

# NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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Andy putting up temporary fencing for youngstock

## FEATURED FARM: THE MILKHOUSE FARM & DAIRY, Monmouth, Maine

By Sonja Heyck-Merlin

In 2015, organic dairy farmers, Andy Smith (30) and Caitlin Frame (30), closed a deal on a 280-acre farm in the town of Monmouth, Maine. The farm was the culmination of a search to find a location to produce milk for their already established creamery. The farm is an ideal set-

ting for a forage-based dairy with 150 acres of open land and a centrally-located farmstead.

Prior to finding the farm, they managed a micro-dairy in Lincolnville, Maine, and then moved onto one of Maine's original organic dairy farms: Two Loons Farm operated by Spencer Aitel and Paige Tyson. Andy worked

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## Forecast for Organic Dairy in 2018 & Beyond: Organic Dairy Producers' Thoughts on the Current State of Organic Dairy

*Introduction by Ed Maltby,  
NODPA Executive Director*

*Interviews with NODPA Members edited by  
Nora Owens, NODPA News Editor*

NODPA was formed 17 years ago by organic producers when pay price first became an issue, so what better folks to ask the

important questions as to the future of the market and organic dairy family farms than organic dairy producers. While there may be a general, underlying trend there is no one reason behind the success and failure of family farms, each are different. We hope that the answers given by these producers will put

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

### Message from the NODPA President

Every family has one – the person who brings their fervently held political beliefs into absolutely every conversation. So I was not really surprised when he showed up for a family dinner over the Holidays in a red “Make America Great Again” ball cap.

And I remembered a post from a farmer on ODairy where she stated that “making America great again” needs to translate into strengthening rural areas with support for small farms, for it is these small farms that support local businesses, creating jobs and community. A salesman from a local machinery dealership came by to drop off a new calendar. This year, he

had time for a coffee in the kitchen because things were so slow back at the office. “You know”, he said, “once your organic price crashed, so did our business.” And I hear this from other local vendors, too. They ask if this is a permanent price cut, or a temporary one. And I wish I had an answer.

In this issue of the NODPA News, we take a look at where we are, and how we may deal with the realities and the uncertainties in our markets. Some predict that things will turn around by the last half of 2018, some predict it will take until the end of the year. It is fair to say that we were unprepared for the drop in prices and the implementation of production restrictions in 2017. Let’s look ahead to prepare for the worst, while we hope for the best.

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## From the NODPA Desk: January 2018

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

**W**hat is the connection between the Organic Trade Association (OTA) and the Maine Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (MODPA)? OTA is actually suing the USDA and MODPA wants to sue them, both are accusing the USDA of undermining the integrity of the organic program. The green light given by the National Organic Program (NOP) to certifiers that it is OK to approve hydroponic operations for organic certification dates back to 2014, although they did not issue non-compliances to those that did so before then. The National Organic Standards Board's (NOSB) failure to vote against organic hydroponics in 2017 has given the NOP the opportunity to do nothing and allows the marketplace to take over with more certifiers willing to inspect and certify organic hydroponic operations. Hydroponics has already undermined the organic, soil based produce market.

Organic dairy has long known that there is a lack of consistency in implementing the access to pasture regulation and the one time exemption for transitioning operations. The lack of enforcement of these two regulations is part of the cause of the dramatic drop in pay price, with large scale dairies exploiting the loopholes and rapidly expanding their herds, skewing the supply side of the organic dairy market. Some Republicans on the Agriculture Committee are keen to take away the powers and diversity of the NOSB but it seems that the USDA NOP is already doing that month by month. It now dictates their work plan, the agenda of their public meetings, and what they can and cannot discuss at the committee level and in full NOSB sessions. NOSB started its life as a committee mandated under the Organic Farming and Production Act; it is now fast becoming just another federal advisory committee under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). There is no clear leadership at the NOP since Miles McEvoy left 6 months ago which is compounded by the fact that most decisions about the program are now made at the Executive level of the USDA rather than the program level.

In this issue, we have devoted a lot of space to producer's opinions on where we are going because we are a producer organization governed by producer mandate. The tactics and strategies that other groups are adopting are mainly focused on Washington DC and vary. Our friends at Cornucopia are always leading the charge with legal tactics (lawsuits, Freedom of Information requests) and consumer based activism in the form of petitions and attacks on the administration on the issues of the day. They always position themselves as an authority that can be trusted and valued; communicating issues clearly and provocatively in black and white terms that non-organic folks can understand. The Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (WODPA) has taken legal action against NOP on various issues and is advocating directly for an amendment to

Organic Food Protection Act (OFPA) to eliminate the one time allowance for transitioning from conventional to organic dairy. The majority of advocacy and lobbying groups in DC are wary of amending OFPA because they can't control what else a Republican administration will add or more importantly what they will take out that will dramatically affect the future integrity of the organic label. USDA has repeatedly tried to take the independence of the Organic Program away and reduce it to the level of just another marketing program. The organic program's protection is within OFPA and the organic community's leverage within Congress is small compared to other trade groups and the USDA.

NODPA is continuing its advocacy work with its membership with the National Organic Coalition (NOC), the National Sustainable Agricultural Coalition (NSAC) and most recently the Organic Farmers Association (OFA). Within all three, we promote the issues of organic dairy producers. NSAC does not have a high profile in organic but it recently supported the organic community's drive to have USDA implement the Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices Rule (Animal Welfare) immediately. NOC has set up an ad hoc committee to work on the organic dairy issues, especially around the capacity of all certifiers to certify large scale organic dairies. NOC has many other policies that it is advocating to be part of the Farm Bill and appropriations, both to safeguard the NOSB and provide research dollars for organic. OFA has recently started its policy development and is strong on dairy issues. It recently adopted the following three policies that directly affect organic dairies:

### **1. NOP should immediately issue Guidance on the interpretation of the one-time transition provision**

Nationwide there are inconsistencies on the interpretation and enforcement of the transition of livestock to organic, most often the variations are in organic dairy. Organic Farmers Association (OFA) recommends the NOP act immediately by issuing Guidance based on the language in the Proposed Origin of Livestock Rule published in 2015. The Guidance would clearly state that the provision for transitioning conventional cows to organic in one year is a one-time allowance and continuous transition of conventional livestock is not permitted.

### **2. OFA Recommendations for Enforcement of the NOP Access to Pasture for Organic Livestock Rule**

Organic stakeholders have expressed concerns about a lack of consistency in the enforcement of the Access to Pasture rule. There are physical and biological limitations to grazing milking cows daily and bringing the cows back to the milking facility multiple times per day. As herd sizes increase, it becomes increasingly difficult—and eventually impossible—to meet the grazing requirement, “that ruminants derive not less than an average of 30 percent of their dry matter intake (DMI) requirement from pasture grazed over the course of the grazing season.” Organic Farmers Association (OFA) recommends that the National Organic Program strengthen its enforcement of the Access to Pasture rule by immediately targeting the areas of higher risk for abuse by requiring the following for dairy herds of over 1000

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## Forecast for Organic Dairy in 2018 & Beyond: Organic Dairy Producers' Thoughts on the Current State of Organic Dairy

*continued from page 1*

the current crises in organic dairy in some perspective for each and every family. It is becoming increasingly apparent that pay price will not increase in 2018 and probably not in 2019. While the essence of organics is continuous improvement and investment, these next few years will be more like 2010-2013, but with higher costs of inputs. There will be little opportunity for investment in infrastructure and equipment or for improvements in the quality of life. Producers are resilient, but stubbornness must take second place to the reality of losing money over an extended period and the effect on family and quality of life. I hope the article below gives food for thought, examples of survival and reassurance that you are not in this alone.



### Ryan and Annie Murray Hidden Meadows Dairy Cincinnatus, New York

#### 1. What type of operations will survive 2018? Is it a case of bootstrapping and sacrifice for the next two years?

Farmers with well-structured operations won't be set back too far. Those that have been conservative in their spending and not carrying a lot of debt in the times of higher pay price should survive okay. Those that have let costs get away from them or invested in the farm infrastructure and/or new equipment may have difficulty. Those who will have difficulty may have allowed costs of production to increase while prices were higher and did planning based on prices they

were making then rather than planning for lower prices now. This is not to say that farmers shouldn't invest in their farms but if they are carrying more debt now, it will be stressful.

#### 2. Should our expectations be lowered to accept lower margins and cyclical supply conditions that determine pay price eventually becoming dependent on the world organic price?

I believe the answer is yes, unfortunately, at least keeping it in mind when pushing the pencil; planning on lower prices; it's hard to fight markets and long term trends. Organic dairy is similar to conventional

dairy and we've been doing this a long time. In the commodity market there are low margins and if you aren't an above average producer, it will be tough to make money. As organic dairy becomes more mainstream, it becomes more of a commodity. To get higher margins, there has to be a leading edge in management and production models. Even grass-fed is having problems right now, although those farmers are a bit more stable.

#### 3. How do operations plan for the future with increasing land prices and higher minimum wages?

Good business planning; pushing the pencil before making decisions; good financial decisions will all be necessary with rising land and labor prices. There will probably be

## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

more automation as labor costs go up, too. With increasing land prices, it may result in higher production per acre or moving to less expensive property.

### 4. What will organic dairy look like in 5 years?

I think we will move to 'Organic Plus' because traditional organic regulation is too easy to skirt at this point. 30% dry matter is a very low bar. Consumers think that cows are grazing much more. Perhaps the 'Organic Plus' market might include increased testing on milk, such as measuring CLA, Omega 3 levels, etc. Testing would be more scientific and objective than complying with Organic Certification rules.

### 5. What is the future of the existing grass fed standards and what can be done to safeguard

### producer leverage on pay price and contract conditions?

These producers might need to raise the standards, too, in order to ensure that the product remains different than regular organic, and that the market doesn't get flooded—keeping supply limited and demand up.

### 6. Other thoughts you might have?

We've been lucky; Upstate Niagara continues with the highest pay price in the area. My opinions might be a lot different if my pay price was lower. Also, having the security of having the same contract in 2018 that we had in 2017, and that it's not going away, is really important to us.

## Steve Morrison Clovercrest Farm Charleston, Maine

### 1. What type of operations will survive 2018? Is it a case of bootstrapping and sacrifice for the next two years?

Well capitalized and well run operations that are in it for the long haul will survive. If this is a temporary downturn, those making major investments recently will probably survive because they've made a commitment to it; who knows how far beyond they can survive. Most farmers can survive one year of low prices but after that it's questionable. Small family farms that are paid for and run by retirement-age farmers won't lose money for a long time in order to stay in the business and are most likely to exit. With no successors in line and 55+ years of age, they won't want to remain so long that they lose a lot of their assets with such low pay price.

### 2. Should our expectations be lowered to accept lower margins and cyclical supply conditions that determine pay price eventually becoming dependent on the world organic price?

It is a rational expectation but I cannot

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

### Steve Morrison Clovercrest Farm Charleston, Maine

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sustainable price and I need to be encouraged to remain doing this. For me, my expectation is to continue to look for increased money for my milk, not to settle for less. I can't continue for a long period of a low pay price; \$29.00/cwt will eat people up. We can't really operate for less than \$40.00/cwt, especially with labor and all of the other costs going up.

#### 3. How do operations plan for the future with increasing land prices and higher minimum wages?

My approach is to downsize. I am currently overstocked with animals and I need labor to assist with them and for putting up feed. And, in order to grow high quality feed, I need a lot of acres to use. So, if necessary, I will sell cows and downsize the operation, to look more like a small 2-person family farm.

#### 4. What will organic dairy look like in 5 years?

I think it will look a lot like it does right now: huge amount of "organic milk" from factory farms and imports, not necessarily from the Northeast. There will be a smaller percentage coming from family farms, as they find it less

accept that as the new normal and business plan for my farm. I don't have high profit margins and can't commit to an environment that doesn't have a

and less tenable. My sense is that the percentage coming from factory farms will surpass the percentage produced on small family farms as the prices fall.

#### 5. What is the future of the existing grass fed standards and what can be done to safeguard producer leverage on pay price and contract conditions?

There's no opportunity to ship grass-fed milk from Maine, at this time, so I don't have experience with grass-fed but I think it will be most important to get a standard that everyone can abide by. The standards discussed at the 2017 NODPA Field Days sounded like it would be voluntary (the Organic Valley standard), and so weak that anyone can claim it. It will be important to have established guidelines that are absolute and move forward. More science would be good, too. If there's a huge benefit of organic grass-fed milk compared to organic milk, then let's all capitalize on it. But, without a clear standard, there will be a lack of consumer confidence and that will impact sales.

#### 6. Other thoughts you might have?

The competition from non-dairy beverages (nut beverages, etc.) continues to be problematic. It is not environmentally sustainable, such as with Almonds, and can't be done on marginal land in New England, which can be done with cows in Maine. People don't think about the various impacts of these nut milks on the environment. Dairy is better for the future than nut milks.

### Liz Bawden Bawden Farm Hammond, New York

#### 1. What type of operations will survive 2018? Is it a case of bootstrapping and sacrifice for the next two years?

Operations that are more likely to survive will be those that have a handle on their operational costs; with lower debt; grow their own feed; have a good relationship with their lenders. A 25% or more drop in pay price requires more than belt tightening. Most ag lenders will work with you for a while but after 6+ months, it will likely require restructuring a farm's current debt



## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

load. Any additional programs (improving soil health, building maintenance, equipment purchases) to enhance the efficiency of the farm will have to be put on hold because there isn't any money to put into them. For example, we could save money by grinding our own grain but we'd need to purchase the grinder/mixer, storage bins, etc., and that is out of the question at this time.

### **2. Should our expectations be lowered to accept lower margins and cyclical supply conditions that determine pay price eventually becoming dependent on the world organic price?**

Remember where most of us have come from—if pay price continues to slide down and becomes a cyclical cycle mirroring the conventional market, many of us will go back. If the Organic premium doesn't cover the costs, grains, seeds, soil amendments, cow health products, etc., then we'll be better off in the conventional market. It's where most of us came from and while we don't like it, we need to survive. Although most of us will continue to farm organically, at least we understand the conventional market and we know that we can survive in it.

### **3. How do operations plan for the future with increasing land prices and higher minimum wages?**

Farming has always been this way. Twenty years ago, you could purchase land for \$350.00/acre around here but not anymore! Land costs have always been a factor for us. In organic farming, I always thought that if the farmer was better cared for via pay price that some of that should be passed along to the workers, and they should be better cared for, too, in a just and fair work environment. As margins shrink, all that goes away. Those farms that are more dependent on non-family labor will be impacted the most.

### **4. What will organic dairy look like in 5 years?**

This is a hard one. If the oversupply continues, it may not be much different. The only way into the market may be through a Canada-like quota system, where you buy a herd and farm with an established market/buyer. I've heard of some who are getting out are selling their herd

where the market already exists, similar to Canada model. I hope we get through this time and can gain knowledge and experience so that it won't happen again. And I hope I can look back and say that the NOP stepped up and enforced what they were supposed to be enforcing and made a level playing field for everyone. It would be nice....

### **5. What is the future of the existing grass fed standards and what can be done to safeguard producer leverage on pay price and contract conditions?**

We are not a grass-fed farm and I don't have a lot to say regarding their standards, but I do have some concerns about grass-fed operations. 2017 was a very difficult year to put up quality feed, with good energy and protein. So much of it is sub-standard feed with low energy and protein and it concerns me as to how this is impacting good cow care. The grass-fed people need to work this animal welfare issue out. How do you deal with it? If anybody paid attention to this, they might be the next ones under the gun from animal welfare advocates. When you take away tools from farms, you have to have something else in place, even though this is part of their marketing strategy.

### **6. Other thoughts you might have?**

It's a fearful situation out there for all of us. There's the trickle-down effect in my neighborhood. Other businesses are seriously impacted by the organic milk market crash. A local equipment sales person is having a lot of trouble, too. It's no surprise that conventional farmers have little sympathy for us, either. However, our costs have been different; debt load is different; we could fix up our buildings and make infrastructure changes. We expanded when possible in a time of growth; committed to a fair amount of debt when you didn't expect a huge drop in price. When it crashed so rapidly, there's not enough time to change your debt load. People didn't expect this reality and aren't prepared for it. Everyone has to figure it out themselves, and we don't know how long this will last. Industry people say maybe by the end of 2018 but how long will this impact the pay price? We just don't know how long this will last.

## **Forecast for Organic Dairy in 2018 & Beyond: Organic Dairy Producers' Thoughts on the Current State of Organic Dairy**

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## A Summary of the NOSB Fall Meeting

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

**O**n October 31 thru November 2, 2017, the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) held its biannual public meeting in Jacksonville, Florida. Over the course of the three-day meeting, NOSB voted on 16 proposals and 43 Sunset Review inputs. Of the 16 proposals, 6 passed, 6 failed and 4 were tabled. Under the Sunset 2019 National List review process, NOSB recommended the removal of 4 production inputs that were judged as no longer necessary or essential in organic production and handling.

The NOSB failed to make a decision on one of the most divisive issues in the organic community and at the meeting: should crops grown in water, containers, or otherwise not in the ground be allowed to call themselves organic? The NOSB proposal to prohibit hydroponics and aquaponics practices under the USDA organic standards failed by a margin of 8 to 7 votes. As there are 15 NOSB members, 10 votes are needed to decisively pass any

recommendation. In addition, the proposal to create guidelines for other soil-based container production systems failed by a vote of 8 to 7. This decision allowed the NOP to let the status quo continue and, despite the fact that there are no production practices for hydroponics, hydroponic and container operations will still remain eligible for organic certification.

Despite great efforts to reach consensus, the balance of interest remained divided. The vast majority of organic farmers insisted that only farms growing crops in soil, in the ground, can be called organic. Another group of mostly larger operations promoted inclusion for organic hydroponic and aquaponic operations provided they follow strong standards based on organic principles (whatever that may mean!). A third group advocated for prohibiting air/water-based aeroponic, hydroponic and aquaponic operations, but allowing soil-based container systems provided that certain restrictions and requirements be met. A number of commenters suggested NOSB consider a labeling approach for hydroponics, whereby hydroponics and aquaponics remain allowed in organic production, but those producers would be required to label their products as "hydroponically grown" so that consumers can have transparency on the growing methods. While not a proposal formally considered by NOSB at this meeting, a number of NOSB



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members appeared to see a labeling approach as an alternative compromise and expressed their wish that this topic be considered at future NOSB meetings. It is unclear whether labeling of soil-less production systems will be added to NOSB's work plan for 2018. As clarified by NOP following the votes, USDA organic certification of hydroponics, aquaponics and container production will continue to be allowed as it has been since 2002.

The main groups that benefit from hydroponic farms being able to get organic certification are large agribusinesses. Those firms, which include Driscoll's and Wholesum Harvest, operate gigantic hydroponic operations for their organic food. Those that will lose because of this decision are the vast majority of organic farmers who follow both the intent and the spirit of organic regulations. This is yet another case of flagrant abuse of organic regulations being allowed by a few certifiers and becoming established as an acceptable part of organic production. It becomes acceptable because of the economic volume of sales and the ability of a few companies to lobby extensively. That is the case for the current abuses of the grazing requirements in organic dairy and outside access for organic poultry operations.

Other significant topics of this meeting included a proposal to address the issue of organic fraud; a proposal on how to best strengthen the requirement for using organic seed; a proposal

to eliminate incentives to convert native ecosystems to organic production; and a proposal that classifies three new genetic technologies as "excluded methods" and therefore prohibited in organic production and handling.

Below is a summary of votes and issues that directly affect organic dairy producers:

- 1. Use of Parasiticides:** The Sub-committee presented a proposal for clarifying when parasiticides can be used on livestock. Currently the use is only allowed on dairy animals not for organic slaughter and only under "emergency situations." Their attempt to define what emergency situations meant did not receive the support of many commentators and that enough public comment had been received with suggestions for improving the recommendation so it wanted additional time to refine and modify the proposal. NOSB voted to refer this proposal back to subcommittee and will revisit the issue at the spring meeting.
- 2. Hypochlorous acid:** It had been petitioned as a synthetic substance for addition to the National List at \$205.603 as a topical treatment for pinkeye and wounds in livestock. In light of the many non-synthetic materials available and in

*continued on page 10*



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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## A Summary of the NOSB Fall Meeting

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use by organic livestock producers for wounds and pink eye, the Subcommittee did not think it necessary to add a chlorine-based synthetic material to the National List for the same use. NOSB voted unanimously to reject the petition that chlorine material could be used in direct contact with organic livestock.

3. **Addition of Sulfur to the National List:** A petition to add sulfur as a practice to prevent and treat external parasites, particularly on poultry, was discussed by NOSB. They voted to recommend adding sulfur to the National List for use as an external parasiticide on livestock and poultry. The recommendation will now proceed down the long path to regulation and publication on the Federal Register before it can be used by producers.

4. **Removal of Oxytocin from the National List:** There was a recommendation to remove oxytocin from the National List. Oxytocin is used in post-parturition therapy, primarily in cattle, to treat conditions such as retained placenta.

It is also used illegally by organic producers when freshly calved cows do not drop their milk. There are a number of natural alternative methods to treating retained placenta and the Board voted unanimously to remove this material as part of the 2019 Sunset Review.

5. **Removal of Procaine from the National List:** Procaine is used as a local anesthetic to reduce pain when performing minor surgeries or allowed physical alterations (de-horning, castra-

tion, etc.) on organic livestock. Procaine is not currently available except when it is combined with antibiotics and no compliant procaine formulas are currently available. Commenters also stated that lidocaine can be used as an alternative to procaine. The NOSB voted 14 in favor, 1 against the proposal so Procaine will be removed from the National List as part of the Sunset Review process.

The following will be renewed as part of the 2019 Sunset Review process:

1. **Chlorine Materials** (Calcium hypochlorite, Chlorine Dioxide, Sodium Hypochlorite) – vote of 15 to zero but we will be hearing more discussion on the suitability of different sanitizers in the future.
2. **Chlorhexidine** – Used as an antimicrobial during surgery for cleansing wounds, skin, and equipment. Also used as a pre and post teat dip to aid in controlling bacteria that cause mastitis. There are numerous synthetic disinfectants currently on the National List for organic livestock production, including iodine, ethanol, isopropanol, sodium hypochlorite, and hydrogen peroxide. Not all are useful both in a surgical environment and as a teat dip, as allowed under the chlorhexidine annotation. Chlorhexidine

*continued on page 25*



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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## Forecast for Organic Dairy in 2018 & Beyond

*continued from page 7*

### Cliff Hawbaker Hamilton Heights Dairy Chambersburg, PA

#### 1. What type of operations will survive 2018? Is it a case of bootstrapping and sacrifice for the next two years?

To survive in 2018, we need to ask: What's the most profitable strategy for each individual farm? There is no one strategy. We're seeing a depressed market due to oversupply. As farmers, we need to be careful. If quotas are the rule, this forces producers to produce less. If I decide to produce less, I get hurt. I need to maintain production and there are certain economics there—it's Business 101. Farmers start thinking that if we all decrease production, that'll mean prices rise for all and we will all get more money. In reality, it's never worked. When you produce less, you make less money. Competition is the real answer. With fewer companies controlling processing and therefore decreasing competition this will depress price. Those who keep to their business plans will survive. Yes, it will mean less money for a time—you have got to flow with the market. I think bootstrapping is too negative a term, instead, I need to look at the opportunities that exist for my farm, for example, feeding replacement calves and beef calves milk we have available rather than spend money on expensive milk replacer. Being creative in seeking new revenue avenues will help every operation get through this year.

#### 2. Should our expectations be lowered to accept lower margins and cyclical supply conditions that determine pay price, eventually becoming dependent on the world organic price?

Should we expect lower margins? We should expect lower pay price but not necessarily lower margins. Both organic and conventional farms can over-produce; supply management will always be a challenge. I'm sure that organic milk will be produced for less than the US can do it, so really, the locally produced and marketed milk will be the winner in the future. People, especially millennials, are increas-



ingly more aware of where their food comes from and are more particular about what they chose. Organics tries to make it transparent where the milk comes from and how it's produced. Increasingly, more people will seek it out. Lower margins will depend on us farmers. Expect lower pay price but not long term lower margins. We have to operate in a positive way and seek positive solutions.

#### 3. How do operations plan for the future with increasing land prices and higher minimum wages?

This is a good question because the young guys starting out are dealing with higher land and labor costs, as well as being able to attract good help. It's important that we look at the farm as what's its potential is from the soil up. It must feed itself and produce—this is my definition of sustainability. Whether it's the land, checkbook or milk market, it must sustain itself. I believe that soil health is the essence of life. Too often, we as farmers, including me, set sights on what we want our farms to be, whether dairy, raising chickens, vegetables, etc., and we get locked in rather than looking at the farm's potential. What's the quality and type of soil; land characteristics? As we pay more for land, demand for land with high organic value will rise. The more productive the soil, the higher the price will be. I think we may move toward swapping land with

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## Cliff Hawbaker

### Hamilton Heights Dairy

### Chambersburg, PA

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other farmers, for example vegetable producers, whose soil could benefit from having cows on it for a time, and the vegetables have a higher quality. Collaborating with farmers to enhance soils to make the most of the soil and build it up. Some farmers look to increase value-added products at their farm rather than improving the farm's natural productivity (the soil). The farm itself needs to be a profit center. Infrastructure challenges will exist with this type of scenario but perhaps these younger farmers will begin to figure out how to invest in more temporary structures in order to accommodate a more mobile use of farm land. Portability will be necessary. Most importantly, farmers need to think outside of the box and we have the skills to solve these problems. Opportunity will exist if we do so.

Why aren't organic farmers producing milk as inexpensively as conventional farmers? We have more expenses, true, but we can decrease our expenses, such as eliminating grain. When are we going to promote what's in our food rather than what's not in it?

#### 4. What will organic dairy look like in 5 years?

I think that organic dairy will continue to grow slowly while conventional dairy will continue its slow decline.

The problem is that we haven't figured out how to produce organic milk at a lower price. We need to produce at a price so that it can go to the masses. We sell to about 4% of the population now. What if we were to be selling to about 25%? Where would it be coming from? We could do this in the next five years by producing milk at the same price as conventional if we put our minds to it. But, the level of regulations has hampered production. It's a big governmental swamp and it seems like we are regulating everything so we can keep supply down. These regulations are keeping people out of organic when they want to get in.

#### 5. What is the future of the existing grass fed standards and what can be done to safeguard producer leverage on pay price and contract conditions?

I don't have a full answer for this question just yet. I think the standards that are currently being developed represents a good start and it might be time to make these national standards. I'm ambivalent about having only one standard. I believe that we may need a hierarchy of standards, good, better, best. Consumers can be the judges by buying the one that they like the most. If you only have one standard, then all of that milk becomes the same, whereas quality might really be different and should be rewarded. In some cases, grass-fed conventional milk might be better than grass-fed organic milk! My passion is in grass-fed, so I want it to be really successful and to have farmers rewarded for the milk their cows produce.

## Kathie Arnold

### Twin Oaks Dairy

### Truxton, New York

#### 1. What type of operations will survive 2018? Is it a case of bootstrapping and sacrifice for the next two years?

What farms will survive depends on many factors:

- Who the farms ships to, as there is currently a considerable spread in pay price;
- How much debt a farm has and whether their lowered pay price can still support that debt load plus other farm expenses;
- Whether a family member(s) has an off farm job or someone who can take an off farm job so that their income can support the



## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

family and perhaps somewhat financially support the farm to allow the operation to survive until a better pay price comes around;

- Whether or not the farm/family has assets or other enterprises that can help allow the farm to make it through a potential period of negative net income;
- Whether the weather in 2018 breaks for a good pasture and crop year or whether it will be a year of lowered pasture and crop yields because of drought, like 2016 in the Northeast, or a year of excess rain, like 2017, that meant lowered quality of harvestable crops and a difficult year for quality grazing;
- What happens with farm input costs such as grain and fuel;

### 2. How do operations plan for the future with increasing land prices and higher minimum wages?

I am not sure how much farmland price rise there has been in central NY recently. Prices bumped up considerable after 9/11 (urban people looking for a safe place in the countryside). \$1000 an acre is most likely the very minimum per acre price here now, whereas we purchased land

in the last ten to fifteen years that we paid from less than \$500 to \$700 (granted, both parcels flood). That sounds (and is) very cheap compared to many states but that is paired with higher land taxes per thousand of value. But at least those taxes can be deducted and NYS allows farmers a tax credit for school taxes paid. If farm land (especially good quality farmland) becomes available that is contiguous or near to one's farm, if one can figure out a means to purchase it, it will only make the farm more valuable and viable so it will still be worth exploring any possible avenues to purchase.

As to minimum wage hikes, I am a believer in hiring high quality help, if possible, and that requires paying a good wage. Mistakes or the overlooking of potential issues can be costly so having employees who are attentive, knowledgeable, and either already skilled or quick to learn can save a farm as much as their higher wages might cost. I also am mindful that employees need a living wage and people are more apt to become long term employees if they are adequately compensated. Turnover has its costs too. Perhaps the higher minimum wage levels are more of

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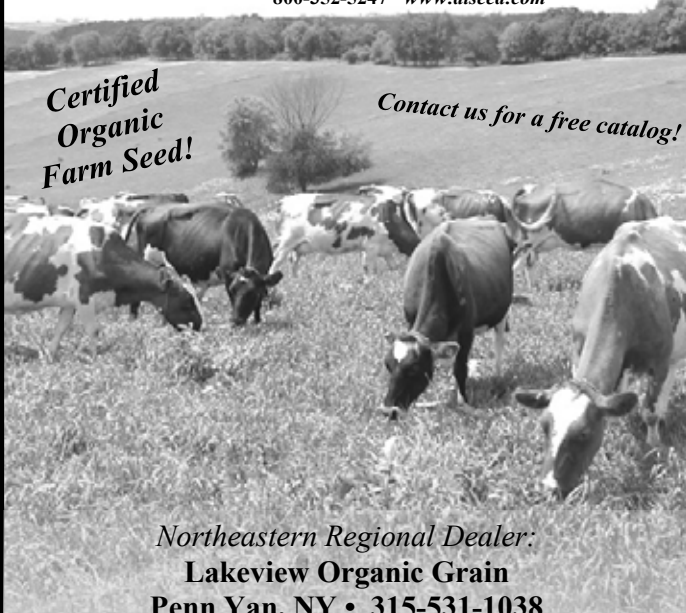


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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

### **Kathie Arnold** **Twin Oaks Dairy** **Truxton, New York**

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an issue if a farm has lots of low skilled manual labor that makes up the job description.

#### **3. What will organic dairy look like in 5 years?**

I have been shipping certified organic milk for almost 20 years now and this is by far the most significant downturn in organic milk pay price that I have witnessed. Given this, and the fact that Aurora Dairy is building a new processing plant in Columbia, MO to process the milk of 30,000 cows for their "cow to carton" business model, I am not sure what the picture will look like in 5 years. 30,000 more Aurora cows, given their high production system, will likely pro-

duce the milk of 500 or more average organic dairy farms in the Northeast. If the market for organic milk keeps growing at a good clip, the market may be able to absorb that new milk without much more than the current downturn. But, if the growth in the market levels off, we may be in a situation of a long term trough, meaning lack of market opportunities for new organic farmers and a longer term low pay price for existing producers. I still think the majority of organic producers are likely to be in a somewhat better place than conventional dairy producers, who are also in a low price trough along with some conventional farms losing their milk market with no other market options available. The loss of a market is also a potential risk for organic producers who do not belong to a cooperative who may be at risk of being given notice by their buyer. Unfortunately, I think the next 5 years are much more uncertain and unstable for organic dairy producers than has been seen since the early days of the market.

### **Forrest Stricker** **Spring Creek Farms** **Wernersville, PA**

#### **1. What type of operations will survive 2018?**

When we went to visit the farms in New Zealand in 1997, they were producing conventional milk for \$6/cwt and making a profit. What we observed was that they had low cost milking parlors; milking a lot of cows per man; minimal equipment/tractors and were 100% grass fed. I believe that is the type of operations that will survive--those that can produce milk at a lower cost per cwt.

#### **2. Is it a case of bootstrapping and sacrifice for the next two years?**

Yes. We will need to be very cost conscious.

#### **3. Should our expectations be lowered to accept lower margins and cyclical supply conditions that determine pay price eventually becoming dependent on the world organic price?**

*continued on page 20*



# ***“Nothing else compares to Udder Comfort..”***

— Stephanie Hughes



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*The Hughes family with Meadow Ridge Maestro Petunia EX92. The 8-yr-old was 2015 Supreme of Central WI Fair.*

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She and Alan started their own Sunsett Dairy near Pittsville, Wisconsin July 5, 2015. She runs the herd, he does the crops. They met at Univ. of Wisconsin, River Falls: he in agriculture, she in dairy science. They worked and saved to make their dreams reality. Alan also serves as Wisconsin Air National Guard F-16 crew chief and part-time aircraft mechanic.

“We love the effectiveness. Nothing else compares to Udder Comfort,” Stephanie adds. “The other night we had one with a hard quarter, applied Udder Comfort, and by the next night it was gone.

“Be flexible, and roll with it,” she says is good advice they have learned since they started their own dairy. “That’s also true for the cows. It’s good to have this versatile product to rely on.”

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

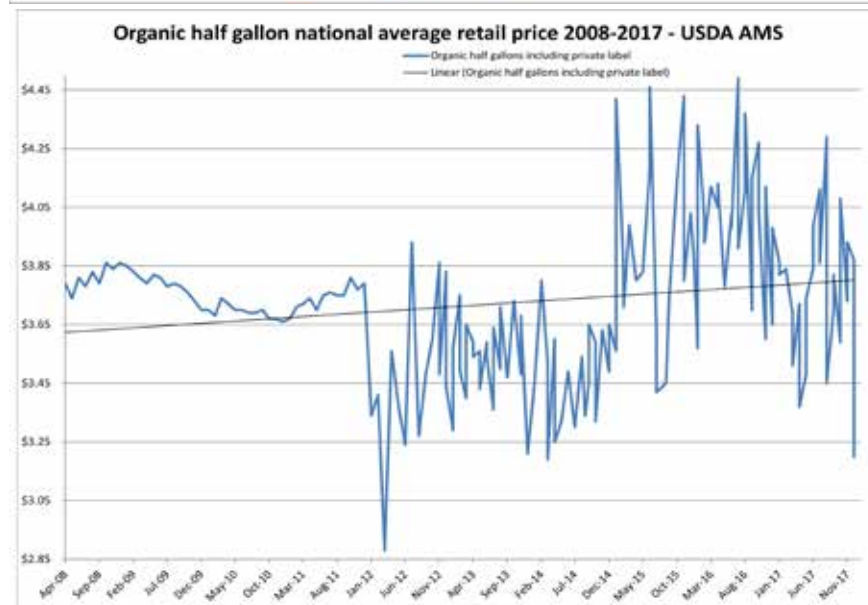
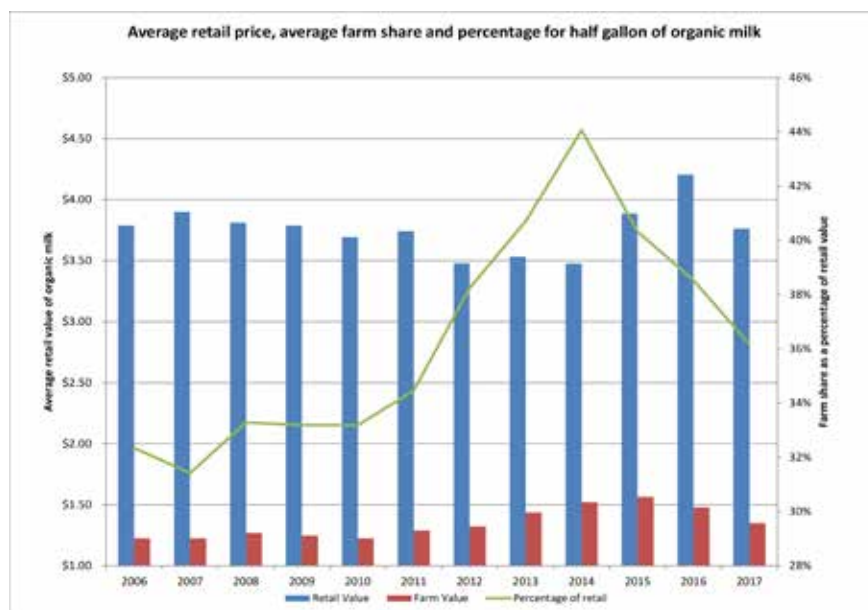
# Organic Milk Pay, Retail and Feed Prices: January 2018

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

Organic milk sales are not growing, with organic non-fat sales dropping, but sales of plant-based milk are rising with the Wall Street Journal reporting an increase of 2.9 percent in sales in 2017. However, the largest gains in milk sales were seen by specialty milk which would include products like lactose-free.

USDA AMS reports that total organic fluid milk sales were marginally higher January-October 2017 as compared to the same period in 2016, with whole milk sales nationally expanding at a consistent rate. Retail pricing was down on average for December 2017, at a low that was last seen in December 2013. Retail pricing varies enormously by brand, private label and region so is not a great indicator of the response by milk buyers in pricing to increased supply. The organic bovine milk continues to have to compete with vegetable and nut juices that call themselves milk, but are basically a few ground-up nuts and water and usually loaded with sugar. Hopefully at some point there will be more exposes on the veracity of the organic claim plus the health benefits of the juices. Unfortunately the two national milk buyers prefer to diversify their products by expanding their selection of non-bovine products. DanoneWave is investing over \$60 million in their plant based manufacturing facility in Virginia rather than promote the benefits of bovine milk at the expense of vegetable juices.

USDA AMS reports total organic milk products sales for October 2017 were 218 million pounds, up 0.4 percent from the previous October 2016 and up 0.2 percent, January-October, compared with the same period in 2016. Total organic whole milk products sales for October 2017, 87 million pounds, were up 6.8 percent compared with October last year and up 6.5 percent, January-October, compared with the same



## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

period of 2016.

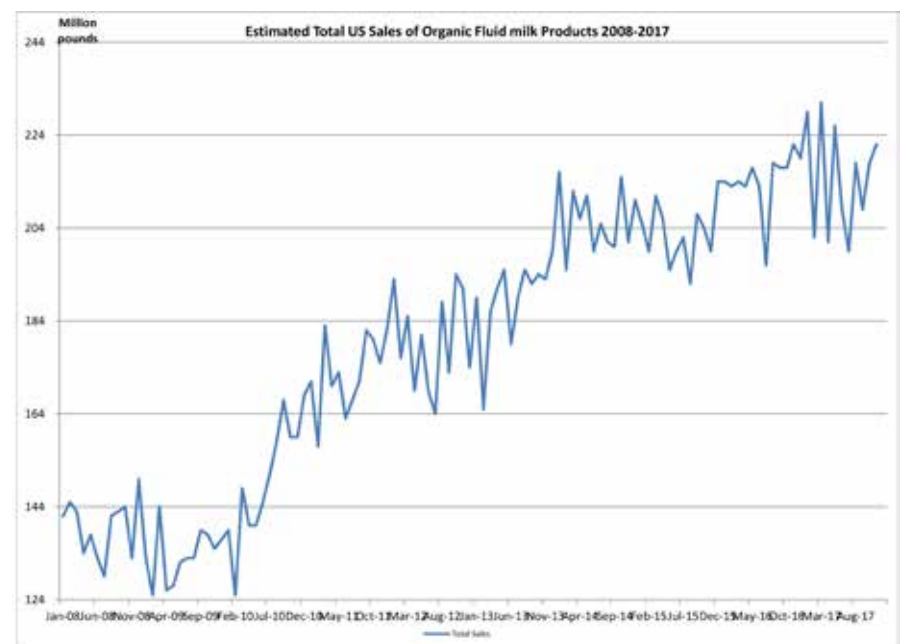
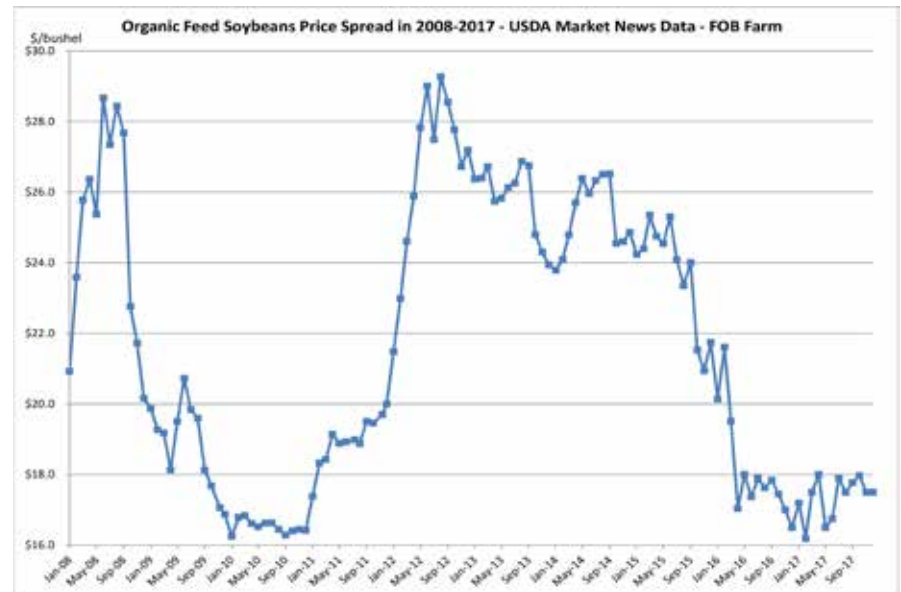
Federal Milk Market Order 1 in New England reports that during November, 2017, organic

whole milk utilization by pool plants totaled 15.1 million pounds, down from 15.8 million pounds one year earlier. Organic reduced fat milk utilization for November 2017, 20.6 million pounds, was down from 22.6 million pounds one year earlier.

The supply side can be summed up by a quote from Stonyfield Farms in a letter sent to producers: "Unfortunately, at this time, Stonyfield (owned by Lactalis) remains committed to our existing producers, consumers and the New England dairy industry. Stonyfield is not taking on any new dairy producers through 2018." None of the organic milk buyers are taking on new producers and DanoneWave is sending 6 month notices of cancellation instead of renewing some contracts.

DanoneWave and CROPP have lowered their pay price. As of December 2017 CROPP have predicted a base pay price average for New England of \$29.52 for 2018 which includes a quality premium of \$1.80 but no deductions for stop charges or other coop overheads. This is a drop averaging \$10 per cwt from 2014. The pay price for their organic Grassfed program is \$33.52 per cwt. For the Northeast region, the pay price is slightly lower at \$29.27 for organic milk, and organic Grassfed at \$33.98. Danone-Wave do not publish their pay price and it will vary by contract but producer reports have the price averaging that of CROPP cooperative. There is no guarantee that the pay prices will remain that high and in the CROPP cooperative calculator the summer pay-price is down to \$25 per cwt. The only company not to lower their pay price significantly has been Upstate Niagara in western New York that has exercised supply management and restricted its supply to a specific region to control trucking and overhead expense.

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## Pay &amp; Feed Price

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The changes in the organizational and business structures of organic buyers will further compound the uncertainty of the organic pay-price in 2018. Lactalis (Stonyfield) is an unknown as to whether they will expand their own pool of milk or look to others to supply their raw milk. The other question very pertinent to New England is whether they will expand their facility in New Hampshire or look to building new plants in more cost effective regions. Lactalis has entered into a deal to acquire Siggis, a producer of Icelandic style skyr yogurts. Siggis' products are sold in retailers including Stop & Shop, Meijer, Publix, and Whole Foods Market. In 2017, the company saw topline growth of 50 percent and projects similar results this year, according to Siggis' president. Lactalis plans to use the acquisition to expand the company's yogurt platform in the U.S.

DanoneWave is not new to the market but the parent company (Danone) has made changes to the management because of a 2.2% drop in third quarter sales. Mariano Lozano, previously CEO of The Danone Company, has been appointed CEO of DanoneWave, under Francisco "Paco" Camacho who leads Danone's Essential Dairy and Plant-Based (EDP) International

business division which includes DanoneWave in North America. Danone CFO Cecile Cabanis is quoted in the Wall St. Journal with this prediction: "The premium dairy business continues to be pressured by the industry's oversupply of organic milk. We continue to take steps to reduce our organic-milk supplies." They have also shown their willingness to cancel contracts by using non-organic provisions within the contracts, for example producers diverting some of their milk for direct marketing. Inevitably, the shrinking margins and cheaper raw milk for buyers will lead to contracts being cancelled because of expensive trucking routes and smaller pickup volumes in the Northeast. Producers need to read any new contracts carefully, despite their lack of leverage and no choice in milk buyers. The brochures Making the Most of Your Milk Check and When Your Processor Requires More than Organic Certification are still relevant and available on the NODPA website or by calling 413-772-0444 for a free copy.

CROPP Cooperative faces its own upper management challenges. George Siemon gave 10 year notice of his planned retirement - about 9 years ago. With the situation for organic dairy going from bad to worse and finances at CROPP continuing to suffer due to poor decisions made by management, George Siemon is quoted in the January 2nd 2018 Wall Street Journal article "Dairies Are Awash in Organic Milk as Consumers Jump to Alternatives" with this admission, "The market slowed way down. There are a lot of signals I may have missed in hindsight." The question

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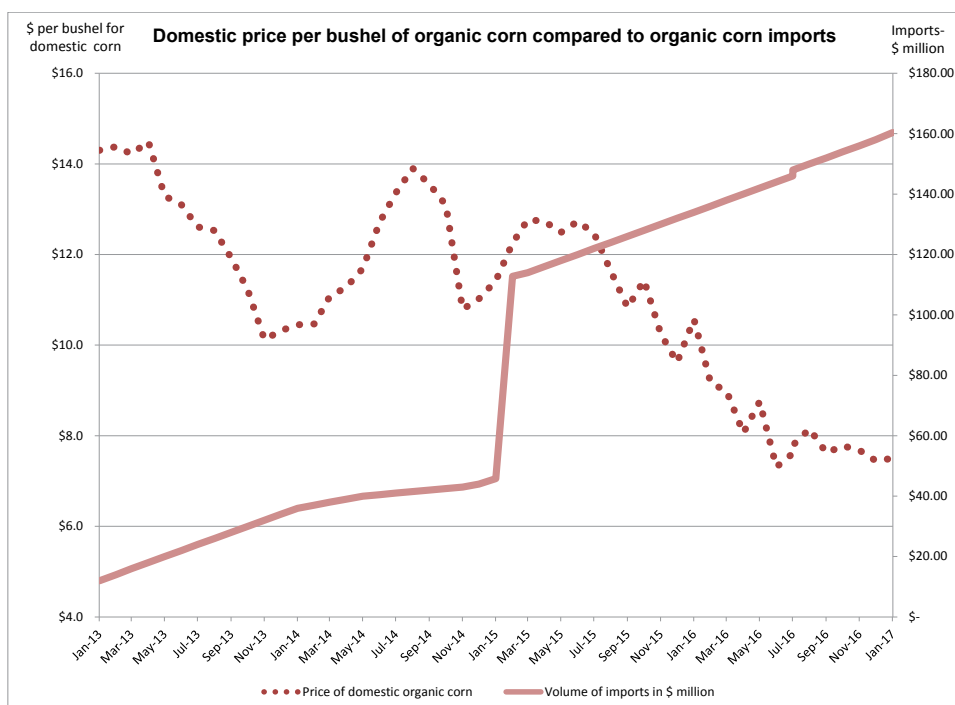

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mark must be around the experience and competency of the new breed of management who will run the company that George has dominated from its inception.

NODPA does not have the resources to access Nielsen data but I will summarize the situation with this quote from the January 2nd Wall Street Journal article by Heather Haddon and Benjamin Parkin.

*"The honeymoon ended in 2017. Organic milk sales fell in volume and dollar terms for the first time since at least 2013, Nielsen data shows. Organic milk sales at select grocery and convenience stores peaked at more than \$1.42 billion in 2016, falling to \$1.37 billion in 2017, according to Nielsen sales figures."*

The lower price for feed and protein may be a life-saver for some organic dairies but it is not beneficial for organic soybean and corn growers. Prices for organic feed corn and soybean remain at the same un-economic level for domestic



production of \$8.50 for corn and \$17.50 for soybean. Progress on greater scrutiny and accountability for imports continues with various bills being introduced in Congress and more actions from the NOP. ♦

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

### **Forrest Stricker** **Spring Creek Farms** **Wernersville, PA**

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The only way to avoid that is by developing your own local markets and working with your local handler to set your own price and not be dependent on the global market price. There could be tariffs placed on incoming “certified organic” milk that is produced in other countries where workers are paid below our minimum wage. And AMERICAN standard NOP rules are enforced on foreign “organic” grain and dairy products.

#### **4. How do operations plan for the future with increasing land prices and higher minimum wages?**

Renting land vs purchasing; sharing assets with neighboring farms (equipment, employees??)

#### **5. What will organic dairy look like in 5 years?**

NOP is not enforcing the grazing organic standards and so now the consumer is losing confidence in the integrity of organic product. Our milk processor was questioned by one of his customers who said “so now organic milk cows do not have to graze any more”. This is being reinforced by newspaper articles and some of the gigantic dairies are NOT adhering to the grazing standards. We need local producers that ship to local

processors/handlers/dairies who can answer these questions honestly and where the consumer can actually come to a dairy producer’s farm and see that the animals are being treated humanely and ARE grazing.

#### **6. What is the future of the existing grass fed standards?**

I believe that the grass fed standards needs more producer input and not be solely written by 2 milk companies and 2 organic certifying agencies, NOFA New York and PCO. We want to have greater input into the standards that are going to be imposed on us. At the Lancaster County Grazing Conference on February 20-21 in Quarryville, PA, we are going to get producer input on the new proposed grass fed standards. These suggestions will be taken back to one of the agencies mentioned above. This is how we are planning to get our message into the new standards.

#### **7. And, what can be done to safeguard producer leverage on pay price and contract conditions?**

I believe the future of organic dairy is going to be 100% grass fed milk and the reason for that is grain lowers the nutritional quality of the milk. The consumer is looking for the nutritional quality of milk. We safeguard the pay price by working with a LOCAL processor where communication and integrity are shared by both parties.

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### **Anonymous Farmer**

**This farmer’s identity is being withheld because they asked for anonymity**

#### **1. Organic dairies that have a better chance of surviving in 2018 include those that:**

- Are better graziers
- Have invested in their genetics, soils, crops, management practices and infrastructure (ie. are better dairy farmers)
- Are members of a milk cooperative and have better organic milk markets (such as Upstate Niagara Coop in NYS)

- Are not over leveraged (i.e. are better business managers)
  - Have been certified organic dairy producers for a number of years (i.e. have more experience)
  - Put up their own good quality feed (i.e. not indebted to feed mills and in jeopardy of being shut off)
  - Are large scale “conventional organic” dairies (i.e. like Aurora)
  - Are large vertically integrated operations (i.e. like Aurora)
  - Are not complying with the intent and letter of the law under the NOP (i.e. like Aurora and heifer ranches with continuous transition of conventional cattle)
-

## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

- Have the political influence and deep pockets to avoid non-compliance actions and/or decertification by the NOP (i.e. like Aurora)

### 2. Organic dairies most at risk in 2018 include those that:

- Have no milk market
- Are already at elevated risk of losing their organic milk market (Maine Danone shippers?)
- Recently transitioned to organic
- Recently transitioned to 100% grassfed organic
- Took on too much debt
- Have a contractual (only) relationship with their milk buyer
- Have milk markets with smaller niche companies, like Maple Hill Creamery
- Are members of and ship milk to Organic Valley
- Already had been relying on off farm income to support their farming habit

Most organic dairies will have to sacrifice and bootstrap to get through the next year or two.

DFA and its approach to “supporting dairy farmers” will increasingly be the model for what is happening in the organic dairy world. The existing domestic organic dairy can’t compete in the world market, where shady inspections, dubious oversight and fraud prevail.

Note: a new certification (add-on-to-organic) is needed that ONLY allows milk produced in the US, but no one is pursuing that.

Processors have imported organic product for years, and worked to break down barriers that would slow this trend.

Organic dairy, as we have known it for the past couple decades, is dead. We will have to make the best of this new era, which includes the 100% grassfed organic market. As has long been the case with conventional dairy, only the most stubborn family-scale organic dairies with the best

managers will be able to ride this new wave.

I don’t like thinking what organic dairy will look like in 5 years – it’s too depressing. There will still be family dairies, but most will have tightened their belts and be getting by without the kind of investment and quality of life we’ve only enjoyed in more recent years. A lot of organic land will have been lost to ever-expanding large scale conventional confinement operations.

Organic companies are scrambling to try to differentiate themselves in the marketplace (100% grassfed, FARM, additional Animal Care Standards, additional pasture requirements, additional in-house inspections, etc.). I believe milk handlers that have been leaders in the organic market and have relied upon the good and growing market conditions of the past couple decades will be in serious trouble. Will they survive the new era for organic dairy with competition from the Big Guns? I suspect not.

CROPP may be most at risk as they’ve not run a “tight ship” in all the years we’ve been members, and do not have the experience, discipline or the management in place to compete under the new market circumstances. CROPP has chosen to focus on eliminating competitors like Maple Hill Creamery (another company that is unlikely to be solvent in 5 years), ignoring the elephant in the room – Big Food. DanoneWave has a 100%

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# Independent Tests Show Benefits of “New-to-the-US” Harrows

*The NODPA News occasionally features articles and information about and from our advertisers. This month, we are passing along information on new and innovative production equipment that is finding its way to the United States from Europe.*

**A**s winter snows insulate one of our greatest assets, now is a great time to consider how to best manage this asset, your land, and maximize its productivity this spring. Whether your operation requires the production and management of thick healthy forage for grazing or highly nutritious hay, or you are venturing into the realm of cover crops, following are a few primary considerations aimed at helping you accomplish these tasks with great success:

- Maximize your soil exposure providing positive seed-to-soil contact, which will greatly improve germination.
- Maintain uniform seed distribution across the seeding surface area to maximize production and minimize seed costs.
- Complete the necessary, yet beneficial, tasks as quickly as possible while reducing risks for compaction by eliminating the need to pass through the field multiple times.

Ensuring you have the right implements for grass management and cover crops can make the difference in meeting these considerations and boosting your production and efficiency. Two series of implements designed to do just that arrived on the US scene in 2017 from APV America Inc.: the GP Series and GK Series harrows. Earlier in 2017, *topagrar* Austria—one of the key agriculture journals in Europe—reviewed the GP 300 Pro Harrow with rollers and found it to be a “true professional.” By combining several necessary functions into one implement and offering flexibility and ease of use, these harrows are a new innovation for both grass management and cover crop seeding.

The *topagrar* team tested the 9-foot 10-inch wide GP 300 Pro Harrow with Cambridge rollers and a PS 300 Pneumatic Seeder on field preparation, cover crop seeding and overseeding of grasses. They found that the spring-mounted leveling bar evened out soft mounds and the two rows each of heavy gauge (12mm) and finer gauge (8 mm) spring tines combed out shallow-rooted weeds. The tines also lightly aerated the soil, putting it in prime condition to receive the seed. Further, their tests showed that existing field residue was appropriately redistributed without clogging the tines.



**GK 300 working on a steep hill.**

The PS 300 Pneumatic (air) Seeder used for the test had an electric fan, although a hydraulic fan is available as an option for high seeding rates. The test included trials of 3 different seed metering rolls, which are used with seed from grass to legumes and were changed within just a few minutes each for each interchange. The test also included the new 6.2 touch screen controller for the PS 300 air seeder and noted that it made for quick and easy calibration. The unit included the optional calibration button that eliminated the need for getting in and out of the tractor cab during calibration operations. The test team appreciated that the controller could store, in memory, each calibration setting, which eliminated the need for recalibration with each specific seed type. They also noted the 6.2 controller benefits of being able to increase or decrease the seeding rate by up to 50% while the tractor is in motion. They utilized this feature to manage application rates while moving over thin or bare spots in the field.

The *topagrar* team clearly stated that it is important to make the hydraulic adjustments to the roller assembly, utilizing its weight, to ensure accurate depth control and adapt to existing field conditions. The team expressed appreciation for the easy access to the seeder by means of the access ladder and platform and easy removal of any remaining product in the hopper.

*Topagrar* concluded that, compared to the combination of a cultivator with a seeder, the GP 300 Pro Harrow provided a finer seedbed, better aeration, and superior seed-to-soil contact for improved results under dry conditions with minimal maintenance to the implement. And, under sufficiently moist conditions, the tests recorded that seeding with the GP 300 Pro Harrow while applying seed at 0.1, 0.2 or 0.3 bushels per acre produced indistinguishable results, in visible successful seedlings, from the cultivator/seeder combination applying seed at 0.4 bushels per acre, suggesting a clear opportunity to reduce costs through reduced seed use.

Finally, the team successfully completed the tests at a higher speed than other methods, with smooth operation at speeds of nearly 10 miles per hour.

The team's key conclusions were:

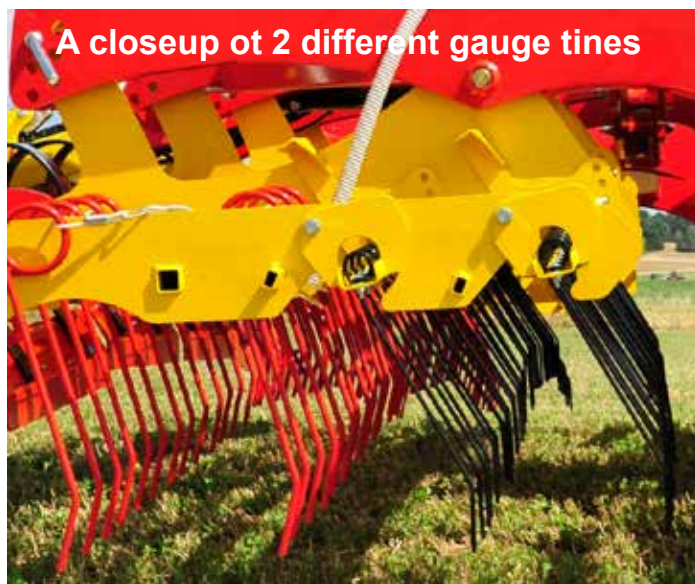
- The GP 300 Pro Harrow offers superior soil preparation to alternative grass maintenance and cover crop seeding methods.
- Because the implement distributes the seed uniformly over the entire land area—rather than in rows or other means of limited distribution—and provides superior seed-to-soil contact, it offers costs savings by allowing for seeding at lower application rates.
- The ability to operate the implement at nearly 10 miles per hour while accomplishing several tasks in a single pass has the potential to save time, fuel and reduce compaction.
- The GP 300 Pro Harrow can be used to properly perform cover crop seeding as well as grass maintenance, thereby

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**GP 300 harrows with PS 300 seeder**



**A closeup of 2 different gauge tines**



**The 6.2 touchscreen controller**

## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

### “New-to-the-US” Harrows

*continued from page 23*

increasing the utility of the implement.

At the same time, topagrar noted that the GP 300 is a “heavy-weight”, requiring a tractor with at least 100 HP (and hydraulic lift capacity of 7,100 lbs. with the smaller 15.4” Cambridge roller or 9,300 lbs. for the larger rollers). In response to such concerns, APV has produced the smaller, lighter, and separable GK Series. The GK Series Combination Harrows with rollers and seeders weigh less and the harrow portion can be separated from the roller/seed component. This flexibility allows for the implement components to be used independently, together in a rear-mounting configuration, or in a split, front/rear mounting with the harrow on a front mount 3-pt hitch and the roller on the rear 3-pt hitch. As a result, the GK Series of harrows is appropriate for hills and steep terrains.

Jon Hackett, APV America’s Business Development Manager, is excited to bring the GP and GK series harrows to the Northeastern organic dairy markets. “We understand how

important quality feed is to organic dairy producers and maximizing field production improves profitability.” Jon observes, “APV’s CEO, Juergen Schoels, is an organic farmer and established APV as an implement manufacturer over 20 years ago precisely because he believed he could do a better job of leveraging technology to improve his operation’s bottom line.”

“But, we understand that organic dairies and those who serve their feed needs require more than our enthusiasm to make an investment in an APV implement. That’s why we are so pleased to see topagrar’s independent test results,” Jon continued. “We want to save producers time while getting the best results. We know in today’s climate it often comes down to bottom-line decisions, and limiting time in the field by consolidating multiple processes, using less seed, reducing compaction, and getting better germination results will help improve the bottom line. These results from topagrar provide producers with an objective evaluation of what the implement may be able to do for them. The best step the producer can make is to try it for themselves.”

*For more information and pricing, please contact Jon Hackett, Business Development Manager, APV America Inc., at jon.hackett@apv-america.com or by calling him at 903-818-9536.*

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## A Summary of the NOSB Fall Meeting

*continued from page 10*

reportedly kills mastitis-causing pathogens faster than iodine and is more persistent in its disinfection activity. Chlorhexidine is gentler on the skin than iodine, which is especially useful in northern climates where an irritated udder and teats can be especially problematic for the animals in cold winter months.

3. Glucose - Glucose is an essential animal health tool. It is used typically to treat ketosis, and there was universal approval for keeping this material on the National List. Since glucose is an ingredient in calcium gluconate used to treat milk fever, retaining glucose on the National List of approved synthetics also maintains this important tool for treatment of this ailment as well.
4. Tolazoline - Tolazoline is used in conjunction with xylazine, which is used as a sedative, analgesic (pain killer) and muscle relaxant in veterinary medicine. Tolazoline is used to reverse the effects of xylazine. Tolazoline was last

reviewed in 2015 at which time the NOSB voted unanimously to renew it.

5. Copper Sulfate is used in livestock management specifically as a walk-through footbath to help control and prevent hoof-related diseases in dairy cattle and sheep. Some of the specific problems that can affect skin adjacent to the claw horn of dairy cattle and sheep include digital dermatitis (DD) (hairy heel warts), foot rot lesions (interdigital area and invading the subcutaneous tissue), and heel erosions.
6. Lidocaine is a local anesthetic which has a rapid onset of action and is short term in duration. It numbs only the area to be worked on. For example, lidocaine is used to humanely de-bud horns on calves, and for minor surgery on mature animals.

*The next NOSB meeting is on Wednesday, April 25, 2018 - 8:30am to Friday, April 27, 2018 - 6:00pm at the Tucson Marriott University Park, 880 East Second Street, Tucson, Arizona. The NOSB will meet to discuss: substances petitioned for addition to or deletion from the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances (National List), substances due to sunset from the National List in 2020, and guidance on organic policies.*



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## NET UPDATE

### Recent ODairy Discussions

By Liz Bawden, *Organic Dairy Farmer, NODPA President*

Some yearling steers were playing around with a round bale, and one ended up with a closed, teary eye. The farmer believed that the animal was poked in the eye with some hay. Suggestions for treatment included spraying the eye with either Dr. Paul's or Crystal Creek's Wound Spray and irrigating the eye with a 1:4 solution of Eyebright (*Euphrasia*) tincture in water.

There was a long discussion on how we may all be more resilient in these stressful times. One farmer suggested: The "biggest lesson conventional dairies have learned is growing your own feed. It's probably better to consider yourself a top notch forage farmer who uses dairy cows to get rid of your feed than a dairyman." Another producer recommended participating in Cornell Extension's Dairy Farm Business Summary program (or similar program in your state) to help get a firm grip on where you are making or losing money. Another suggested that we need a new label ("Eco-Friendly Family Farms") where family ownership of a limited size herd is a requirement; "Animal Welfare Approved" and "Regenerative Ag" certification were also suggested. Another producer advised making early culls in the herd, getting rid of favorite cows, inefficient cows, or open cows. And as for the cycles in the market, one farmer said, "The only way to escape it is to remove yourself from the commodity market by doing something else or making your milk not a commodity. That means differentiating it. That could be something like value-added direct marketing or by making your milk something special that a processor will pay more for. Components, quality, A2 beta-casein for fluid milk, kappa-casein for cheese, and grass-fed are what spring to my mind." It was also suggested to look at how and why we raise young stock: "Are you putting lots of feed towards replacements because of poor longevity? Or are heifer sales a profit center? Replacements often cost more to raise than they're worth at market, maybe it makes sense to buy them all." It was suggested to breed your top cows to top bulls using sexed semen, and breed the rest of the herd to a beef bull for more salable bull calves. And there was talk of diversification into other things that make sense for your farm: pastured poultry, freezer beef and pigs, and cash crops.

If you have ever used a refractometer to get a Brix reading on forages, you can also use this tool to get a reading on the quality of your milk. A Brix refractometer measures the amount of dissolved solids in a liquid. One farmer reported that colostrum should have a Brix of 22, and the milk should be 16, but is more often around 11 or 12.

A farmer had his Surge pulsation control box quit during milking and was looking for parts. Both Parts Department in CT and EZ Milking Equipment in PA were recommended as good sources for new and used parts. ♦

## Website & E-Newsletter Advertising

NODPA is pleased to provide additional advertising opportunities for our organic dairy supporters and resource individuals through our Website and our monthly E-Newsletter.

### Website Advertising

Three banner ads are located at the top of the home page and at least 10 other pages on NODPA's website. NODPA.com receives over 2500 visits each month navigating to an average of 3 pages per visit.

**Ad Design:** Display-ready ads should be 275 pixels wide by 100 pixels tall. Your ad can link to a page on your website.

**Cost:** Display-ready ads are \$150 per month.

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Two banner ads are located at the top of each E-Newsletter, going out monthly to over 2,000 individuals through our E-Newsletter, the NODPA-ODairy discussion forum, and NODPA's Facebook page.

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## Forecast for Organic Dairy in 2018 & Beyond

### Anonymous Farmer

**This farmer's identity is being withheld because they asked for anonymity**

*continued from page 21*

grassfed organic line, and other better leveraged competitors will get on board when the likes of OV and MHC have invested enough into growing the Grassfed Organic market niche to where it makes economic sense for them.

I don't have confidence that CROPP, which has been very wishy-washy on all of the new standards (grassfed, animal care, etc.), will pull off meaningful 100% grassfed organic standards. Too many in roles of leadership and influence at CROPP are not really sold on grassfed, as is evidenced by decisions to apply the same limits and price cuts across the board to grassfed and non-grassfed dairy members. There is no acknowledgement that grassfed is a very different manage-

ment system that cannot adjust as readily to such changes. Instead, CROPP will continue to respond to the consequent problems by imposing more internal rules and regs (such as for animal care) thinking that will somehow address cattle in poor condition that don't breed back, or worse animal welfare issues at the farms of its struggling dairy members. It's only a matter of time before that is exposed, if not by the PETA-types then by the conventional ag industry.



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## FEATURED FARM

**THE MILKHOUSE FARM & DAIRY, Monmouth, Maine**

*continued from page 1*

alongside Spencer and Paige, learning the routines and rhythms of a mid-sized commercial dairy. At the same time, Andy and Caitlin established their yogurt brand using milk from Two Loons Farm.

“Working at Two Loons also helped open our thinking to the possibility of shipping wholesale milk,” Andy said. Originally, Andy and Caitlin intended to milk a small herd of 10-12 cows and process everything, but realized the scale was too small to cover the large overhead typical of dairy farming. They now milk 30 Jerseys and ten crossbreeds, and are direct marketing about 50% of their milk. The remainder of their milk is shipped to Horizon Organic.

2016 was the first full year the couple spent on their farm. It is a year that will be remembered for its oppressive drought. Forage-based dairies were forced to feed stored forage during prime grazing months. As farmers saw their winter feed supplies dwindling, most were attempting to source high-quality feed

from wherever they could find it or even reducing herd size. In the same year, Caitlin and Andy also lost a number of milk cows to a pneumonia-like respiratory illness. On a more positive note, they also added a second child to their family.

2017 was their second full year on their farm, one that will be remembered for severe pay price cuts amid a deepening concern for the integrity of organic milk.

We all know farming without adversity does not exist. It might be weather or market conditions, health problems or mechanical failures. Despite the challenges of their first two years on their land, Caitlin and Andy have persevered--their direct markets have continued to grow, they were awarded Horizon's second place milk quality award in the country in 2016 (3rd place in 2017), and have expanded upon the farm's infrastructure.

“When we moved to the farm, there was a 3-sided east-facing barn the previous owner had built for his Angus,” explained Caitlin. “We used the barn as it was for the first winter, but last summer (2016) we built the mirror image to that structure, which

**Andy and Caitlin's son, Linus, with some of their yogurt**



## Cows walking in for milking time, farm in background



fully enclosed the barn.” One side of the barn houses the milk cows, and the other side is used for weaned heifers and dry cows. Both groups of animals access baleage from a center feed alley.

“When we were looking for a farm, we were looking for a barn that could be used as a bedded-pack,” Andy said. Having managed the bedded-pack on the micro-dairy in Lincolnville, and then worked in a concrete free-stall situation at Two Loons, they decided they preferred the bedded-pack. “We originally thought we would use mulch hay in the pack, but because of fertility issues, our hay fields haven’t yielded what we expected,” Andy said.

They currently use sawdust in the pack. The milk cow pack gets about three yards of sawdust per day. It is stirred daily with a 7-foot, 3-point hitch Sundown rototiller. The pack in the dry cow/heifer group is bedded every third day with three yards and is stirred every third day. “Ideally, we would be using straw for bedding,” Andy said, “but we haven’t found a local and reliable source of good-quality organic straw.

As part of their comprehensive nutrient management plan, a 65’x74’ high-use area was poured this summer. Its primary function is for winter outdoor access as required by NOP regulations. After the farm purchase, they also built an inexpensive flat-10 milking parlor in the old tie-stall. “It’s kind of its own thing,” Andy remarked about the parlor. “There is space for 10 cows and we milk 5 cows at a time and then switch to the other side.” The milk is lifted into an overhead pipeline. Andy recognized the inefficiency of the parlor, but explained that they needed to keep costs low since they were simultaneously building a creamery.

Attached to the front of the tie-stall barn is a new 24’x24’ foot creamery. “When we moved here and started milking our own

cows and the value of the wholesale milk was higher, we wondered why we were also direct marketing,” Andy explained. With the plummeting milk checks of 2017, Andy said he is “glad that they have the direct-market outlet for much of their milk.” Their current pay price is about \$33/cwt. That is with butterfat at 5.0 and an average somatic cell count around 50,000.

“We started out with a lot of brewing equipment,” explained Caitlin about their early days of making yogurt. As demand increased, they outgrew the two 30-gallon brew kettles, in which they heated the milk with copper coils. This past June, a 130-gallon custom vat pasteurizer from the Netherlands arrived at the farm. “It is a beautiful piece of equipment,” Caitlin said.

Milk is pumped directly from their bulk tank into the water-jacketed vat pasteurizer where it is heated to 180 degrees. The milk is cooled and then the culture is added. Jars are filled by hand at the bottom of the pasteurizer, the quart size is in glass, and the pint size in plastic. From there, the containers are placed in an insulated incubation closet. Once the yogurt has set, it is put into crates and moved into a walk-in cooler.

“We make two different kinds of yogurt--whole milk and Greek,” Caitlin explained. They currently offer six flavors. Last year, they debuted eggnog for the holiday season and Caitlin said she “can’t believe how much they are selling this year.” They also recently started producing and marketing chocolate milk.

Although they sell some of their products from their small farm store, the bulk of their product is sold in small independent grocery and natural food stores throughout Maine. “In our enterprise

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## Our farm & farmstore



### FEATURED FARM

*continued from page 29*

budgets for value-added products, we account for milk at \$42/cwt.," said Andy.

"We are making a concerted effort to add value to more of our milk as bulk milk prices drop," the couple said. Caitlin has been busy this winter negotiating with Hannaford, a supermarket chain based in southern Maine, who is interested in stocking their products. "We're waiting to see how that shakes out," Caitlin said. If the relationship with Hannaford fails to materialize, they are considering adding a whole-milk mozzarella to their product line.

"We still occasionally talk about how we have some regret about investing so much money into the creamery," admitted the pair. "We did it that way though because it was our business plan. It is how we were able to get our loan to buy the farm; as a yogurt business."

Farmstead dairy products depend on the quality of the milk used, and The Milkhouse has proven their capabilities in producing high quality milk. Caitlin and Andy gave much of the credit to their dedicated and skilled farm crew, as well as "my anal-retentive personality," Andy said. Andy and Caitlin have a partner farm nearby, Grace Pond Farm, and Gregg, one of the owner's, works full-time at The Milkhouse.

"We feel very fortunate to have the relationship with Gregg and his family," Caitlin said. "One of my goals when we decided to start producing our own milk was to find someone who could share the responsibilities of milking." Gregg owns a dozen of the

cows in the herd, and is instrumental to the forage and pasture programs. Without extended family nearby, both farms have consciously created a cooperative farming system that mimics the benefits of having a large family.

Andy joked that he and Gregg are motivated by competition with other farms regarding milk quality, but ultimately, he feels a deep sense of responsibility for producing the cleanest milk he possibly can since they also have raw milk customers. Raw milk is not, however, a part of the business Andy and Caitlin are looking to develop. "We would rather add more value with the new vat pasteurizer," Caitlin said.

Andy and Gregg rely on monthly DHI testing, the CMT paddle, and the quarter milker to help maintain milk quality. The team is also fastidious about equipment and cow cleanliness. "We change our inflations and pipeline gaskets frequently," Andy said. "If the cows come in dirty, we don't just get them clean enough. We need to be willing to eat off those teats. There shouldn't be a speck on them."

Andy and Caitlin use peracetic acid in both the parlor and the creamery. Peracetic acid is a mixture of hydrogen peroxide and acetic acid, and is among the most effective methods for control of microbial contamination. It is water soluble and leaves no solid residues after rinsing. The bi-products are only water, oxygen, and acetic acid. "It's really effective against bacteria," Andy explained. "We dip our claws in it between high count cows, and use it as a final rinse for our glass yogurt jars."

Average daily production per cow ranges from 40-50 pounds with each milk cow getting ten pounds of grain year-round. The grain is fed during milking time. During the grazing season, the cows are rotationally grazed in 12-hour paddocks. Dry matter intake from pasture is 65-70% during the main grazing season.

If it is exceptionally hot, they may spend half of the day in the bedded-pack. During the shoulder seasons, they typically spend nights in the bedded-pack and the day time grazing.

“We are breeding towards having an A2A2 herd,” said Andy, noting that their customers frequently inquire whether their milk is A2A2. Although it is unknown whether or not A2A2 milk will catch on in the United States market place, Andy and Caitlin want to be “positioned for that market.”

“When we took the farm over, everything was run out fertility wise,” Andy explained. They have bought in both hen and dairy manure. Most of their ground is a heavy Buxton silt loam, not ideal for tillage. “We have been experimenting with some tillage on 15-20 acres the past few years. We’ve been plowing down some low-quality hay fields, seeding them to annual forage crops, and then trying to get them seeded back down into perennial hay and pasture crops.”

They have planted pearl millet, Sudan grass, oats and peas, and this fall some triticale. Caitlin said, “Last summer we planted 12 acres of dwarf millet and hybrid brassicas. The milk cows loved the brassicas. During the summer slump, the brassicas helped boost production to spring flush level.” This August and September became unusually dry, and Caitlin and Andy credit the annuals for preventing them from having to dip too heavily into their stored feed.

“We are slowly trying to improve our forage quality,” Andy said, “but we continue to struggle with the meadow foxtail in our hay ground and pasture.” Meadow Foxtail, or field meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*) is a long-lived perennial grass native to Eurasia. In Andy’s opinion, “It’s just a weed. When it comes up in the spring, it is basically headed out. It’s forage quality rapidly declines, it’s low yielding, and the cows just don’t like it that much.”

Each farm has its challenges; The Milk-house is no exception. Internal challenges, such as noxious weeds or a parlor that isn’t

*continued on page 32*



**Andy rototilling the bedded pack barn**



**Gregg, our co farmer & neighbor, wrapping 1st crop bales**



**Andy and Linus with cows on pasture in fall**

## FEATURED FARM

*continued from page 31*

as efficient as you would like it to be can be improved over time. Farmers can even mitigate the effects of external challenges created by the vagaries of the weather and climate change. Some challenges, however, such as the pay cuts of 2017, leave farmers with little if any coping mechanisms.

Through their direct-market, Andy and Caitlin have created somewhat of a buffer against falling pay prices, but they still depend on the wholesale market for half of their milk. "I don't want to give the impression that direct marketing is the end-all," Andy said. "We are running so many businesses within the farm and it is difficult to do it all well."

Andy also said he would like to see the Maine milkshed "distinguished in the market place somehow." He added, "We need an in-state processor of organic milk, a brand that can distinguish itself from large Western dairies. It doesn't take an economist to figure out how many family farms can fit into a 5,000-cow dairy."

*The Milkhouse is located at 445 South Monmouth Rd, Monmouth, ME 04259. Andy Smith and Caitlin Frame can be reached by calling 207 933 8184 or by email, [mainemilkhouse@gmail.com](mailto:mainemilkhouse@gmail.com). The website is: <http://www.mainemilkhouse.com/>*

*In early January, Caitlin and Andy were notified that in six months, Horizon will no longer accept their milk. Several other Maine Horizon producers were also affected. Caitlin said, "I think we are up to the task of trying to balance our own milk supply. We've got to try right?"*

**Our vat pasteurizer**



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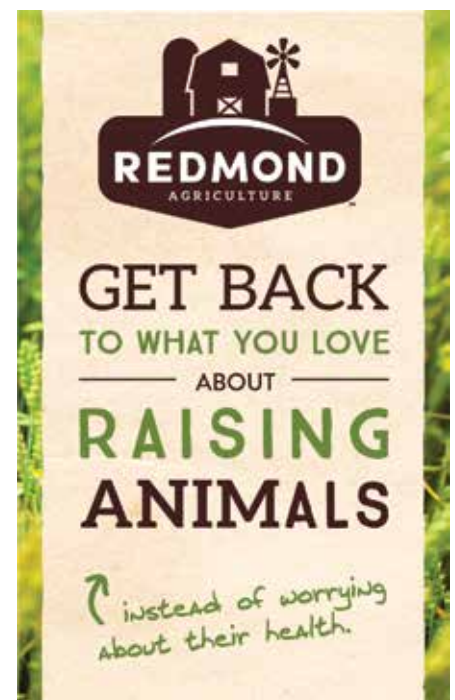
[nate@newagritech.com](mailto:nate@newagritech.com)

## Somatic Cell Program

Liquid Feed Supplement  
(10 ml)

**Dramatic  
Reductions in  
SCC Production  
Responses**

OMRI Listed  
17-18c per day



# Classified Ads

## ANIMALS

**10 Springing Holstein Heifers, all 7+ months, \$2,000/hd**

Eric Evans, 801-430-2738, eecowman@yahoo.com

Location: Lancaster Cty. PA

## EMPLOYMENT

### CERTIFICATION SPECIALIST

NOFA-NY Certified Organic is hiring a Full-time Certification Specialist to start in January or February 2018.

Training provided along with the ability for a flexible work location at home or at NOFA-NY Binghamton, NY office. A candidate who can regularly visit the Binghamton, NY office is preferred, though flexibility in location is possible.

Be a part of a growing non-profit company, USDA-accredited organic certification agency, whose primary purpose is to provide high integrity organic certification to over 1000 organic farmers and processors throughout New York State and surrounding areas.

Primary responsibilities include evaluating organic plan information and inputs to determine compliance with the National Organic Standards, and communication with clients about certification requirements. We require excellent communication skills, verbal and written; strong computer skills; and the ability to do detail-oriented work in a fast paced environment. The ideal candidate will have a college degree in a related area, or equivalent by training or experience, and knowledge of organic farming and certification.

This is a full-time (40 hours/week) position with benefits. Benefits include healthcare, dental and 403(b) as well as generous paid holidays/vacation time. Salary is competitive. We offer a friendly work environment, challenging work, open communication, and commitment to a job well-done. For information regarding our organization, please visit [www.nofany.org](http://www.nofany.org). This position will take approximately one year to master - serious applicants only. Interested and qualified candidates are invited to email a resume and letter of interest to: [Lori@nofany.org](mailto:Lori@nofany.org)

Detailed posting at

<https://www.nofany.org/about-us/opportunities>

*continued on page 34*

## Organic Milk Replacer

Convenient, Organic-Approved Nutrition



**Call Today.**

manufactured by  
**MILKSPECIALTIES**  
ORGANIC  
ANIMAL NUTRITION

Joe Gulick -National Acc. Manager

**(412) 627-3623**

[jGulick@milkspecialties.com](mailto:jGulick@milkspecialties.com)

## UPSTATE NIAGARA COOPERATIVE, INC. FARMER OWNED

At Upstate Niagara Cooperative, Inc. our member dairy farmers work passionately to ensure delicious, high-quality dairy products. Our products have earned numerous awards and customer trust for years.



**1-800-724-MILK**

**[www.upstateniagara.com](http://www.upstateniagara.com)**



# Classified Ads

*continued from page 33*

NOFA-NY is an equal opportunity employer and encourages applicants from diverse backgrounds to apply.

## FORAGES, BEDDING & GRAINS

**For Sale: Wrapped round 4x4 silage bales.** NOFA-VT certified organic. Baled with Welger RP 200s or a Morra MR 1200. Wrapped and stacked immediately after being baled. Tied with net or string, triple wrapped and weigh +/- 1200 lbs. These are 1st cut, soft core bales, averaging 12%P, 60McalE and 100 RFQ. @ \$35/bale. Our NOFA-Vt certificate is attached to each invoice. We offer trucking with our tractor trailers @ \$85/hr. and will deliver ASAP. Robbie Nuzzo, shoebox2004069@yahoo.com, 802-644-5138  
Location: Jeffersonville, VT

**For Sale: NOFA-NY Certified Organic 2017 and 2016 Field Crops.** Timothy DRY HAY - 4 x 4 1/2 Round bales, stored inside and outside. BALEAGE - 4 x 4 Round bales (Clover, Alfalfa, Orchard grass, Oatlage, Timothy). Also BEDDING HAY- 4 x 4 1/2 Round bales, stored outside. Contact Jeff @

Mitchell Farm, 607-566-8477,  
Mitchellorganics@hotmail.com.  
Location: Avoca, NY (Steuben County)

**For Sale: First cut hay, round bales.** They are tubed round bales (ensiled not dry), so they are not individually wrapped bales. Mowed in late June (1st cut). If you are interested, please send me a note. Contact Sarah Flack, sarahflackconsulting@gmail.com.

## REAL ESTATE

### GRAZING DAIRY FARM FOR SALE

Currently operating dairy farm for sale in Truxton, NY. 340 acres, 230 tillable mostly in fenced pasture. Very nice valley ground, pastures likely eligible for immediate organic certification.

Double 7 parlor in a 138-stall dairy barn, additional 30 stalls for dry cows, and bedded pack for pre-fresh cows. Heifer barn with 102 stalls. Young heifer barn with bedded pack for 70-80 youngstock. 40 Calf hutches, 4-bay commodity shed, and bunk silos. Barns built within last 10 years. Large farmhouse on the property, too.

We're listing this for a neighbor so please contact us, Ryan and Annie Murray, at hiddenmeadowsdairy@gmail.com and we can put you in contact with the owner.

Location: Truxton, NY

## Northeast Organic Milk Buyers

### Upstate Niagara

Upstate Niagara is a member owned dairy cooperative dedicated to high quality dairy products. Upstate Niagara offers a highly competitive organic pay program with additional premiums for milk quality and volume. For producers interested in transitioning to organic production, we also have programs to assist you in the transition process.

If you are interested in becoming a member, please contact Mike Davis at 1-800-724-MILK, ext 6441. [www.upstateniagara.com](http://www.upstateniagara.com)

### Natural by Nature

Looking for an organic milk market? Natural Dairy Products Corporation (NDP) was founded in 1995 as a family owned and operated organization producing organic dairy products

under the Natural By Nature brand name. Natural By Nature organic dairy products are produced with great care and distributed nationwide.

We are actively seeking organic, grass-based dairy producers in the southeastern PA, northern MD and DE areas. NDP pays all hauling and lab costs, and we are currently offering a signing bonus, so this is the time to call! We'd be happy to answer your questions ... please call 302-455-1261 x221 for more information.

### Dairy Marketing Services Organic

More milk is needed by Northeast organic customers! Dairy Marketing Services can help you facilitate the transition from conventional to organic production. Count on DMS Organic specialists for organics, transition stabilizers, pasture requirements, pasture supplies and more. Call David Eyster at DMS: 1-888-589-6455, ext. 5409 for more information today!

To be listed, free, in future NE Organic Milk Buyers columns, contact Nora Owens at 413-772-0444, [noraowens@comcast.net](mailto:noraowens@comcast.net).

# Calendar

**Saturday, January 27, 2018**

## **Tenth Annual Winter Green-Up 2018 Winter Green-Up Conference**

**The Century House, 997 New London Road, Latham NY (Albany County)**

We are pleased to announce our Tenth Annual Winter Green-Up, held once again at The Century House in Latham, NY. This year, by popular request, Winter Green-Up has continued as a one-day event. We've made sure that there are great speakers, vendors, and the traditional Winter Green-Up lunch – at a great price, \$75.00 per person. Rooms are being held for Friday and Saturday night at The Century House for \$114 per night. Call 518-785-0931 to reserve. Please mention the Winter Green-Up conference to receive this special rate. Register online at [https://reg.cce.cornell.edu/WGU2018\\_201](https://reg.cce.cornell.edu/WGU2018_201). Questions about

## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## From the NODPA Desk: January 2018

*continued from page 3*

milking and dry cows:

- Certification file review staff and organic inspectors must have documented training and experience in livestock nutrition and grazing on organic dairies with over 1,000 milking cows.
- A calculation matrix should be required for verification of meeting the grazing requirement which includes the following parameters: average animal weight, milk production, daily dry matter requirement, daily non-pasture dry matter consumption, acres of pasture, forage yield of pasture, and maximum distances cows walk to pasture.
- As stated in the regulation, dry matter intake “shall be calculated as an average over the entire grazing season for each type and class of animal;” therefore, dry matter intake of milking cows cannot be averaged with dry matter intake of dry cows.
- Certifiers must conduct two inspections during the grazing season, one announced and one unannounced.

### **3. OFA Request for FMMO to publish organic milk data**

The Federal Milk Marketing Order (FMMO) already has the data to expand their reporting to include organic data. The data for the reports are derived from reports submitted by pooled handlers. The majority of organic milk is processed at plants that process and manufacture conventional milk; and thus, are required to report to the FMMO.

Whenever you can, make sure your voice is heard and we will do the same. ♦

the conference may be directed to Hank Bignell at [hdb48@cornell.edu](mailto:hdb48@cornell.edu) or to Tove Ford, 518-765-3518 or [cce-caahp@cornell.edu](mailto:cce-caahp@cornell.edu).

**January 28, 2018**

**Southern New England Livestock Conference, 8 am to 4 pm**

**Bristol County Agricultural High School**

**135 Center St. Dighton, MA 02715**

The Keynote Speaker is Andrew Gunther. Andrew is Executive Director of A Greener World, home of America's leading food labels: Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW, Certified Grassfed by AGW and Certified Non-GMO by AGW. For nearly a decade Andrew has spearheaded the unprecedented growth of AGW's flagship certification. Animal Welfare Approved and its distinction as the only “highly meaningful” food label for farm animal welfare, outdoor access and sustainability as designated by Consumer Reports. From an agricultural background in the United Kingdom, Andrew and his family pioneered the world's first organic poultry hatchery for chickens. Andrew is a member of the U.S. delegation for development of standards related to ISO/TC 034/WG 16.

We will be running EIGHT different tracks for the 2018 Conference! Attendees can attend talks from any track; the hard part will be choosing which to attend. COST: \$35 for regular admission; \$20 for student admission. For more information visit- <https://www.thelivestockinstitute.org/2018-conference.html>

**January 31, 2018**

## **Managing Dairy Manure Systems: Sharing Experiences of Farmers and Engineers**

**Greenwich Elks Lodge, 130 Bulson Rd., Greenwich, NY**

**Wednesday, 9:30 registration, Program 10:00 am to 3:00 pm**

Topics include: Separating sand & solids; Draglines; Hauling; Storages below & above ground; Pumping; Satellite Lagoons. Early-Bird Registration \$50 by January 24, 2018 - \$65 after January 24, 2018.

SPEAKERS: Curt Gooch, Cornell Pro-Dairy Program; Peter Wright, retired engineer, NRCS; Farmer Panel: Matthew's (Severy) Trucking, Newmont Farm, Ideal Dairy, Gettyvue Farm, Allenwaite Farm, Walker Farms. Questions & RSVP: Tove Ford (518-765-3518, [cce-caahp@cornell.edu](mailto:cce-caahp@cornell.edu)), Aaron Gabriel (518-380-1496, [adg12@cornell.edu](mailto:adg12@cornell.edu)), or Sandy Buxton (518-380-1498, [sab22@cornell.edu](mailto:sab22@cornell.edu)). RSVP online: [https://reg.cce.cornell.edu/managing\\_manure\\_systems\\_201](https://reg.cce.cornell.edu/managing_manure_systems_201)

**February 7, 8 & 9, 2018**

**Winter Crops & Soils Days, Lamberton, Luverne, & Morris, MN**

A collaborative event between the WCROC and the Southwest Research and Outreach Center (SWROC), Winter Crops & Soils Day offers regionally focused research results and recommendations for area crop and livestock producers. The event will be held February 7 in Lamberton, February 8 in Luverne, MN and February 9 in Morris MN at the WCROC. Programs begin at 10 am, and conclude at 3:15 pm. Presentations include:

- Integrating Cover Crops and Livestock to Improve Farm

*continued on page 36*

# Calendar

*continued from page 35*

Profitability - Brad Heins, WCROC Dairy Scientist;

- The Good, the Bad, and the Reality of Minnesota Farm Profitability - Joleen Hadrich, U of MN Extension, Applied Economics;
- Do Reduced Pest Management Inputs Mean Increased Economic Risk? - Bruce Potter, SWROC, IPM Specialist;
- Interseeding Cover Crops into Standing Corn and Soybeans - Axel Garcia y Garcia, SWROC, Agronomy;
- Research at ROCs and How it Impacts your Farm - Curt Reese, WCROC, Agronomy; and
- Opportunities and Challenges for Supplemental Irrigation - Jeff Strock, SWROC, Soil Science, and Tamas Varga, CFANS PhD student.

Registration to Winter Crops & Soils Days is open to the public.

Pre-registration is encouraged by registering online, or by calling Heidi Olson-Manska at 320-589-1711 ext. 2130. Registration for the program is \$35 (cash or check only), and includes refreshments, handouts, and lunch. Continuing Education Units for certified crop advisers have been applied for. More information about the event, including the program schedule, is available on the SWROC website. Contact the SWROC at 507-752-7372 with any questions.

**February 7-10, 2018**

**Farming for the Future , 27th Annual PASA Conference  
The Penn Stater, State College, PA**

The Farming for the Future Conference is PASA's featured event, held annually in February. We seek to gather a diverse audience from the sustainable food system including farmers, educators, processors, advocates, and eaters – please join us! Each year we feature: Over 100 speakers representing the best from the sustainable agriculture field and our membership. The conference features a variety of sustainable farming and food system programming including full-day tracks, half-day sessions, and 80-minute workshops across the four days of the event. There will be over 90 Trade Show vendors representing the broad diversity and deep expertise of our community. There will be opportunities to network and socialize over receptions and meals that feature regionally-sourced ingredients. And, an ag-themed Future Farmers program for kids (K to Grade 8) will take place.

Special events like music, movie, yoga, knitting, and more are scheduled. Join us for an event that will send you home energized for another year of building the sustainable food system! For more information, visit <http://conference.pasafarming.org/>

**Tuesday, February 13, 2018**

**Harvesting Quality Forage, NYCO Winter Meeting**

**Jordan Hall at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, 630 West North Street, in Geneva, NY**

Harvesting quality forage year after year is the topic of the February 13 NYCO meeting. The challenges of the drought of 2016 followed by the wet spring of 2017 have many farmers wondering how to develop resiliency in their forage system. Invited speakers include Tom Kilcer of Advanced Ag Systems, on his new work adding resiliency to rotations through double cropping and multi-use cover crops.

Also on February 13, Cornell Horticulture Professor Dr. Thomas Björkman will show research on planting dates and when to include clover in cover crops, and Dr. Heather Darby from the University of Vermont will share details on forage and small grain research she has recently conducted in northern Vermont. The free-to-attend NYCO meetings begin at 10 AM in Jordan Hall at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, 630 West North Street, in Geneva, NY, and provide organic crop growers and dairy farmers together with the opportunity to hear speakers and network. There is no need to register for meetings. Participants are asked to bring a dish to pass at the potluck lunch.

NYCO winter meetings have grown from a gathering of six organic grain producers in the Martens Farms farmhouse kitchen in 1994 to filling the auditorium at the Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva. More than 300 farmers attended NYCO meetings in 2017. For more information, contact Fay Benson at 607-391-2669 or [afb3@cornell.edu](mailto:afb3@cornell.edu). Information on previous NYCO meetings is posted at <http://blogs.cornell.edu/organicdairyinitiative/>. Fay Benson, Cornell Small Dairy Program, 607-391-2669, [afb3@cornell.edu](mailto:afb3@cornell.edu)

**March 6, 2018**

**2018 Organic Dairy & Field Crop Conference, Holiday Inn  
Liverpool/Syracuse, New York**

Our 7th Annual Organic Dairy and Field Crop Conference will take place on March 6, 2018. The conference will be held at the centrally located and easily accessible Holiday Inn Liverpool/Syracuse, New York, just off the Thruway and Interstate 81. Key Note speaker will be John Bobbe, the Executive Director of the Organic Farmers' Agency for Relationship Marketing (OFARM Inc.), an organic grain and livestock marketing cooperative with organic producer members in 19 states. John is the author of "Marketing Organic Grain, A Farmer's Guide" which has received positive reviews from organic grain farmers in the U.S.

We welcome veteran farmers, beginning farmers, and farmers interested in transitioning to organic management. NOFA-NY Certified Organic, LLC staff will be available throughout the conference to answer questions. For more information, visit the website: <https://www.nofany.org/events-news/events/odfc-conference>

**Tuesday, March 13, 2018**

**Adding Pastured Hogs to Diversified Dairy or Crop Farm; Farm  
Start-Up Opportunities NYCO Winter Meeting**

*continued on page 39*

## Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance Producer Milk Check Assignment Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (please print name on your milk check)  
 request that \_\_\_\_\_ (name of company that sends your milk check)

deduct the sum of :

\_\_\_\_\_ \$0.02 per hundredweight to support the work of NODPA

\_\_\_\_\_ \$0.05 per hundredweight to support the work of NODPA (the amount that has been deducted in the past for national milk marketing but can now be returned to you as an organic producer if you have applied for the exemption.)

\_\_\_\_\_ \$0.07 per hundredweight (the \$.05 marketing check-off plus \$0.02)

as an assignment from my milk check starting the first day of \_\_\_\_\_, 201\_\_\_\_. The total sum will be paid monthly to NODPA. This agreement may be ended at any time by the producer by sending a written request to their milk handler/buyer with a copy to NODPA.

### Milk handlers please send payments to:

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (NODPA), Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director, 30 Keets Rd, Deerfield, MA 01342

Producer signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Producer number/ member no: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of milking cows: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel #: \_\_\_\_\_

Certifying Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Farm Address: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Producers—please send this form AND YOUR EXEMPT FORM to NODPA, Attn Ed Maltby, Executive Director, 30 Keets Rd, Deerfield, MA 01342, so we can track who has signed up and forward this form to the milk handler. **If you need assistance in applying for the exemption, check here \_\_\_\_\_.** Thank you.

## Subscribe to the NODPA News and support NODPA!

By becoming a subscriber you will receive 6 copies of the NODPA News and help support the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance. NODPA depends on your contributions and donations. If you enjoy the bi-monthly NODPA News; subscribe to the Odairy Listserv ([http://nodpa.com/list\\_serv.shtml](http://nodpa.com/list_serv.shtml)); visit our web page ([www.nodpa.com](http://www.nodpa.com)) or benefit from farmer representation with the NOP and processors that NODPA provides, please show your support by making a generous contribution to our efforts.

Note that if you sign up for the NODPA Voluntary Organic Milk Check-Off, you will be automatically signed up as a NODPA News subscriber.

\_\_\_\_\_ \$40 to cover an annual subscription to NODPA news

\_\_\_\_\_ \$300 to \$500 to become a Friend

\_\_\_\_\_ \$50 to become an Associate member (open to all)

\_\_\_\_\_ \$500 to \$1,000 to become a Patron

\_\_\_\_\_ \$100 to become a supporter of NODPA

\_\_\_\_\_ \$1,000+ to become a Benefactor

\_\_\_\_\_ \$150 to become a Business Member

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Farm Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a certified organic dairy producer? YES NO

Number of milking cows \_\_\_\_\_

Milk buyer \_\_\_\_\_

Are you transitioning to organic? YES NO If yes, anticipated date of certification: \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail this form with a check to: Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director, 30 Keets Rd, Deerfield, MA 01342, or by fax: 866-554-9483 or by email to [ednodpa@comcast.net](mailto:ednodpa@comcast.net). Please make your check payable to: NODPA

Credit card: Master Card Visa Card #: \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_ 201\_\_ Security Code on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS



Mari Drinkman

## From the MODPA Treasurer

**T**his update is dedicated to my wife Mari who passed away this past Christmas Eve. I owe her a lot. She stood by my side through thick and thin, good times and bad times and never wavered. She has had leukemia for the last seven years but for those of you who knew her she never let it show. She has been a key part in my work to try to provide a better future for farmers. There were many times over the years when she would finish chores so I could make a conference call or make sure that I could get to a meeting whether near or far. She loved being a part of a movement that we could believe in. A movement we must continue. If we do not continue on this journey all of the hard work of people like her will be for naught. I, for one, will not quit. Her smile may be gone but definitely will not be forgotten.

As I write this, the cold blast that greeted the northern half of the country is finally giving us a break. I am sure that it will return but this too shall pass. It would be nice if we could get the continued pressures in the marketplace to give us a break. There continues to be a surplus of organic milk. The surplus of conventional milk is not helping the situation. Several producers in my area are still waiting to get on the organic truck. They have been delayed several times already and are hoping that they eventually get on. In the meantime, the pressure on them continues to increase. The ugliness in the conventional market only compounds this problem. I have been trying to help a conventional producer find a market. He lost his processor and nobody wants to step up and do the right thing. I fear that organics is on a similar course. We are seeing signs of this as producers in more remote areas are feeling the strain caused by distance to processing. We, as farmers, understand the costs associated with transportation but we are not responsible for bad decisions made at the board level, but ultimately in the end we are held accountable for these decisions. Right now there seems to be nothing but negativity, not only in the milk markets but also in the world in general. What will it take for all of us to realize that we are all in this together regardless of size or where we choose to send our

*continued on page 39*

## 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.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Certified Organic Dairy? Yes No # of cows: \_\_\_\_\_

Transitioning: \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to support MODPA (check whatever applies):

\_\_\_ By becoming a state rep or director.

\_\_\_ By supporting MODPA with a %/cwt check-off.

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

**Please send this form to: Bruce Drinkman, MODPA Treasurer,  
3253 150th Ave, Glenwood City, WI 54013**

## About MODPA

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." To ensure a fair and sustainable farm gate price.

1. Keep family farms viable for future generations.
2. Promote ethical, ecological and humane farming practices.
3. Networking among producers of all organic commodities.
4. Promote public policy, research and education in support of organic ag.

## MODPA Board

**Wisconsin**

Darlene Coehoorn, President  
Viewpoint Acres Farm  
N5878 Hwy C, Rosendale, WI 54974  
ddviewpoint@yahoo.com  
Phone: 920-921-5541

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Phone: 715-687-8147

Bruce Drinkman, Treasurer  
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Phone: 715-265-4431

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taofarmer@direcway.com  
Phone: 608-544-3702

Jim Small, Director  
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Tel: 608-435-6700

**Iowa**

Andy Schaefer, Director  
25037 Lake Rd  
Garnaville, IA 52049  
Tel: 563-964-2758

**Michigan**

Ed Zimba, Zimba Dairy  
7995 Mushroom Rd  
DeFord, MI 48729  
zimbadaairy@tband.net  
Phone: 989-872-2680

**Ohio**

Ernest Martin, Director  
1720 Crum Rd  
Shiloh, OH 44878  
Phone and Fax: 419-895-1182

# Calendar

*continued from page 36*

## **Jordan Hall at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, 630 West North Street, in Geneva, NY**

The March 13th NYCO meeting will cover two topics: Rodale Institute Farm Manager Ross Duffield will provide an overview of current projects at Rodale and present a how-to talk on how Rodale incorporated hogs into its farming system and the multiple benefits of doing so; and a panel of three organic dairy farmers will share how they have used social investment capital to help their farming business. Representatives from Dirt Capital Partners and Iroquois Valley Farms REIT will be on hand to outline the opportunities they offer farms.

The New York Crop Insurance Education Team and Cornell Cooperative Extension provide support for the NYCO meetings. There will be a brief description of how Crop Insurance can benefit organic farmers at each of the three NYCO 2018 Winter Meetings.

The free-to-attend NYCO meetings begin at 10 AM in Jordan Hall at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, 630 West North Street, in Geneva, NY, and provide organic crop growers and dairy farmers together with the opportunity to hear speakers and network. There is no need to register for meetings. Participants are asked to bring a dish to pass at the potluck lunch.

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## **March 21 & 22, 2018**

### **Western PA Grazing Conference, Trinity Point Church of God, Clarion, PA**

Legendary artist, singer/guitarist Teddy Gentry from the country music group Alabama, along with noted author and mob grazing guru Greg Judy will be featured at this year's conference. The conference will focus on many aspects of improving low input grazing systems. Sessions will cover topics such as brood cow efficiency and nutrition, how soil health and profitability are related, extending the grazing season, marketing opportunities, health and economics of grass finished meat and developing and implementing grazing leases. Two keynote speakers Teddy Gentry and Greg Judy bring a wealth of knowledge gained through experience in tuning and evaluating the many pieces of a grazing system to maximize functionality and profitability. Gentry will share his

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

### From the MODPA Treasurer

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milk, etc.? We definitely live in trying times. I also believe that it is our responsibility as individuals to make the effort to do what we can to make this a better world. If we don't do our part we lose the right to say how wrong things are. I strongly encourage everybody who reads this to step up to the plate and do your part. Nobody else can do it for you. And it is your future that is at stake. There will not be any easy answers but we must work to make it better not only for ourselves but also for generations to come.

If you get the chance, make time to get out and take in one of the many conferences that will be held this winter. Talk to old friends and make new ones. Those conversations may lead us to where we can move forward.

Wishing all a wonderful rest of winter,

**Bruce Drinkman, MODPA Treasurer**  
3253 150th Avenue, Glenwood City, WI 54013  
715-781-4856

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# Calendar

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insights into breeding cattle to fit environmental conditions along with how grazing management has benefitted his beef cattle operation. Gentry owns and operates the Bent Tree Cattle Co., located near Fort Payne, AL. Greg wrote a book, entitled "NO RISK RANCHING, Custom Grazing On Leased Land", which gives a complete breakdown on the methods they used to build their operation of 1,600 acres from scratch.

Other sessions will include; Meg Grzeskiewicz - Generating cash

flow in cow-calf operations, Tara Felix - Advance nutrition in beef cows, Jessica Williamson - Extending your grazing season, Ron Gargas - Health benefits grass finished beef, Aaron Miller - The economics of marketing grass-fed beef, Russ Wilson - Nutrient recycling in adaptive grazing systems, Melanie Barkley- Winter feed budgets...how much of what?, Gary Gilmore - Charcoal; helping your livestock and building soil, and Local Farmers - Dawson Dibern, George Gaffron, Gary Yeaney. Registration - \$85 for 2-days & evening session, \$45 for 1-day only (Continental Breakfast & Lunch included) registration deadline 3/14/18. Bonus evening session with Greg Judy on March 21: \$20. To Register or for more information visit Headwaters RC&D. | Phone: 814-503-8653 Email: [info@headwaterspa.org](mailto:info@headwaterspa.org) or visit our website: [www.headwaterspa.org](http://www.headwaterspa.org)