Karen Hoffman, USDA-NRCS. Grain farmers may be interested in a full-day organic weed management forum with experienced organic farmers and a half-day organic legume workshop from Cornell scientists, Laurie Drinkwater and Julie Grossman, and organic farmers, Tony and Dakota Potenza and Eero Ruuttila.

Saturday and Sunday (Jan. 26-27) workshops explore topics on organic livestock, organic field crops, and organic dairy farming in three distinct tracks (over 18 workshops!). On Saturday, the renowned Dr. Ann Wells, DVM will give a complete three-session program on organic dairy including: 1. Healthy Pasture, Healthy Animals, which will touch on controlled grazing, pasture health, and animal health; 2. Developing Sustainable Animal Wellness Plans, a workshop that ties animal health and wellness to soil and plant health; and 3. Integrated Parasite Management for Livestock, this workshop explores proper livestock and environmental management techniques that reduce the incidence of cattle parasites. The full conference program and registration information are available at the NOFA-NY website, visit: www.nofany.org. The pre-registration deadline is January 11, 2008. Walk-in registration is also available.

Vermont

NOFA-VT is pleased to announce the **26th Annual Winter Conference, Business Not As Usual**. NOFA-VT has exciting news: **They are expanding from one to two days: February 16 and 17, 2008** at Vermont Technical College in Randolph Center, VT. **Dairy Workshops on Day Two**

The second day of the conference will offer some dairy track workshops focusing on 'Making Milk and Saving Money on Organic Dairy & Livestock Farms'.

Session I will feature Rich Kersbergen who will provide an overview of rumen function and implications for ration formulations and will follow with discussions on feeding homegrown grains, and least cost rations and milk production trade-offs.

Session II will offer two workshops for producers to choose from; 1) Quality Forage and Production workshop with Sid Bosworth a panel of organic dairy producers, 2) Maximizing Milk Quality and Udder Health on Organic Dairy Farms with Dr Linda Tikofsky

Session III will offer two workshops for producers to choose from: 1) On-Farm Grain Production in Vermont with Dr Heather Darby and organic dairy producers Jack Lazor and Louis Rainville, 2) Capturing Organic Milk Quality Premiums by Lowering Bacterial and SCC Counts with Dr Linda Tikofsky.

Please contact the NOFA-VT office for additional information: info@nofavt.org or 802-434-4122.

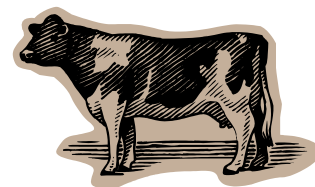
Pennsylvania

PASA's 17th annual Farming for the Future Conference is scheduled for February 7, 8, and 9, 2008 at the Penn State Conference Center in State College, PA. Each year this nationally recognized event has grown in number of attendees, workshops and overall stature. Last year over 1,700 farmers and consumers attended the three-day conference making it one of the largest sustainable agriculture conferences in the nation.

Keynote speakers include environmental activist Diane Wilson, author of "An Unreasonable Woman: A True Story of Shrimpers, Politicos, Polluters and the Fight for Seadrift, Texas" and Mark McAfee, an internationally recognized raw milk production pioneer and advocate. The conference theme and keynote speakers have been selected to emphasize the tremendous determination and perseverance it takes to succeed in creating a more sustainable world.

In addition to over 80 workshops and ten pre-conference tracks, the conference features locally-grown, organic meals, a 78-vendor tradeshow, arts and music, and programming for youth and kids.

To receive a full color brochure, find complete conference information and online registration visit



From the MODPA President

By Darlene Coehoorn

MODPA (Midwest Organic Dairy Producers Association) was started by a small steering committee late in 2003. As we sat around the table we were all united with the idea that organic producers were very much in need of a communication link. From that meeting MODPA was born. Steve Pechacek was elected President; Jim Greenberg, Vice President; Pam Reisgraf, Secretary and Darlene Coehoorn Treasurer.

MODPA board members have been working to promote clear, concise, and measurable organic standards to protect the industry and to ensure the consumers satisfaction. We have been working to develop communication between producer groups and consumers and have participated in NODPA and WODPA meetings as well as the 2007 Boulder Producer/Processor Summit.

On July 20, 2007, the board voted to restrict board representation to producers who were not on boards or in management positions with any processor. This vote re-

sulted in Darlene Coehoorn becoming President and Treasurer, Jim Greenberg stayed on as Vice President, and John Kinsman became Secretary. MODPA also underwent a name change; the A in MODPA now stands for *Alliance*. MODPA would like to thank Steve Pechacek, Pam Reisgraf and Jim Wedeberg for all they did to get this group started and for their willingness to serve. After struggling with limited funds and time, the board made the decision to accept NODPA's offer to contribute to the NODPA News. This is our first joint newsletter and maybe your first look at MODPA, NODPA, WODPA and the FOOD farmers groups but it will hopefully not be your last.

I trust you will find this publication informative and hope you will recognize the need to work together. I encourage you to join NODPA, MODPA, and WODPA and become an active member with your time and dollars of support. Being involved and informed is the only way we can hold and improve our organic premium. Join MODPA at the Organic Farming Conference in La Crosse, WI in February for our annual meeting. We welcome all producers' participation and are looking for board representation from all the Midwest states. ♦

The Midwest Organic Dairy Producer Alliance (MODPA) represents organic dairy producers in WI, MN, ND, SD, IA, NE, KS, MO, IL, IN, OH, & MI with the mission "to promote communication and networking for the betterment of all Midwest organic dairy producers and enhance a sustainable farmgate price." Objectives are:

1. To ensure a fair and sustainable farm gate price.
2. Keep family farms viable for future generations.
3. Promote ethical, ecological and humane farming practices.
4. Networking among producers of all organic commodities.
5. Promote public policy, research and education in support

MODPA Board Wisconsin

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Become A Member of MODPA!

Member dues are \$35 per year for which you receive our newsletter and become part of our team working for the best interests of all organic dairies.

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Certified Organic Dairy? Yes NO # of cows:

Transitioning: _____

I wish to support MODPA (check whatever applies):

By becoming a state rep or director:

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By providing a donation to support the work of MODPA:
\$_____ enclosed.

Please send this form to: Darlene Coehoorn, MODPA
Treasurer, N5868, Cty Hwy C, Rosendale, WI 54974

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Alliance (NODPA)**

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Classified Ads

(Continued from Classifieds, page 32)

Grow this variety and save your own seed. Also have spring wheat and oat seed for sale. Jack Lazor, Butterworks farm, 802-744-6855

For Sale:

4 Organic Holstein Heifer calves in good health, born 12-7-07 thru 1-1-08. From mostly AI sired closed herd in Upstate NY. Price \$500. each.

Contact Loyal Martin for more info.

loyalanesha@five95.net
315 783 0223

For Sale:

Five organic bred heifers for sale. Due in April. Holstein-New Zealand Friesian-Normande crosses.

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Please call David or MaryEllen Franklin directly at 802-254-2228. Farm is in Guilford, Vermont (southeast corner)



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