NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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Jim, Sue, Jenny and Ryker Smith of Tre-G Farms

FEATURED FARM: TRE-G FARMS, POMPEY, NY

by Tamara Scully, NODPA News Contributing Writer

A whole lot of change has been happening at Tre-G Farms LLC over the past five years. Located in Pompey, New York, Tre-G Farms is a Century Farm, and has been a dairy since the 1940s. Today, the fourth and fifth generations of the Smith family - Jim and his wife Sue, along with their son Ryker and his wife, Jenny - are working together to position the dairy for a long and vibrant future.

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SAVE THE DATE FOR THE 20TH ANNUAL NODPA FIELD DAYS

SEPTEMBER 24 & 25, 2020

We are excited to announce that the 20th annual NODPA Field Days will be held on the coast of Maine, at the Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture and the Environment and Organic Dairy in Freeport. Wolfe's Neck Organic Farm is situated on over 600 acres of picturesque coastal land in Freeport, Maine. The farm has been in operation since 1959 when it was operated as an organic beef farm.

The NODPA Field Days have been held in Maine two times. The first one was

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Message from NODPA President

Several years ago, I attended a workshop at a conference, and the speaker asked the group of attending organic farmers, "Are you organic by design, or organic by default?" He was referring to the range across the industry, contrasting organic farmers who were committed to improving the health of their soil and animals in their care with farmers that followed the cardinal rules of organic certification and nothing more. In the scope of his talk, he wanted to have each producer examine their own farm practices, along with their goals and mission.

I think about that today while we are finalizing our spring seed orders, and I briefly take a look back over the years. Since then, we have had both good years and challenging ones; we have tried out some new varieties of crops and crop combinations; we have tried out some different crossbreeding and have improved the drainage on some fields. But we still have a long way to go to reach our goals. It feels harder these days to be "organic by design" since it is so easy to be paralyzed by fear of uncertain markets and our shrinking margins. So we proceed a little more carefully toward our goals; after all, baby steps are better than no steps.

I think about how we can sink more carbon into the soil where it belongs. And how we can continue to improve the soil, diversity, and feed quality. It's a lot to think about, but I guess that is the beauty of farming; every spring is like a "do-over". The missteps or challenges from the past year are behind us, and the new season is unfolding with possibilities.

I wish you all the best for a safe and rewarding spring season!

Liz Bawden, NODPA President
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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From the NODPA Desk:

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

The headline in the **September NODPA News 2020** will be:

"*Astounding growth in organic milk sales as consumers recognize the nutritional benefits of organic milk in increasing immune resistance with its high quality protein, vitamins, and calcium and yes, it is also good for the environment. The publication of the Origin of Livestock Final Rule on July 2nd stopped the continuous transition of conventional dairy animals and with buyers having to deal with the existing organic dairy herd, pay prices are predicted to increase as supply is short.*"

While I have never been good at predictions, and most of the time they do not happen, there is some science behind my prediction. A recent report called 'Milk and milk related products, consumption for Chinese residents' written by among others the Chinese CDC as a recommendation to fight COVID 19, praises the nutritional qualities of milk to fight the novel coronavirus. While panic buying may be why all the milk in the dairy case is gone (even organic!- according to one newspaper report) initial analysis by marketers is that it ties in with the increase sales of beef by 8% as consumers look for comfort food. There is nothing like a medical, economic and social crisis to stimulate the examination of one's lifestyle and eating habits, especially if you have to cook and prepare the food. Every crisis has a silver lining!

As the Federal government gives away our children and grandchildren's future with recklessness that ordinary folks would be jailed for in their trillion dollar packages, there are many programs within SBA and USDA that temporarily are open for those of you who have the mental space to refinance or restructure your loans with lower debt service. SBA-backed loans from your existing lenders or banks can provide interest free loans to pay operating expenses with deferred repayments.

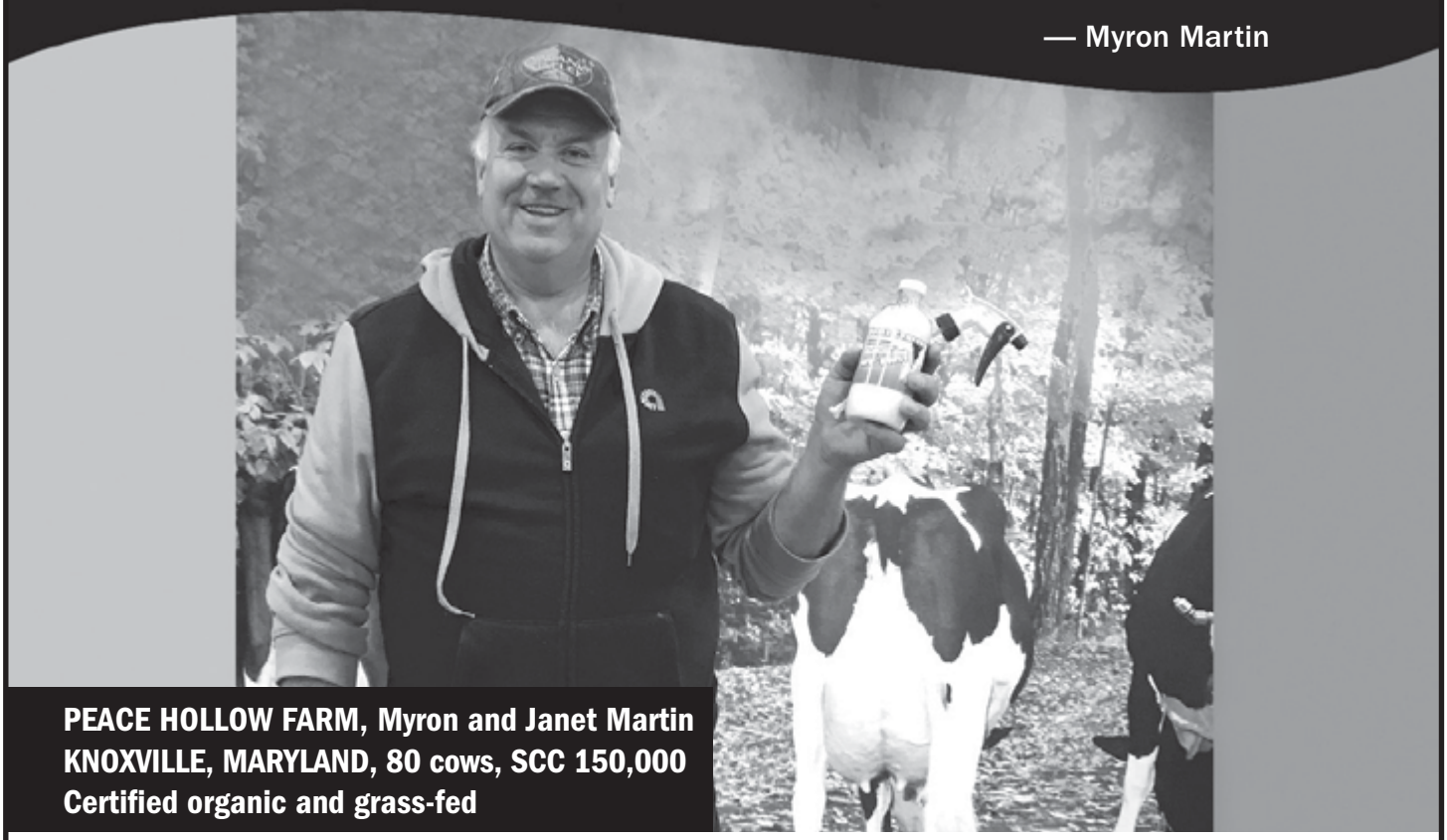
The final comment period on the proposed rule on Undue and Unreasonable Preferences and Advantages under the Packers and Stockyards Act (P&SA) ended on March 13, 2020. While these protections are tied to poultry and livestock producers, the need for them do relate to the current situation within the organic dairy. NODPA sent in comments that addressed the fact that organic dairy producers exist in what has been described by the US Department of Justice as a supply monopsony and have faced harassment and intimidation from their buyers. Producers have a right to lawfully join producer associations or speak to the media or elected officials about their milk contract without suffering retaliation from a buyer. It is common for organic dairy producers who speak out about issues within the industry to receive lower pay price and quotas and to be the first to be terminated from truck routes. The two major buyers have practiced this discrimination without any recourse. There was hope in the beginning of organic that the different production methods and market would result in more transparency and fairness in contracts. While the consumer was led to believe that was the case, increasingly that fairness has disappeared, to be replaced with buyer-controlled contracts that have conditions which allow buyers to cancel contracts arbitrarily or impose un-economic pay prices. Organic dairy producers need the protection afforded other producers under the Stockyard and Packers Act.

The NOP have been instructed by Congress to publish a Final Rule on the Origin of Livestock on or before June 16, 2020. While the COVID 19 virus does affect almost everything, those who are writing the rule can do so remotely with perhaps more time if they have less distractions of endless meetings. One concerning aspect of the Proposed Rule comments received from processors and their trade organizations, is their advocacy for tying the one time transition exemption to an operation rather than a person (as defined by USDA). The National Milk Producers Federation stated their opinion that "NMPF and many others in the organic industry are not supportive of changing the rule to only allow one transition to organic per producer as this would be overly restrictive and unnecessary." They used CROPP Cooperative comments in 2015 to support their argument and also inaccurately stated that "Organic milk sales have continued to increase over the years, creating a need for more organic fluid milk." Comments from Horizon, WhiteWave, Danone and the International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA) agree with that provision. IDFA stated that 'we recommend that the one-time transition be assigned to a "certified dairy operation" rather than a "producer." IDFA members include Aurora Dairy, Lactalis, DFA, Organic Valley, Organic West and Scott McGinty, CEO Aurora Dairy is a Director on the executive Council. NODPA and many others supported not tying the exemption to the operation. Tying it to the operation means any one individual can set up new operations repeatedly to make use of the exemption multiple times. New operations owned by the same individual/ LLC/company are then either managed separately in 2-3,000 cow milking 'operations' or joined together once the one-year transition period is up. The NOP can still receive opinions and comments on the rule, as can the Small Business Administration and the Office of Management and Budget. **Please pressure your buyer to correct the statement that their trade associations have made which imply all of organic dairy supports this interpretation of the exemption.** The Final Rule will probably not be perfect but we need to keep the pressure on for the best we can get.

I wish you all the best of health as you continue to be the heroes that we know you are, providing the best of food, services and support that the country relies on during this crisis. Remember when you visit with your neighbors, keep the pick-up truck between you! ◆

"Nothing works like Udder Comfort!"

— Myron Martin



PEACE HOLLOW FARM, Myron and Janet Martin
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"I've tried other products, but nothing works like Udder Comfort!™ We use it for swollen udders, as needed, especially to remove edema in fresh cows. And, for any cow with flakes or elevated SCC, I use it on that quarter," says third generation dairyman Myron Martin of Peace Hollow Farm near Knoxville, Maryland.

He operates the 80 cow dairy with his wife Janet and associates Michael and Angela Busselberg, with emphasis on producing high quality, organic, grass-fed A2 milk. They feed all grass and hay and maintain a 150,000 SCC average. Myron gives some of the credit for milk quality to Udder Comfort.

"It promptly takes down swelling," says Myron. "It is good to have this natural product, and it's handy for other things, like swollen hocks. I love the simplicity of Udder Comfort and how it really works. The comfort and results for the cows make me feel good."

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Judge Gives USDA 6 Months to Fix Organic Livestock Rule Errors

Adapted from an article by Sustainable Food News, March 13, 2020

The federal judge in the ongoing organic livestock welfare lawsuit on Thursday (March 12, 2020) granted the USDA's request for a six-month remand to correct the flawed analysis behind the withdrawal of the Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices (OLPP) final rule.

"This lawsuit represents the administrative process at its never-ending worst," wrote U.S. District Judge Rosemary Collyer in her order granting the USDA's request for remand.

Washington, D.C.- based OTA (Organic Trade Association) had filed the lawsuit in September 2017 in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia (Case #: 1:17-cv-01875) alleging the USDA "abused its discretion" and violated the federal Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) by delaying, and ultimately withdrawing, the effective date of the OLPP final rule.

The final rule created more stringent regulations governing the organic certification of livestock and had been issued on the last day of the Obama administration in January 2017, after 10 years of diligent vetting of the rule.

The next month, the Trump administration's USDA determined that there was little, if any, economic justification for the new regulations. The agency then three times unilaterally issued a rule delaying the effective date of the OLPP rule before issuing a withdrawal rule in March 2018, which effectively terminated the OLPP final rule.

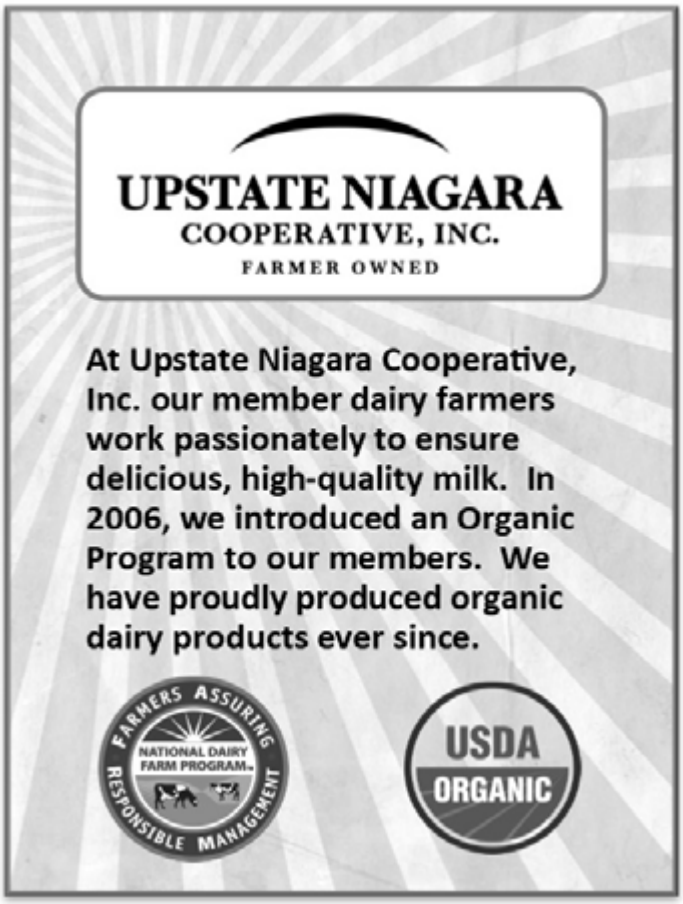
The end of the lawsuit appeared near after the OTA filed its motion for summary judgment in October, "and, after two extensions of time, USDA was expected to file an opposition when it suddenly asked for remand."

The agency sought the remand "to correct a series of admitted flaws in the cost/benefit analysis in the OLPP rule that were carried over into the withdrawal rule," according to Judge Collyer's order. "OTA's underlying challenges to the withdrawal rule involve claims that USDA incorrectly concluded that it lacked authority to publish the OLPP rule in the first place and that the withdrawal rule contained errors in its economic analysis."

Judge Collyer said the case is now stayed and remanded to the USDA for a period of no more than 180 days. The order requires the parties to submit a joint status report no later than Sept. 8, or two weeks after a revised final rule has been published, whichever is earlier.

"At the end of the day and despite this delay, we are more confident than ever that our arguments will prevail and that the will of the industry will be served," OTA said in a statement. "We are confident that the OLPP will ultimately be reinstated."

From sustainable seafood to organic milk, all-natural meats to fair trade coffee, Sustainable Food News is the leading source of daily news and market information for the organic, sustainable and natural food industries. https://sustainablefoodnews.com ◆



Organic Industry News

Regulation or Market Incentives: How will Organic production's positive contribution to climate change be recognized?

Compiled by Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

Whether we like it or not, farmers are on the frontlines of climate change. They are either being used as an example of negative impact or as an essential part of the climate solution. Climate change is affecting agricultural productivity; altering the nutrient content of crops; increasing the cost of producing food and therefore the price of food or the amount of subsidies. Climate change is causing more extremes which directly affect every risk analysis that goes into the day-to-day operations and long term planning of all farming operations.

Organic production is the gold standard for creating a healthy soil and a healthy environment and is the best example of a holistic, climate-friendly system of farming. Embedded within the organic regulations (once we get rid of the abuses) are soil health requirements that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, sequester carbon in the soil, and help mitigate the effects of the climate chaos farmers now face, and that they will be challenged with going forward. Organic agriculture provides management practices that can help farmers adapt to climate change through strengthening agro-ecosystems, diversifying crop and livestock production, and building farmers' knowledge base to best prevent and confront changes in climate.

US agriculture is based on a cheap food policy and subsidies that encourage large scale chemical farming. Science demonstrates that agriculture has a significant role to play in combating climate change, but it requires a very deliberate shift toward climate-friendly farming practices. Who is going to pay for production practices that improve our environment? Will farmers see increased regulation that will not be size appropriate? Will 'greenwashing' and purchasing of climate credits replace actual change? Do we need a consumer facing third party certification that recognizes good practices? And, should organic certification get a free pass or automatic qualification for the production practices that are part of a climate-friendly certification?

What is Congress doing?

The U.S. House authorized a Select Committee on the Climate Crisis in January 2019, which is charged with delivering "ambitious climate policy recommendations to Congress, in order to achieve substantial and permanent reductions in pollution and other activities that contribute to the climate crisis." The Select Committee called for the release of a set of public policy recommendations for congressional climate action by March 31, 2020. This report has now been postponed because of the Coronavirus Pandemic.

Maine organic farmer and US Representative Chellie Pingree (D-ME) introduced the Agriculture Resilience Act (ARA) to "address the most pressing farm issue of our day: climate change." The bill establishes a set of aggressive but realistic goals for farmers to help mitigate climate change and increase agricultural resilience, starting with the overarching goal of reaching net zero greenhouse gas emissions from U.S. agriculture by no later than 2040.

The legislation's substantive programmatic sections are divided into six additional titles – agricultural research, soil health, farmland preservation and viability, pasture-based livestock, on-farm renewable energy, and food waste. Each of those titles of the bill also have 2040 goals (and 2030 interim goals) attached to them, such as retaining year round cover on at least 75 percent of cropland acres, eliminating farmland and grassland conversion, increasing crop-livestock integration by at least 100 percent, tripling on-farm renewable energy production, and reducing food waste by 75 percent. The bill directs the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to develop detailed action plans to help attain each of the goals.

ARA Bill Summary

Agricultural Research – The bill would authorize and increase funding for important existing, but never authorized, USDA programs, including the regional climate hubs run by the Agricultural Research Service

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(ARS) and U.S. Forest Service and ARS' Long-Term Agroecological Research (LTAR) Network. It also proposes to pump $50 million a year into the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program in recognition of the outsized role SARE has played in soil health, cover cropping, and rotational grazing, creating a new Agriculture and Food System Resilience Initiative, including farmer and rancher research and demonstration. The ARA would also strategically invest in public breed and cultivar research to focus on the delivery of regionally adapted livestock breeds and crop cultivars to build agricultural resilience.

Soil Health – The ARA would expand funding for working lands' conservation, including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) (and its new Soil Health Demonstration Trials) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) (including a new CSP Innovation Grants program). The bill would also increase and assure steady future funding for technical assistance to producers in mitigating and adapting to climate change. A new block grant program to support rapidly emerging state-based soil health programs is also envisioned. Importantly, the bill would also expand current rules requiring farm subsidy recipients to control soil erosion to now also include soil health plans.

Farmland Preservation and Viability – Funding and authority for the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP) would be expanded by the ARA to include a new subprogram for farm viability to develop and expand markets for farm products that significantly improve soil health. The tax code would be modified, to exclude from capital gains a portion of gains from the sale of farmland to beginning, socially disadvantaged, young and veteran farmers, and for the sale of permanent conservation easements to protect natural resources on working farmland. Funding for the Agriculture Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) would be increased, and recipients of farmland preservation funding would be required to have a conservation plan that includes soil health and GHG emissions reductions.

Pasture-Based Livestock – The ARA would revive the dormant Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative and create

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We Brought the Organic Farmer's Voice to DC

Annual Advocacy Day recap from the Organic Farmers Association Policy Director
By Patty Lovera, OFA Policy Director

On March 10, 2020, the Organic Farmers Association held our third annual Advocacy Day in Washington, D.C. Nineteen organic farmers and advocates from 12 states visited over 30 congressional offices in one day. We focused our meetings on the ways the USDA organic program can improve the integrity of the organic standards, by strengthening enforcement and preventing fraud, ending loopholes in organic dairy standards and stopping organic certification of hydroponic operations.

This is the time of year when Congress is developing the spending bills for departments like the USDA, called the appropriations process. We are still fairly early in the process, when the appropriations committee is developing the list of spending levels for specific federal programs that will end up in the bills that go to the House and Senate floors later this year. This made it a good time for OFA advocates to meet with key offices in the appropriations process to explain why they need to push the USDA's National Organic Program to protect organic integrity, especially when it comes to preventing fraud, closing dairy loopholes and addressing the growth of hydroponic in organic.

Patty Lovera

In addition to educating offices on these key organic integrity issues, we also had several meetings focused on the role

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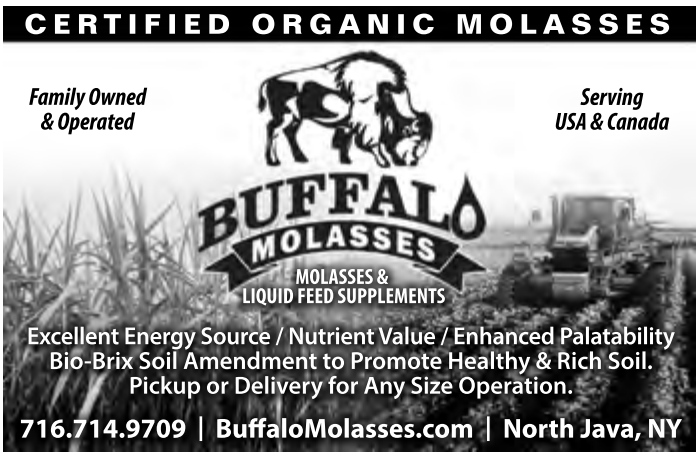
organic farming can play in addressing climate change and the need to include organic farmers in the debate over immigration and farm labor. There are several bills already introduced in both the House and Senate on agriculture and climate change, with even more expected later this year. We talked with several offices that are leading on climate change issues about how to make sure that organic methods are recognized as part of the solution to climate change and the need to make sure the organic standards on building soil and grazing livestock are as strong as possible, so that organic is the gold standard for climate friendly agriculture. On immigration and farm labor, the debate is centered in the Senate, which needs to consider the Farm Workforce Modernization Act that was passed by the House late last year. It's not clear when that debate will actually begin in the Senate, but we made it clear to key offices on that issue that organic farms need to be in the conversation.

The trip to DC wasn't just about our day on Capitol Hill. OFA's Policy Committee also spent time together to work on the next steps in the annual policy development process. The Policy Committee reviewed the policy proposals submitted by organic farmers from around the country, identified the top priorities and drafted policy statements. Keep an eye out – the new draft policy statements will soon be available to OFA members for comments. (You can read more about the process OFA uses for developing our policy positions at https://organicfarmersassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Policy-Process-Adopted-5.10.2018.pdf.) ◆



NET UPDATE

Recent ODairy Discussions

By Liz Bawden, Organic Dairy Farmer, NODPA President

Last month we heard from some farmers out there who have been breeding towards an A2/A2 herd for years. Although the mainstream organic processors have yet to move into the A2 milk arena, direct-to-consumer and local niche sales have been on the rise, according to these producers. (Remember that A2 refers to a form of beta-casein protein in milk.) Testing can be done through NeoGen/Genseek Labs in Nebraska for about $16 per sample, or through University of California (Davis) for about $30. Some larger dairies in CA and NY with more than one barn reported to have filled local niches for A2 milk by testing their herds, and moving all A2A2 cows to one facility.

A horned milk cow locked horns with her herd mate, breaking off her outer horn shell. The farmer had already treated the exposed horn with Dr Paul's Wound Spray and dosed the cow with homeopathic Arnica, Hypericum, and Aconite. Several other farmers said they had seen this type of injury before, and suggested that she had treated it appropriately and, given some time, the animal will grow back her horn shell and fully recover.

It was over a year ago when this farmer faced an "abortion storm". After exhaustive testing over several months, the cause of these late-term abortions was determined to be Neospora. This protozoan parasite causes abortions at 4 to 6 months and in live births, calves may be weak. Once infected, animals are infected for life. There is currently no known cure, and a vaccine that is available is reported to be only modestly effective. "There is a 90% chance that a dam will pass it to her offspring so we now breed all identified Neospora animals to beef semen. That is the vertical transmission route. There is another transmission route and that is horizontal--being passed to cattle from the infected feces of the Canidae family, which includes dogs, coyotes, wolves, foxes, and others…"

A non-certified farmer asked the group if anyone had any experience using composted biosolids. Biosolids/sewage sludge have always been prohibited in organic production, and this farmer wanted to understand why. Several respondents explained that the main reasons are the heavy metals and unknown chemicals in sludge. One story was shared of a farm in Maine that had spread sludge on their dairy farm's fields under a state program since the 1980's. Their farm became so polluted with Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) that their milk tested very high for these PFAS, and they lost their milk market and had to close the dairy operation last year. These types of pollutants are sometimes called "forever chemicals" since they are very persistent in the environment. ◆

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ODairy is a FREE, vibrant listserv for organic dairy farmers, educators and industry representatives who actively participate with questions, advice, shared stories, and discussions of issues critical to the organic dairy industry.

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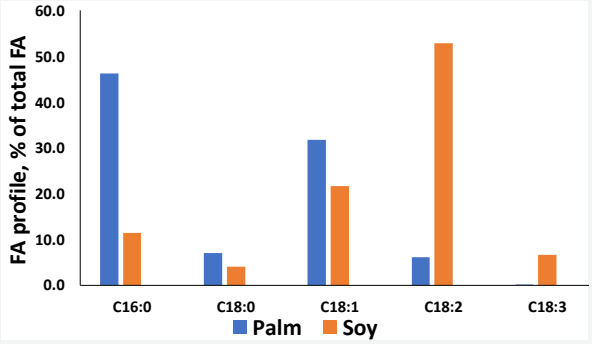

Figure 1 - Comparison of the fatty acid profile of calcium salts based on palm and soybean.

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RUPd (% RUP)	86.8
dRUP-Lys (% DM)	1.6
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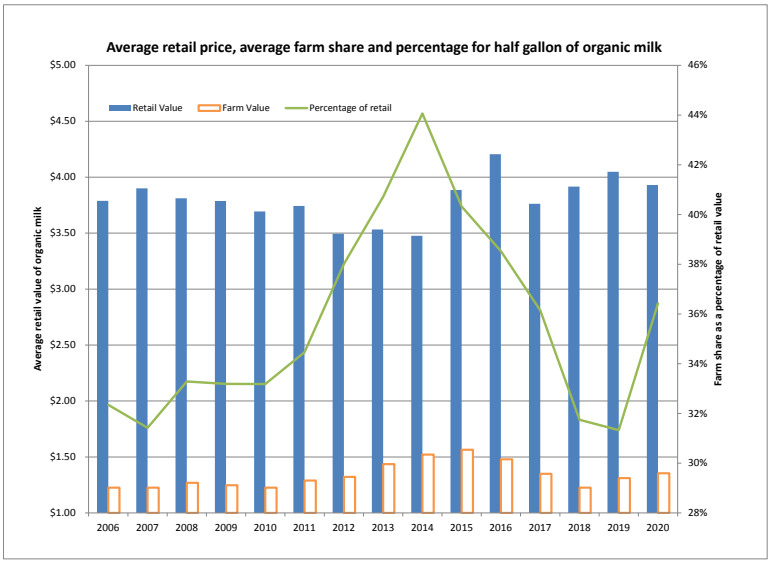
ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

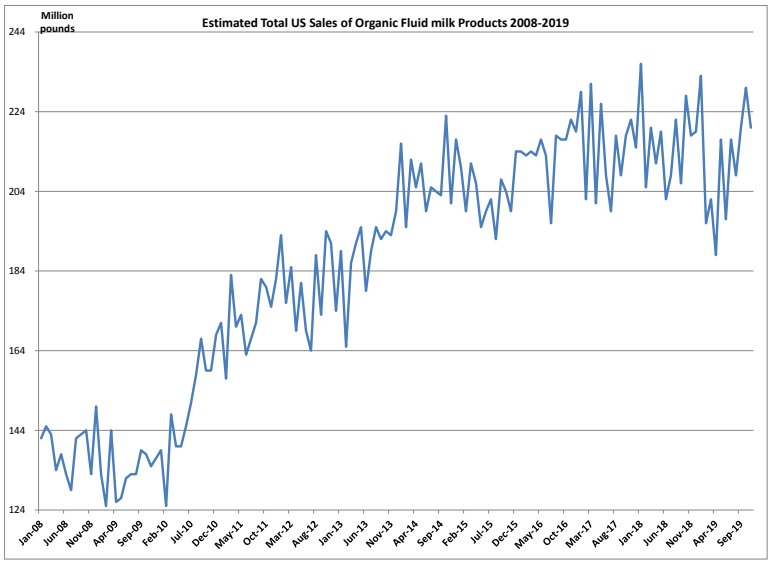
Pay And Feed Prices March/April 2020

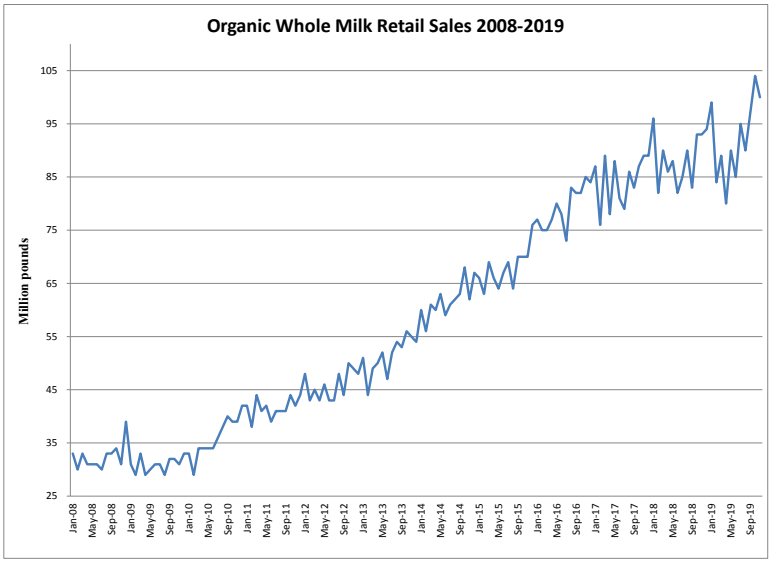
By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

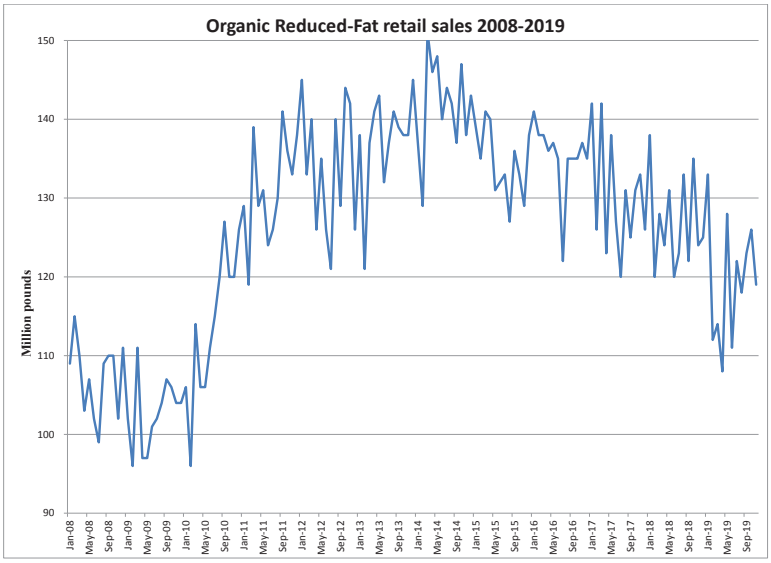
In February 2020, the Agricultural Marketing Services (AMS) reported that estimated US sales of total organic retail milk products for November 2019 were up from 2018. In November 2019, total sales of organic retail milk rose by 1 percent from 2018, to 220 million pounds, but year-to-date sales for 2019 fell 2.0 percent compared to 2018. Organic whole milk retail sales continued its slow rise in November, 100 million pounds, which was up 7.8 percent compared to a year earlier, and up 4.7 percent compared to year-to-date in 2018. Reduced fat milk (2%) sales, 72 million pounds, climbed 3.2 percent over a year ago, while year-to-date sales increased 1 percent. With some more recent data, the Federal Milk Marketing Order One reported that in January 2020 utilization of organic Whole Milk totaled 11.5 million pounds, down by 25% from the 15.2 million pounds one year earlier. Utilization of Reduced Fat organic milk was also down by 35%. This drop in utilization is unusual for January as it's usually a month that organic milk sales peak. Hopefully, February data will show a more typical trend.

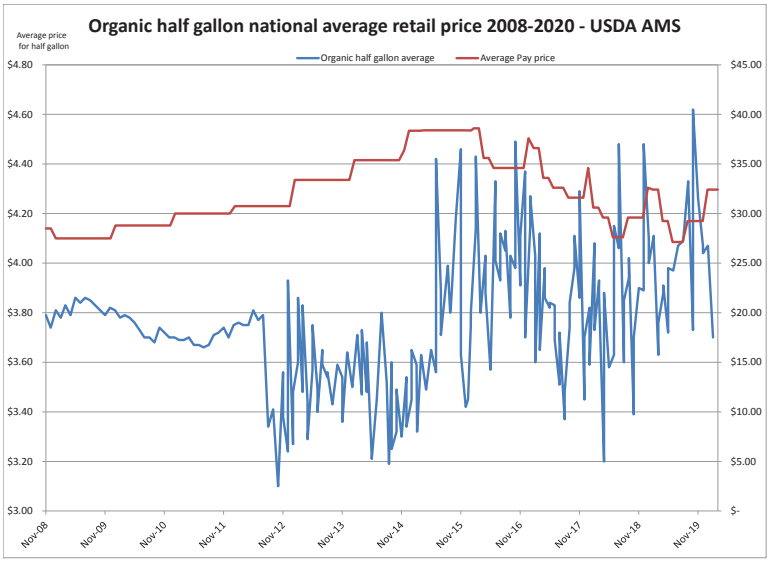
At this time of year, CROPP Cooperative usually publishes its pay price for the year. Currently, all we hear is that there will be no changes from last year (awaiting a reply to my request for comment from CROPP). Concerns that organic dairies in California were going to be dropped by CROPP, which was mentioned in the January 2020 issue of the NODPA News, has become a reality with 18 farms being dropped by CROPP. Some farms have found a market with Organic West; however, there is no confirmation on how CROPP is handling the end of those cooperative agreements. Having been to the Humboldt CA area for a WODPA conference many years ago, I saw how wonderful the area was for real organic dairying, with some of the best pasture I have seen. Some of these organic dairies in the Humboldt area that have been dropped by CROPP were among those that took their arguments about a fair pay price to the CROPP Board. Reports from supermarkets are that the Dean Foods/CROPP joint venture, "Organic Valley Fresh," has problems with the supply of HTST (lower temperature pasteurization milk) milk. That had











been one of the selling points of the joint venture in using the surplus capacity of Dean Foods regional plants in areas where grass milk product are available and being able to deliver fresh, traditionally pasteurized milk, directly to retailers supporting the regions producers. CROPP is also offering free half gallons of their Ultra Milk in northeast supermarkets.

In December 2019, Danone North America announced in a letter to its producers a change in the procurement relationship between the company and its 'Dairy Farmer Partners' as of January 2020,'Danone North America/Horizon has selected Kalona Farms (which is operating under Small Farm Program LLC) as a connection point." While Kalona Farms has not returned our request for comment, we have found other information on their operations and their longer history with Horizon/Whitewave/Danone. They have been supplying milk for Horizon's Grass Fed brand of organic milk using the standards of the American Grass Fed Association and pool milk from different areas and coops, including Westby Coop. Kalona Farms experience with pools of milk from small and hand milked dairies is obviously valued by Danone and hopefully they set the example for other handlers who deal with the numerous challenges of maintaining milk quality from these dairies. There have been undocumented complaints directed at handlers that pool small amounts of milk about the use of Hydrogen Peroxide to reduce the bacteria content and improve the quality of milk.

Kalona was on the list of customers for Nature's Way Dairy LLC, "a 3,500 head organic dairy that has two milking parlors, 1,200 acres of organic certified pasture, 2,500 acres of rangeland and a 1,500 head heifer facility located in Sulphur Springs, Texas," as quoted in the real estate listing for the sale of Nature's Way Dairy. Kalona Farms is also launching some new product for national distribution. They have launched a 100% organically certified Grass-fed Whole Milk Kefir Whole Chocolate Milk and Whole Milk Cottage Cheese. While Kalona Farms are obviously increasing their national presence, there needs to be transparency in how any potential conflict will be resolved with both local and national utilization on the supply side, which ultimately affects pay price. Kalona Farms base pay for organic milk is reportedly at $21.50; there is no protein or other solids premium; the butterfat premium is $.10 below Organic Valley; and there is no winter bonus. They also routinely take deductions for marketing losses; as recently as August 2019 there was a $3.00/cwt deduction for marketing losses. What is the future of this relationship with Danone? Are they just creating a level of distance and deniability that will insulate them from past problems with managing their own supply, especially with smaller operations?

French dairy firm Lactalis has announced it aim for a bigger presence in the US. Three years ago, Lactalis purchased Stonyfield from Danone for $875 million, which gave it a strong foothold in organic. It followed that in 2018 with the addition of Siggi's, the New York-based maker of Icelandic-style yogurts using simple ingredients, and Green Mountain Creamery, an organic yogurt producer located in Vermont, a year ago. Thierry Clement, CEO of Lactalis North America, is reported to have said: "We are a leader in the world [in dairy] and we are not in the U.S.. We want to be the one stop for all

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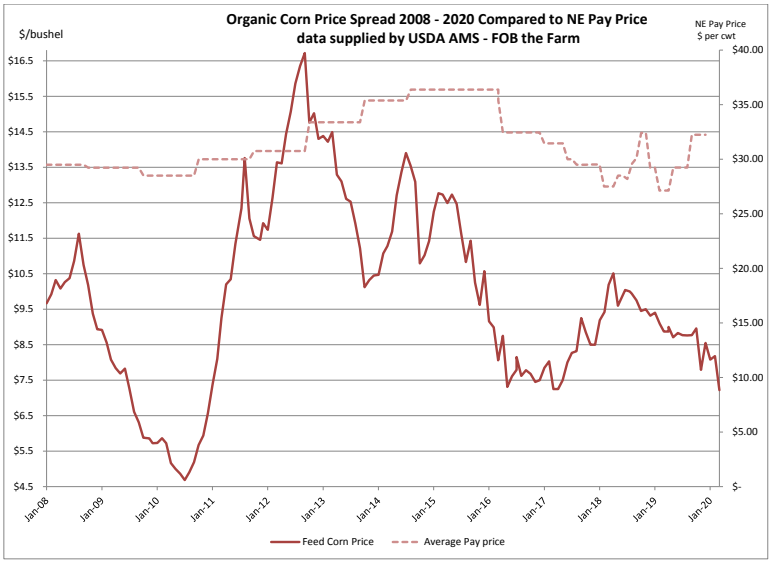
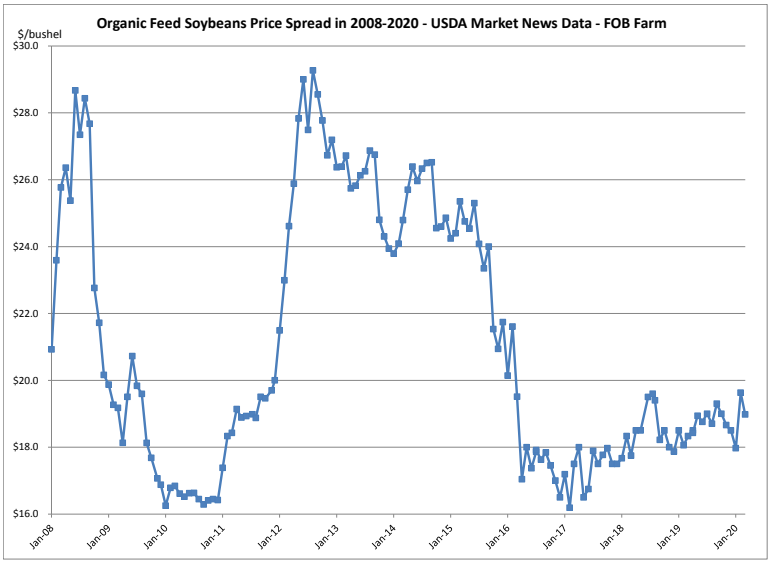
the dairy. We can't offer all the ranges [of product] so we still have a lot to bring if we want to be a leader in this country, and this is our mission." His statements also reflect that, unlike Danone NA, they do not see their growth in plant based products but Clement is quoted as saying, "I'm not against plant-based. It's very nice in the diet, but it's not exclusive. And I think dairy in terms of nutritional value has something to prove that's even bigger."

Domestically, the price for organic corn and soybean has dropped with organic feed grade soybeans trading $0.09 cents lower and organic feed grade corn trading $1.04 lower than prices recorded in January 2020. The USDA's Global Agricultural Trade System (GATS) reports declining imports and exports of U.S. organic commodities in the first few months of 2020, as shipments to markets overseas dropped 14 percent in January, while the value of organic commodities crossing the U.S. border were down less than 1 percent. The most notable change in imported organic commodities in 2019 was the sharp drop in the volume of organic livestock feed ingredients such as soybeans and corn, which registered declines of 18 percent and 27 percent, respectively. Organic soybean imports from Ukraine soared 151 percent to $5.8 million in January. The big push of organic livestock feed ingredients from the Black Sea region exporter offset declines from the two largest organic soybean exporters to the U.S. market, India and Argentina. Meanwhile, organic corn imports from Romania, another Black Sea region exporter, were up 154 percent in January to about $500,000. ◆





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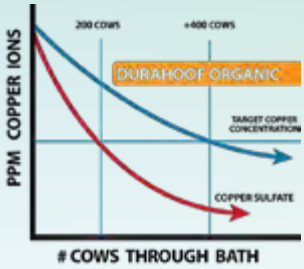

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

General Mills Launches Regenerative Wheat Farming Pilot in Kansas

By Jason Flatt
This article first appeared on the Food Tank website, https://foodtank.com/ and is reprinted with permission

General Mills is launching a pilot program that will help transition Kansas wheat farms from conventional to regenerative farming. The three-year pilot taking place around the Cheney Reservoir watershed will support 24 farmers learning how to use regenerative farming to improve soil health and increase revenue.

"It's really important that we invest in the long-term sustainability of farmers and of the natural resources on which the whole food system depends," says Steve Rosenzweig, a soil scientist at General Mills involved in the company's regenerative agriculture initiatives. "Regenerative agriculture can really address the… negative trends in soil health, biodiversity, and the pressures on the farm economy that threaten the long-term security of the food system."

Participating farmers will learn and adopt General Mills's six pillars of regenerative farming: reduce disturbance, maximize diversity, keep a living root in the ground year-round, keep the soil covered, integrate livestock, and understanding context. The pillar "understanding context" was recently added, according to Rosenzweig, and focuses on applying the other five pillars based on an individual farm's needs. The company's investment in regenerative farming is driven by a desire to support "healthy ecosystems, sustainable climate, healthy watersheds, and thriving farmers," Rosenzweig tells Food Tank.

For the pilot program, General Mills partnered with regenerative agriculture consultants from Understanding Ag and its Soil Health Academy, an initiative that teaches farmers how to build soil health and use it to their economic advantage. The academy's coaches include local regenerative farmers who will walk pilot farmers one-on-one through developing regenerative farming plans appropriate for their farms. The coaches will also help the pilot participants with social networking and building a community of regenerative farmers.

"One thing we hear all the time from regenerative farmers is that they… feel like they're the only ones in their communities doing this," Rosenzweig tells Food Tank. "A lot of farmers have lost friends because they're completely changing the way they farm and that can be ostracizing in a farming community."

General Mills believes helping their pilot participants feel like they are moving down this path together will help them

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

learn more from one another. "Farmers learn best from other farmers that share the same climatic and economic conditions," says Rosenzweig.

The program also aims to incentivize farmers to participate in ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, greenhouse gas reduction, water quality improvements, and water quantity reduction. Agriculture is about 50 percent of General Mills's greenhouse gas footprint, according to Rosenzweig.

Pilot participants will partake in an ecosystems services market that will pay them for activities that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and contribute to healthier soil and waterways. General Mills believes that providing ecosystem services is also a financial imperative for farmers. "As you restore your ecosystem, you can maintain productivity while reducing your reliance on external inputs" resulting in fewer expenses and increased profit, Rosenzweig tells Food Tank.

General Mills hopes to encourage farmers to transition 1 million acres of land to regenerative farming by 2030 as a result of the market-based incentives, the community of regenerative farmers, and the local knowledge base their pilot program aims to achieve.

General Mills plays a role as funder and "enabler," convening the right partners to contribute to regenerative agriculture's widespread success, according to Rosenzweig. The program is a "pilot for the whole food system to… figure out what it takes for all these different food system players to come together to enable regenerative ag adoption," says Rosenzweig.

Jason Flatt is a Food Tank intern and a recent AmeriCorps-turned-employee at a food systems nonprofit in New Jersey. He focused on government food assistance programs during his Master of Public Administration, but now, he is more engrossed in how communities across the U.S. can revolutionize their whole food systems. While his most recent endeavors include implementing food recovery programs in New Jersey public schools, he is generally just passionate about how we can make food more accessible, affordable, democratic, and culturally appropriate for everybody. He can be reached at 202-590-1037 or https://foodtank.com/contact/. ◆

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Save the Date for the 20th Annual NODPA Field Days

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Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture and the Environment situated on picturesque coastal land in Freeport, Maine

in NODPA's early days and Henry Perkins promised every attendee a lobster dinner to lure them to Maine. It was a smashing success! The last time, 10 years ago, NODPA Field Days was held at the MOFGA headquarters. On this 20th anniversary, we are excited to partner with Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture and the Environment to bring you a full educational program and two farm tours. We will have more information about the program in the May NODPA News, and online at http://nodpa.com.

Wolfe's Neck Center (WNC), a public non-profit and community resource since 1997, offers a wide variety of programs including their immersive farmer training programs, farm-based education and research, the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship program, a community garden, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, Community and Visitor programs, seasonal events and festivals, and a campground.

We are working hard to create a timely educational program that we will share as soon as it's more fully formed. In the meantime, the following activities are confirmed: On Thursday, September 24th, we will feature the first farm tour (to be announced shortly), then convene for registration, lunch and an afternoon of workshops and discussion. The NODPA Annual Meeting will take place during the evening banquet, and a speaker presentation will follow dinner. Friday morning starts with the very important Producer-Only meeting, and will be followed by a morning of workshops. After lunch, the second farm tour, of Wolfe's Neck Organic Dairy, will close out the meeting and Field Days.

In southern Maine, Freeport is conveniently located 25 minutes north

of Portland, just off Interstate 295, and is the home of LL Bean, plus plenty of things to see and do in the area. Wolfe's Neck has an oceanfront campground, which includes over 130 sites and three oceanfront cabins; we are working with the staff in order to offer all NODPA Field Days attendees that are interested in staying on-site terrific rates. Please stay tuned for more information. In addition to standard tent and RV sites, they have 'comfort camping' sites with a furnished tent, and a few cabins. The campground also offers kayak and canoe rentals for exploring the coastline of Casco Bay, and bike rental for wandering the dirt roads that line their campus and campground.

If you are planning to extend your Maine stay following the NODPA Field Days, consider heading up I-295 to Unity, Maine for the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association/ MOFGA's 44th Annual Common Ground Fair, September 25-27th. Almost 60,000 people visit this very popular three-day agricultural fair each year. Visit https://mofga.org/The-Fair for more details.

We will be sending out information on sponsorship and trade show opportunities in the few weeks, and will have it posted on our website. Anyone that is interested or who has questions should contact Nora Owens, NODPA Field Days Coordinator, at 413-772-0444 or by email, noraowens@comcast.net.

We hope everyone will Save the Dates, and join us at Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture and the Environment for the 20th Annual NODPA Field Days on September 24 & 25, 2020.

Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture and the Environment, Freeport, Maine To Host the 20th Annual NODPA Field Days

By Allison Carrier, Marketing & Communications Manager, Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture & the Environment

Wolfe's Neck Center farmhouse, cows, pasture

Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture & the Environment (WNC) is a nonprofit educational and working farm situated on over 600 acres of picturesque coastal landscape in Freeport, Maine. Our mission is to transform our relationship with farming and food for a healthier planet, using our setting to connect people of all ages to the food they eat and where it comes from through an array of programs and visitor experiences.

One of the earliest pioneers in sustainable agriculture, the farm was created by Lawrence M.C. (LMC) and Eleanor Houston Smith in 1959 and operated as an organic beef farm for decades, consistently leading the way through innovative and experimental farming techniques. The Smiths envisioned the farm as a place to demonstrate sustainable agriculture; to foster farm innovation; and to engage with and inspire people

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Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture and the Environment, Freeport, Maine To Host the 20th Annual NODPA Field Days

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around farming and the natural world, ultimately inspiring and instilling the core values of what Wolfe's Neck Center is today.

The farm progressed into a public non-profit and community resource in 1997. Today, WNC is an educational and working farm set amidst an agricultural campus consisting of a unique mix of ecological systems: forest, marsh, pasture lands and four miles of coastline. Open free to the public year-round, WNC encourages the more than 30,000 annual visitors to traverse the extensive nature trails, learn about livestock in the barns and pastures, explore organic gardens and vegetable fields, camp along the shoreline, and enjoy the open space. Its authentic, beautiful setting uniquely positions the center to engage with people in deep and meaningful ways that have a lasting effect on their health and how they perceive their role in the food system.

As both an educational community resource and working farm, Wolfe's Neck Center furthers this engagement by providing immersive farmer training. By training new farmers, Wolfe's Neck Center strives to play a leading role in shaping the future of sustainable agriculture; inspiring people to make informed food choices; and facilitating farm-based education and research. Its most prominent program is the Organic Dairy Research & Farmer Training Program, established in 2015 in partnership with NH-based yogurt company Stonyfield, to address the growing number of challenges facing the dairy industry. Their shared vision was to create a pathway for farmers into a career in organic dairy, and to support increased milk production from family farms across Maine and New England. The training program is offered in partnership with Wisconsin-based Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship program, the first accredited

Wolfe's Neck Center apprentice

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS


Wolfe's Neck Center apprentices

farming apprenticeship in the nation. There are currently three apprentices in the program who live and work at the farm as part of their two-year training. Additionally, there are five graduates of the program now working in the dairy/agriculture sector in Maine.

In addition to the organic dairy program, Wolfe's Neck Center also offers an intensive seasonal opportunity for aspiring organic fruit and vegetable farmers. Fruit & Vegetable Production Interns farm our fields from June through October, contributing to our on-site food offerings and practicing small-scale farm enterprise skills with a 40-share CSA. The program hosts 2-5 interns each summer. The program is two-fold: Provide quality education and experience to aspiring farmers, and support a significant population of food insecure Maine residents. Since 2014, WNC has partnered with the Good Shepherd Food Bank's Mainers Feeding Mainers Program and have donated more than 40,000 pounds of fresh produce. In this time, WNC also constructed greenhouses to extend its growing season to increase access to nutritious produce through the winter months when it is needed most. The produce grown in our organic gardens is also prepared in our Farm Café, sold in our Farm Store alongside other local products, and purchased by CSA shareholders throughout the season.

As part of the WNC farmer training programs, apprentices and interns learn to farm using regenerative agriculture practices; caring for the land so that it stores excess carbon and builds soil health for increased resiliency. Soil health research takes place on our fields, and that valuable information is used to help farms, university researchers, and food companies develop practices that limit greenhouse gas emissions and measure effects over time and in varying climates.

In July 2019, WNC launched OpenTEAM, or Open Technology Ecosystem for Agricultural Management, a major cross-sector collaboration to rebuild soil health in response to the impacts of climate change. OpenTEAM is a global, collaborative and farmer-driven, interoperable platform to provide farmers and ranchers around the world with the best possible knowledge to improve soil health. This initiative is funded, in part, by a multi-year grant from the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research.

While Wolfe's Neck Center is addressing major issues facing the future of food, farming, and the environment, it also uses its setting to welcome visitors to engage with these elements on an introductory level through a variety of place-based, hands-on programming. Over 500 children participate in

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Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture and the Environment, Freeport, Maine To Host the 20th Annual NODPA Field Days

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summer Farm Camp and throughout the year in school vacation camps and field trip programs, where they engage in hands-on learning about sustainable agriculture and the environment. Wolfe's Neck Center also boasts a community garden, a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, Community and Visitor programs, seasonal events and festivals, and a campground, all to further engage its thousands of annual visitors. Its oceanfront campground, which includes over 130 sites and three oceanfront cabins, has been a favorite retreat for many families for over fifty years. The campground offers kayak and canoe rentals for exploring the coastline of Casco Bay, and bike rental for wandering the dirt roads that line our campus and campground.

Picking blueberries at Wolfe's Neck Center

Each year at Wolfe's Neck Center, thousands of visitors engage in powerful experiences through hands-on, place-based interactions while engaging with the natural world. Through this, WNC hopes to inspire active participation in a healthier food system and build a community of people who care deeply about the future of food. ◆

A hayride at Wolfe's Neck Center

Organic Industry News

Regulation or Market Incentives: How will Organic production's positive contribution to climate change be recognized?

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four new authorities: animal-raising claim labeling (e.g., grassfed, pasture-raised, no added hormones, etc.), with auditing and verification procedures; a grant program to assist very small meat processors serve the growing niche meat sector; an alternative manure management program to support non-digester dairy and livestock methane management strategies to reduce emissions; and a new Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) pilot program to create long-term protection for 5 million acres of grassland at risk of conversion to cropping or development.

On-Farm Renewable Energy – The mainstay of the energy section of the bill is a big increase in funding and a variety of much-needed policy changes to the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP). The bill also directs USDA to do an urgent, detailed study, followed by a five year research and extension plan, of how to effectively do dual-use renewable energy and cropping or livestock systems on agricultural land in a way that increases renewable energy production without jeopardizing our food production capacity.

Food Waste – The food waste section would enact common sense changes to food quality and discard dates to better inform consumers and reduce waste. In addition, the bill would direct USDA to make composting a federal conservation practice standard eligible for assistance under the Working Lands Conservation Programs, a long overdue change that would help build soil health while making good use of agricultural and food wastes.

In the Senate, Senators Debbie Stabenow and Mike Braun are members of the bipartisan Senate Climate Solutions Caucus and they are also working on a bill that would help farmers and foresters overcome barriers they face in order to participate in voluntary carbon markets through creating a certification program at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. They plan to publish a bill that would include a "One Stop Shop" for producers and foresters interested in carbon markets to help them get their foot in the door. They want to establish a USDA Certification for the private parties that farmers work with in order to generate and ultimately sell their carbon credits modeled off of the National Organic Program. They would like to include an Advisory Council to keep the Secretary and USDA updated on new developments in the rapidly expanding landscape of carbon markets. The proposed council of agriculture experts, scientists, conservationists, and producers will ensure that the certification program remains relevant, credible, and responsive to the needs of farmers, forest landowners, and carbon market participants alike. Finally, they want regular reporting to keep lawmakers up to speed on barriers to market entry, producer challenges, market performance, and opportunities for USDA to contribute to the further adoption of voluntary carbon sequestration.

Most of these big measures are unlikely to become law anytime soon given that Republican lawmakers, and President Trump, typically dismiss the issue, and they control much of Washington DC right now. Instead, these bills are a sign of a debate that has long been relegated to Washington's back burner, re-emerging. Whether this debate translates into actual policy passing is a big open question — and probably on hold until after the 2020 presidential contest. We will continue to report on climate change initiatives that are directly affecting the future viability of organic dairy farms and how they might give some light at the end of the tunnel. ◆

Consider Advertising in the NODPA News

See page 34 for more details.

FEATURED FARM

TRE-G FARMS, POMPEY, NY

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There have been multiple changes to the management and the infrastructure of the dairy over the past few years. Numerous changes happened within the same time frame, so pinpointing any direct cause and effect would be difficult to do. But what the Smith family can tell you is that the changes have been unconditionally positive, and have re-invigorated this dairy, preventing what could have been its demise.

Roots of Change

By 2014, the Smiths realized that things were no longer functioning as they wished at the dairy. Along with the size of their 190 head Holstein milking herd - an "awkward size in a weakening milk market," Jim was growing increasingly frustrated with the twice per day milking, taking over eight hours of time per day, and the focus on hitting their production numbers - they averaged 85 pounds per cow per - to keep afloat.

Their 1960s era milking parlor was no longer functional. A difficult labor market and the departure of one of two valued longtime employee added to the stress. And they were in danger of losing their milk market, as they were the only farm in the immediate area and the hauling costs were escalating. A drought in 2012 had caused added pressure, as the farm, like most the dairies with more than 100 cows in their local region, suffers from a lack of water resources, and wells often run dry. In 2012, ponds dried up, too. The stressors were piling up.

"The numbers weren't working," Jim said. "Sue and I felt like it would be tight for us to compete in the next downturn."

So the couple opted to make changes to keep the dairy thriving in the future, and bring some pride and joy in dairy farming back into their lives.

Reassessing the Dairy

The Smiths knew that they needed to get out of the old parlor, and Jim wanted to decrease the size of the herd. They'd already built a new six row freestall barn for the milking herd in 1999, and had been looking at robotic milking parlors for almost a decade, visiting farms which adopted the technology early and monitoring their experiences. They had previously implemented heifer and dry cow grazing, and liked what they saw, both economically and in improved herd health. They were dedicated to continue improving the farm's environmental footprint, which had been a focus for years.

It became obvious that organic certification was the best fit option for the dairy, and the time was right to pursue the organic certification they'd talked about but postponed for years, as the paperwork was the major hurdle for Jim. Ironically, looking back today, it is the paperwork which has allowed him to better manage the farm, track his progress, and make the best management decisions, and he is thankful for it.

It soon became clear that not only were the Smiths going to go organic: they were going to go robotic, too. And they were going to upgrade the entire infrastructure of the 1999 six row freestall barn: electric, water, internet and wifi, "to make it functional for the next generation," Jim said.

"The difficult part in all of this is timing. We had to make changes or get out," Sue said. They knew Ryker, then still in college at Cornell University, wanted to work in agriculture, but "we weren't sure if dairy was in his future or not, and didn't want to pressure him. We took a leap of faith."

But Ryker was already making some decisions on his own. He and Jenny had been exposed to robotic milking at school, and liked what they saw. He saw that his parents were making choices that reinforced his own views on dairy farming. While returning to the farm had always been "on the radar," he said, the family's decision to transition to robots and to organic management was the key which cemented his decision to remain on the dairy.

"The opportunity of transitioning to organic played a big role," in his decision, Ryker said.

Jumping Into Organic

They contracted with their processor, Organic Valley, in 2015, and began to certify the land and transition the herd. When Jim finally relented to the challenges of pursuing organic certification, he was hoping to enter the market incrementally, transitioning the cropland and herd during the three year transition period and getting used to the idea.

But Organic Valley had other ideas. They saw the grazing set up already on the farm, with the laneways, a gravity-fed

FEATURED FARM


Cows grazing at Tre-G Farms

pasture watering system and fencing as being fully functional. Organic Valley wanted them to become organic sooner, not later, and signed them on with the condition that they needed to be delivering certified organic milk as soon as the cows could be certified, even though all of the land would not be yet be eligible for certification.

The grazing land - about 150 acres of the 600 owned and rented by the farm - was already eligible, and another 75 acres could transition in one year. About one-third of their 300 hay acres was already eligible for certification, with another 200 acres under transition. But the corn crop and small grains were on land that had recent synthetic chemicals applied, and they would need to purchase in certified organic feed.

The rapid transition into the organic milk market left fields of feedstocks that they couldn't use themselves. It was a difficult sales market, as no one was buying feed, either. Instead of selling low, they opted to turn it into mulch, leaving it on the land to add fertility and build the soil, gaining value from the crops.

By 2017, the cow herd itself was certified organic, although the final remainder of the land required another year of transition.

While their rations didn't change significantly with the switch to organic certification, remaining a mix of haylage, corn silage, high moisture corn, roasted soybeans, and a mineral supplement, their feeding philosophy did.

They are now focused on managing the herd's nutrition with a mindset of supplementing pasture forages, not supplementing the fed ration with pasture. A nutritionist balances the TMR based on their forage samples, and they use what they observe in the manure patties to provide guidance, too.

"We get as much as we can from out there on pasture," Ryker said. "We do like grazing. The cows do really well."

The permanent pastures are primarily a mix of orchard grass, timothy and white clover. They have purchased a no till drill, and although they haven't been actively seeding, are planning

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FEATURED FARM

TRE-G FARMS, POMPEY, NY

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Ryker and Jim in front of newly placed Lely

to begin renewing pastures to increase pasture yield and nutrition.

The milking herd utilizes two paddocks in a rotational system that is still being optimized. The gate leading to the pasture is open 90 percent of the time. During slow growth, the herd is redirected once per day to fresh pasture. During the rapid spring green-up, managing grazing is a bit more challenging and they are "still ironing out the bugs," Ryker said.

The ration is fed using a mobile TMR mixer, which can drive into the barns to unload the feed. The cows also receive a customized pellet, formulated specifically for the herd, while milking in the robot. The robot-fed grain pellet ration is tailored to each cow's individual needs, based on milk production. They program the robots so they are able to "effectively allocate feed," Jim said, with higher producing cows receiving more grain during milking.

They now manage 200 acres of pasture, grow 80 acres of corn silage and 30 acres of triticale, with the remainder of the 600 acres farmed in hay. All of the land is now certified organic.

Robotic Benefits

Precision management is cost effective, and is one of the reasons Jim had been researching robots since 2010. He'd visited other farms and followed their transitions to robotic milking systems. Ryker and Jenny were exposed to robotic milking during college, and were enthusiastic about its benefits.

In October 2017, they made the switch to robotic milking, purchasing two Lely Astronaut A4 robots.

The robots free up all of the hours per day once spent milking. Each morning and evening they scan the reports from the robots to see which cows haven't been milked recently, and fetch them. They fetch about six cows, on average, each time. They haven't had any problems with animals not accepting the robot, and have found that the cows are much calmer now than when they needed to be herded into the crowded holding area and wait to be milked twice per day.

"The timing of milking has created a huge change in them," Ryker said. The cows get milked when they want to, and can visit the robot up to three times per day. "We've taken a lot of stress away from the cows in the herd."

The transition to two Lely milking robots coincided with their organic transition, the reduction in herd numbers, and the upgrading of infrastructure to the barn. They also redesigned an old free stall barn, which now serves to house the calves, adding side curtains to increase ventilation.

Today they are comfortable with a milking herd of 140 Holsteins. They raise about 50 replacement heifers each year. Any bull calves are sold. Breeding is done primarily via artificial insemination. Although they are pretty good at detecting heats, the robots are able to do it sooner, Ryker said. They do use a purchased bull each spring to breed as backup, or for heifers on pasture. They raise about fifty heifers per year, keeping the calves that were conceived via AI to push their selected genetics.

They had been watching the herd to select for udders and teats suitable to the robotic milking systems for the previous seven or so years, and eliminating cows with quarters that wouldn't attach properly, in preparation for the change. The herd has

now begun to select itself for grazing, as the smaller Holsteins are able to outperform the larger-bodied ones in the grazing system, and their animals are getting smaller. They are actively breeding for better components, and have been seeing a slow increase in those numbers.

"We were higher when not organic," Jim said of the components, stating that this was likely due to the added supplements they were able to feed when conventional.

They are currently averaging around a 3.9 -4.0 butterfat and a 3.0 protein average this winter. The cows are producing about 75 pounds of milk per day each, decreasing to around 60 pounds during the summer. The decrease from the 85 pounds of milk per cow, per day they were averaging when conventional isn't easily traced to increasing pasture intake, or to a switch to robotic milking, as those changes occurred simultaneously.

"I think it's a mix of both," Jim said.

The cows in the miking herd are housed on sawdust bedded mattresses, in the 1999 six row freestall barn. The bedding is refreshed once per week, using a side shooter bucket, while the cows are in the middle feed alley for the morning feeding. In this manner, they don't disrupt the cows routine, keeping stress low. The milking robots are located in the outside alley.

Changing Health

The data the robots collect on each cow as she is milking allows them to closely monitor the herd for any concerns. Changes in rumination, in lying time, walking or other activity indicators can point to herd health concerns before they become a noticeable. When a cow is flagged as having changes in behavior, they are able to assess the situation and begin homeopathic treatment early, catching problems before they can compromise animal health.

They've also had a change in mindset. Instead of asking what they can do to fix a health problem after it has become a concern, they focus on making the environment healthier and prevent any concerns from arising in the first place.

"Prevention is by far our biggest asset in this," Jim said. "We don't have the antibiotics to fall back on to fix any mismanagement."

While they have seen an overall increase in herd health over the past five years, it's not possible to directly correlate the improvements seen to any given management change. It could be primarily due to organic certification and the grazing of the milking herd and the increase in pasture intake. It might have to do with the switch to a robotic milking system, or to the enhanced monitoring they provide. It could also be contributed in part to changes in environmental factors. The cows are no longer in a holding area while waiting to milk, and are less stressed.

They have seen a decrease in lameness, too. Displaced abomasum has all but been eliminated, too. They have less issues with retained placentas.

"Conception rates have increased since the transition to organic. We don't have as many herd health issues," Jim said.

Their relationship with the veterinarian has changed, as they now primarily require services for ultrasounds to check for pregnancy. Their veterinary care costs have decreased dramatically now that herd health issues are minimal. Increased forage intake, a change to a low stress robotic milking system, an alteration in mindset so they aren't pushing milk production, improved infrastructure which eliminated a lot of environmental causes of ill health, and a renewed focus on prevention have all combined to increase herd vigor.

Other infrastructure changes that occurred during the organic and robotic transitions include changes to calf housing. The calves, formerly housed in an old tie-stall barn, were prone to scours and pneumonia. By moving them to an old freestall barn retrofitted with side curtains, they've substantially increased ventilation and eliminated the environmental factors which were instigating a lot of those calf health issues. Today, they very rarely have a sick calf.

"We thought we were doing a good job," Jim said of their conventional calf health management. Now they realize they were relying on antibiotics to treat issues that could - and should - have been prevented.

They are now feeding the calves milk separated off of the robots. They are able to select which cow's milk they wish to use, and program the robots to divert this milk to a separate bulk tank used for calf feeding. They utilize a milk taxi, an automated delivery system which warms the milk to 105 degrees Fahrenheit, and is individually programmed to dispense milk to meet each calf's needs, resulting in a very

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FEATURED FARM


Exterior of new calf facility

TRE-G FARMS, POMPEY, NY

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consistent feeding regime. The calves are housed in individual pens for three months, then transitioned to a group housing pen prior to moving out of the calf barn.

The vaccination program is more important than ever, and they've "tightened up vaccination," with five or six standing vaccines, Jim said. They've found fly control on grazing cattle to be very challenging, and have added daily organic fly treatments to stay on top of the issue. "We use fly repellent from Crystal Creek, applied via sprayer as needed, in addition to sticky fly traps," Jim said. "It works well for a short period of time. Reapplication is a challenge. We've tried other products. They all have about the same effectiveness and are short lived. They all need multiple applications."

Environmentally Conscious

Always interested in being environmentally responsible, Jim has worked closely with Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District since he took over the family farm in the late 1980s. The farm was named the 2013 Conservation Farm of the Year by the Conservation District, and awarded the 2014 New York State Agricultural Environmental Management Award.

Through the years, the Smiths have implement numerous conservation measures on the farm, including: installing tile drainage; utilizing strip cropping and conservation tillage; planting cover crops, fencing the livestock from waterways, and establishing a rotational grazing system. They've installed a water and sediment control basin, enhancing water quality and decreasing erosion from their hilly, rolling fields and into Limestone Creek and eventually nearby lakes.

Manure management has always been an important focus, both to get the most benefit from the nutrients and decrease the cost of fertility inputs, as well as to prevent runoff issues. Getting those manure nutrients applied correctly to the land is "even more important now, organically," Jim said.

The manure storage pit is closely managed in order to time

applications to the needs of the crops and prevent winter spreading. Manure from the milking herd is scraped from the alleys and into a tube system, where it is gravity-fed into the manure pit. The liquid manure is sprayed onto the fields, and the pit is emptied prior to Thanksgiving each year, to help insure adequate storage during the winter months. Straw bedding and manure from the calf and heifer barns are composted in concrete bunk silos and spread when most needed, rather than on a daily spread basis.

"We want to do what we can to take care of the environment," Jim said, which includes installing a recently added solar array to power the farm.

Public Welcome

Aside from the dairy, Tre-G Farms also had a u-pick strawberries and vegetables component. They've opted recently to discontinued these activities to focus on the dairy, but the family has, through the generations, an established history of community outreach and inviting the public onto the farm.

That tradition continues today with their participation in the Onondago County Agriculture Councils ON Farm Fest, held each fall, during which they hosted over 500 visitors in four hours, teaching them about grazing cattle, organic certification and robotic milking. They host farm tours for schools, too.

"It's really important that these consumers can meet you face - to - face," Sue said. "We've always been actively involved to improve consumer relations. They can see what a working farm is."

It's likely that the public may soon have even more to learn at Tre-G Farms. Jenny runs her own business, Cheese Smith Consulting, advising other dairies on the design and operation of their cheese processing plants. She is looking to bring cheese making to the family farm. She's hoping to open a cheesemaking plant on the farm, and offer cheesemaking classes to customers. She is also looking to mentor 4-Hers, and teach them about the many dairy industry careers available to them.

"That's the dream," Jenny said of her future plans, which are taking shape with the full support of Ryker and his parents. "The door is open."

For Ryker, the door to continuing his family's dairy legacy remains open, too, thanks to the foresight Jim and Sue had when faced with the challenges the downturn in the dairy market, combined with other factors, brought to their doorstep during the past decade. By opting to pursue organic certification, upgrading the dairy facilities, and switching to robotic milking, the Smiths were able to create a dairy that met their own, as well as their son's, needs today and into the future.

The cost-savings they've seen since implementing the changes have provided the farm with increased economic viability. And because the dairy is an LLC, it is relatively simple to officially transfer the farm to the next generation when the time to do so, rumored to be in the near future, arrives.

"We feel very fortunate to have made the switch to organic," Jim said. "We're very happy. There's a new set of challenges," and the dairy as well as the Smiths feel invigorated.

No matter which member of the Smith family is operating the dairy, the legacy of the previous generations will shine through in its name. Tre-G refers to the German surname Baumgartner, which translates to "tree gardener." The original founders of the farm were Joseph and Maude Baumgartners, and the abbreviated Tre-G Farms honors their german name and heritage while allowing for any family descendant, no matter their surname, to continue the farm's legacy.

The following is the Smith Family's contact information: Tre-G Farms, 8183 US Route 20, Manlius, New York; (315) 682-9315; https://www.facebook.com/TreGFarms/; tregfarms@gmail.com

Sue leading On-Farm Fest tour group

Calendar

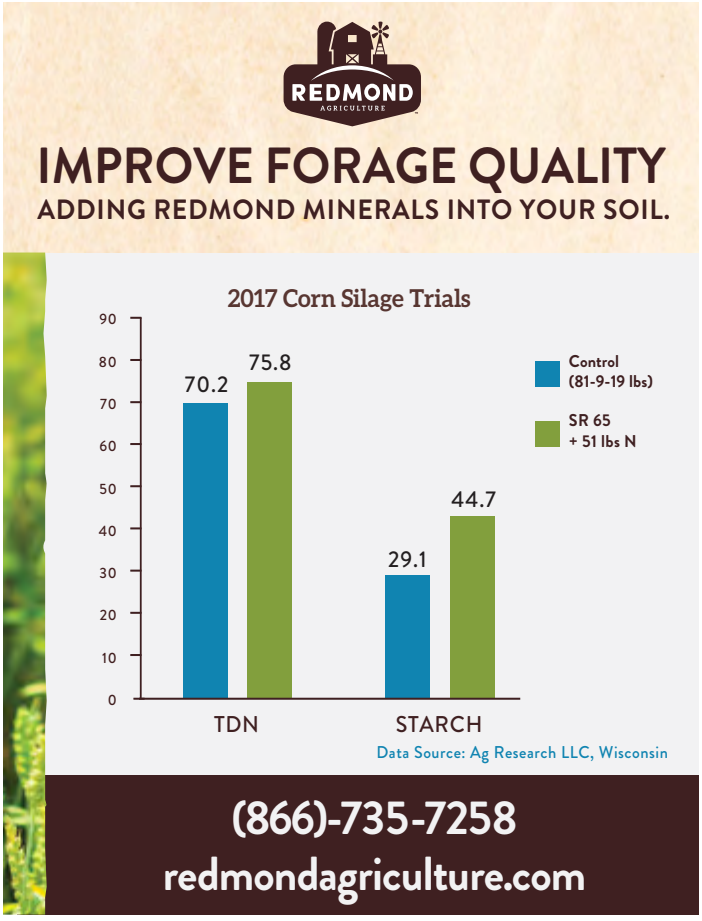
WEBINARS:

Wednesday, March 25, 2020, 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM (Eastern Time)

TREES FOR LIVESTOCK FOOD AND MEDICINE

Several tree species including willow, poplar, and black locust have been extensively researched and found to offer exciting opportunities in silvopasture systems. Join us to learn about the medicinal and feed values these trees can offer ruminant livestock, and methods for managing them on your landscape. Our presenter is Steve Gabriel from Wellspring Forest Farm in NY. He is also an agroforestry extension specialist for the Cornell Small Farm Program.

**Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT) offers free webinars on a variety of topics relevant to humane animal production. Join us for an upcoming session or peruse our archive to access all of our previously recorded presentations. For more information and to register, visit their website, https://foodanimalconcernstrust.org/webinars, or call 773-525-4952, or email them at: INFO@FOODANIMALCONCERNS.ORG*



Wednesday, March 25, 2020, 2:00 PM - 3:15 PM (Eastern Time)

DAIRY FAT--WHAT'S IN IT FOR THE CONSUMER?

Join eOrganic for the second webinar this winter on milk fatty acids! In this webinar, presenter Jana Kraft of the University of Vermont will discuss the fatty acids in dairy milk and their potential health benefits. The webinar takes place on March 25, 2020 at 2PM Eastern Time, 1PM Central, 12PM Mountain, 11AM Pacific Time. It's free and open to the public, and advance registration is required.

About the Webinar

Dairy fat is undeniably the most complex and diverse dietary fat source in the human diet, comprising hundreds of different fatty acids and fatty acid derivatives that fulfill diverse structural, metabolic, and functional roles within the human body. Moreover, the fatty acid composition of dairy fat is distinct because approximately 70% of the total fatty acids are saturated as the result of ruminal biohydrogenation of dietary unsaturated fatty acids. Over the past two decades, most scientific and public attention has focused on saturated fatty acids. Yet, dairy fat contains a large variety of unique minor fatty acids or individual fatty acids that are generated by rumen microbes and the mammary gland. Recent studies indicate that these unique dairy-derived fatty acids possess unusual biological properties and health benefits beyond their basic nutritional value. The webinar will summarize the current knowledge on the bioactivity of dairy-derived fatty acids with emphasis on potential health benefits. Additionally, we will present data from a recently conducted study comparing the fatty acid composition and content, on a per serving basis, between the three types of retail milk (i.e., conventional milk, organic milk, and omega-3 fortified milk) in the Northeast U.S. Register now at https://oregonstate.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_P_IjX5feRx-OQfM4DfRTjw

Note: Our first milk fatty acid webinar was recorded--it focused on fatty acids in dairy cows and their diets. The recording is being processed and will be available on the eOrganic YouTube channel in a few more days!

Monday, March 30, 2020, 2:00 PM - 3:15 PM (Eastern Time)

THE MICROBIOME: WHAT IS IT, AND HOW MIGHT IT IMPACT ORGANIC DAIRY PRODUCTION?

Over the past decade, our understanding of microbes has changed dramatically thanks to advanced sequencing technologies. We now know that our world is dominated by an invisible universe of bacteria, viruses and fungi – they exist in and on our bodies, our animals, our soils, and even our houses and farms. This invisible universe is termed the "microbiome", and it is essential to the normal functioning of plants, humans and animals -- including livestock animals. For example, recent evidence supports the idea that the microbiome of the cow udder plays a critical role in mastitis. In addition, the microbiome could be an incredibly rich source of therapies and

preventives for diseases of livestock animals. These potential tools could be especially important for organic producers, as they may represent an effective alternative to compounds such as antimicrobial drugs. In this webinar, we focus on describing the microbiome and its important characteristics; and we discuss current research that is trying to leverage the microbiome to improve animal health, welfare and productivity. This webinar is the first in a series on the microbiome and its potential applications to dairy production and mastitis. Join eOrganic for a new webinar on the microbiome and how it relates to organic dairy production! The webinar will be presented by a team of researchers who are currently conducting a study on the microbiome and mastitis in organic dairies, with funding from the USDA NIFA OREI. The webinar takes place on March 30, 2020 at 2PM Eastern, 1 Central, 12 Mountain, 11 Pacific Time. Register now at https://oregonstate.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_f4M76BkWTIaFHPx1em5w9g

Presenters: Drs. Noelle Noyes and Luciano Caixeta are Assistant Professors at the College of Veterinary Medicine at University of Minnesota; Dr. Bradley Heins is Associate Professor of Organic Dairy Production in the Animal Science Department at University of Minnesota; Dr. Vinicius Machado is Assistant Professor in Veterinary Sciences Department at Texas Tech University; and Dr. Pablo Pinedo is Associate Professor of Dairy Management Systems at Colorado State University Department of Animal Sciences. Chris Dean is a graduate student at University of Minnesota working on the microbiome.

Wednesday, April 22, 2020, 2:00 PM - 3:15 PM (Eastern Time)

ECONOMICS OF GRAZING ORGANIC REPLACEMENT DAIRY HEIFERS

Previous research shows that high sugar grasses and birdsfoot trefoil (BFT) monocultures have potential to increase dry matter intact and/or animal performance. However, the economic impact of using high-energy grasses planted in mixture with BFT for a grazing forage among organic dairy cattle has not been studied. There are many altruistic motivations for a dairy farm to engage in organic production practices (environmental, animal welfare, rural sociology, human health, e.g.), but very few dairy farmers can afford NOT to consider economic aspects of organic production as well. In this webinar, we discuss what the expected net annual financial impact would be for organic replacement dairy heifer operation using high-energy grasses and the tannin-containing legume BFT as its primary source of grazing forage. The financial impact is benchmarked against a conventional operation that feeds a total mixed ration (TMR) in a dry lot.

Join eOrganic for a webinar about the economics of grazing organic replacement dairy heifers! This is the fourth webinar in a series of presentations about organic grazing, based on research projects funded by NIFA OREI and Western SARE at Utah State University and the USDA ARS Forage and Range Lab in Logan, Utah. This webinar will be presented by Ryan Feuz and Ryan Larsen of Utah State University. Advance registration is required. It's free and open to the public.

Register now at https://oregonstate.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_VEcgi4YeTJatSG-WjSfb4w

About the Presenters

Dr. Ryan Feuz is a Post-doctoral Researcher in the Department of Applied Economics at Utah State University. His primary research interests include pasture and range management, livestock and dairy economics, and agricultural finance. He also teaches courses in firm marketing & price analysis and economic strategy. Dr. Ryan Larsen is an Extension Economist in the Department of Applied Economics at Utah State University. He specializes in farm and risk management. He teaches courses in agricultural finance, risk management, and decision analysis.

The first two webinars in this series can be found on the eOrganic YouTube channel:

- Pasture Mixes to Improve Sustainability of Organic Pasture Based Dairy: Nutritive Quality and Dry Matter Intake
- Effects of Different Organic Pastures on Heifer Growth and Development

Classifed Ads

ANIMALS

COWS FOR SALE: Organic/Grassfed Certified 1st calf heifers 2 Jersey's 1 Holstein. Contact Tami Carboni-Branchaud, MyKashka00@aol.com, 802-779-8558.

Location: PRutland County, VT

ANIMAL WANTED: Looking to get a grain-free family cow again after a few dry years without. We loved our Shorthorns the best, but breed is less important than personality. We also value cream and A2 over volume. The closer to Northern VT, the better! Call Jen, 802-586-2401, nanyfer@hotmail.com

Location: Craftsbury, VT

COWS FOR SALE: High producing 100% pure grass fed organic dairy cows and springing heifers. Pure genetics from one of the oldest grass fed herds in the northeast. Lots of milk, great body scoring on grass only. Serious inquirers only. Contact Joy or Jim, 315-653-0016, or to leave a voicemail message call: 469 500 9286, email: organicgrassfedcows@gmail.com

Location: Central NY

ANIMALS FOR SALE: I am looking to focus on my haflingers, and sell my 3 red angus for $1000, total, for all 3. I would like to help someone starting out. For sale as 3 cattle. 1.) Isaac: 4 year old proven bull. polled when a calf, grade red angus. He is a young gentleman. 2.) Rusty: 5 year old proven cow, white Galloway/red angus cross. Naturally polled. She is the dam of 2 naturally polled bull-calves sired by Isaac. She may be pregnant. 3.) Bridgette: 13 year old purebred, naturally polled red angus cow. Mother of Rusty. She has not conceived since having Rusty. Gentle and a great grandmother. Keeps Isaac happy. She has not needed to serve as a nurse cow. The cows and bull are pastured and loafed with my haflingers, 2 mares and a stallion. All are grass-fed. Non-certified organic since 1980. No vaccines. A couple look-overs by the veterinarian. Closed herd since bringing-in the 4 month old (Isaac) bull in 2015. I am hoping I can sell them to a good farmer who will agree to keep the bull and younger cow as a breeding pair until this upcoming autumn. The older cow could be a grandmother or harvested. Contact Charlie Greene, cgreene@greenemeadow.com, 315-246-5727.

Location: Moravia, NY

COWS FOR SALE: For Sale: OPT 100% grassfed organic certified dairy cattle for sale. 9 cows due in late June/July, including MRY/Swedish Red crosses, Friesan, Holstein, Jersey-cross and Norwegian Red-cross. Jersey heifer due Sept/Oct. Rob Moore, Nichols NY. 607-699-7968 cowpoke2@Verizon.net

Location: Nichols, NY

FEED, GRAIN, HAY FOR SALE/WANT TO BUY

FOR SALE BALEAGE: Organic First Cut Baleage, cut in June. $45/bale. Located in Gouverneur, NY. Trucking can be arranged for a tractor trailer load out of area. Call Kori 315-323-2855, aislyn820@gmail.com

Location: Gouverneur, NY

FOR SALE BALEAGE: Individually wrapped early June cut organic grass baleage. $55/bale at farm near Ithaca, NY Delivery available in NYS. Call Carl at 607-275-1647 or cac22@cornell.edu. Later cut also available at reduced price.

Location: Ithaca, NY

FOR SALE: NOFA-NY Organic DRY HAY - Round 4 x 4 1/2. Stored inside - never rained on. Good Heifer or Horse Hay! Also, BEDDING HAY - same size. Stored outside. Contact Jeff @ Mitchell Farm (Avoca, NY - Steuben County) 607-566-8477 or Mitchellorganics@hotmail.com

Location: Avoca, NY

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Inspections Program Coordinator
Pennsylvania Certified Organic (PCO) announces a job opening for an Inspection Program Coordinator. The Inspection Program Coordinator performs coordination of inspection assignments and supports the responsibilities of the Inspections and Certification Teams. The ideal candidate will have education and experience in organic regulations, inspection and regulatory compliance, inspection planning, and reporting. This position requires both office-based work and overnight travel. We are looking for a well-organized and self-motivated person to join our team-oriented environment in Spring Mills, Pennsylvania; telecommuting will be considered. This is a full-time, exempt position. Salary range: $47,500 to $58,000, depending on experience. This position will remain open for 28 days. Please submit a resume and cover letter to PCO Job Openings by Wednesday, April 8th, 2020.

Certification Specialist
Pennsylvania Certified Organic (PCO) announces a job opening for Certification Specialist. The certification specialist serves as the primary contact between PCO and our certified organic clients. This position focuses on assessing and determining compliance of the operation's organic system plan with organic regulations; evaluating inspection reports and writing/issuing reports to our clients; providing customer service and working collaboratively within the certification Team. This position is primarily office-based with some very limited travel exceptions. The ideal candidate will have education and or experience in the following areas: familiarity with regulatory compliance and organic certification, knowledge of organic standards, agriculture and/or food science/processing, and organic/regulatory inspections. We are looking for a well-organized and self-motivated person to join our team-oriented environment in Spring Mills, Pennsylvania; remote telecommuting will be considered. This is a full-time, exempt position. Salary range: $47,500 to $58,000, depending on experience.This position will remain open for 28 days. Please submit a resume and cover letter through our website (https://paorganic.org/about/staff/openings/) by Wednesday, April 8th, 2020.

HELP WANTED:
Seeking Experienced Herd Manager/Herdsperson
Butterworks Farm in Westfield, VT is currently hiring a full-time Herd manager/Herdsperson to work with our closed herd of organic, grass-fed Jerseys. Our cows supply milk to an on-farm processing facility that makes a variety of dairy products sold in Vermont and distributed across the Northeast. In this position, you will be directly responsible for overseeing all daily operations related to animals (calves to cows) in the herd, including but not limited to organic/holistic health management, nutrition, 2x/day milking, rotational grazing and breeding. You will coordinate the efforts of our barn staff and manage the bedding and movement of cows into and out of our solar barn depending on the season. We offer a competitive wage based on skills, education and experience. If interested, please send your resume and a letter of interest to: Butterworks Farm Herdsperson, PO Box 250, Troy, VT 05868-0250 or send it to jobs@butterworksfarm.com or to request an application. No phone calls or drop-ins please.

Location: Westfield, VT

HELP WANTED: Seeking Assistant Crop/Field Person
Butterworks Farm in Westfield, VT is currently hiring a part-time, seasonal Assistant Crop and Field Person to work closely under the guidance of our Crop and Field Manager in planting and harvesting the forage produced for our closed herd of organic, grass-fed Jerseys. You are the right person for this job if you can maintain, operate and repair a variety of farm implements and equipment. You should be a reliable, organized worker who is also a good communicator, willing to be part of a team and open to new ideas and information to best assist in the day-to-day operations of field work on our farm. Hours vary based on cropping and will likely involve long days and weekend/evening work to bring in the harvest. We offer a competitive wage based on skills, education and experience. If interested, please send your resume and a letter of interest to: Butterworks Farm Asst Crop/Field Person, PO Box 250, Troy, VT 05868-0250 or send it to jobs@butterworksfarm.com or to request an application. No phone calls or drop ins please.

Location: Westfield, VT

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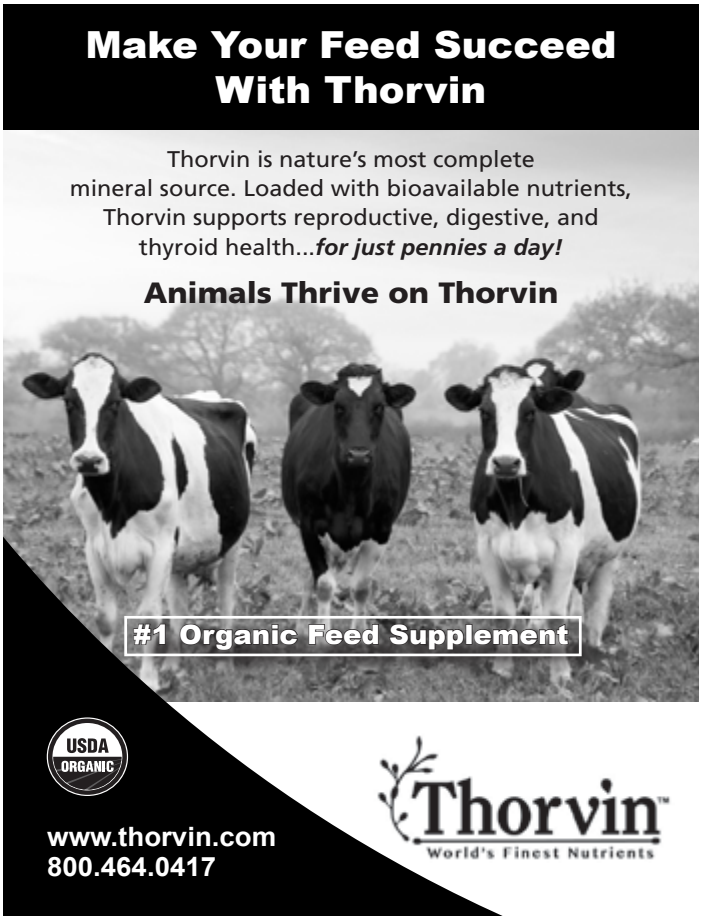

Classifed Ads

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HELP WANTED: Larson Farm and Creamery is a certified organic, certified 100% grass-fed Jersey dairy. All 30 cows are tested A2A2, making the milk easier to digest. To add value, we built a creamery in 2018 to market all milk as either bottled raw milk or processed dairy products that include yogurt, gelato, butter and ghee. Learn more about us at www.LarsonFarmVT.com. The dairy herd is housed on a bedded pack in winter, and pastured May through November. We move the combined milking and heifer herd 3-4 times a day. Great emphasis is placed on pasture management. We also harvest some of our own feed as baleage. We are seeking an individual who is passionate about managing an organic 100% grass-fed milking herd. Responsibilities include about 6-8 milkings/week, feeding, pasture management and rotation, herd health, maintenance of milking equipment, and calf and barn chores. Seasonal responsibilities can include fencing, tractor and equipment maintenance, assisting with haymaking and compost spreading, etc. We also have a beef herd to rotate and manage. Experience is preferred. Must be able to handle animals calmly and have some basic tractor skills. Cleanliness and good organizational skills are a must. Rich Larson, RichardRobertLarson@gmail.com, 802-645-0865.

Location: Wells, VT

HELP WANTED: We are an on-farm creamery operation located on a 200 acre pastured dairy farm in central Maryland. We produce milks, yogurts, ice creams, and butter made from our pastured dairy cows' milk. We focus on being genuine, sustainable, and provide the freshest dairy products one can find! If you ever wanted to work with dairy cows this is the place! Small herd size on a beautiful pasture-based dairy farm in central Maryland. You will milk cows, feed young stock, manage pasture paddocks, assist with care of animals, and help produce great milk for use on the farm's creamery. You will have a nice brick house on 6 acres to relax in when chores are through. Typical day is 5 to 8 hours long. Work side by side with a family who cares about milk quality, sustainability, and health of the herd. Must be a morning person, active, and enjoys being outside. Email: nicefarmscreamery@gmail.com Please write us with a brief description of yourself and attach a resumé. Bob Miller, nicefarmscreamery@gmail.com, 410-829-4456

Location: Federalsburg, MD

NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

Website & E-Newsletter Advertising

Website Advertising

NODPA.com receives over 2500 visits each month navigating to an average of 3 pages/visit.

E-Newsletter Advertising

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Join as a **Business Member** and receive an additional 5% off all advertising. To learn more about Business memberships and the Web Business Directory, go to **www.nodpa.com/directory.shtml** or contact Nora Owens.

2020 Ad rates and sizes listed below.

Deadline for advertising in the May 2020 issue is April 15, 2020.

Full Page Ad (7.5" W x 10.25" H) = $660
1/2 Page Ad (7.5" W x 4.5" H) = $340

1/4 Page Ad (3.5" W x 4.75" H) = $190
1/8 Page Ad/Business Card:
(3.5" W x 2.25" H) = $100

Commit to a full year of print advertising and get 10 percent discount: Full: $600, Half: $306, Quarter: $171, Eighth: $90.

Classified Ads: Free to organic dairy farmers and business members. All others $20 for the first 30 words; $.20 per word over 30

For advertising information call Nora Owens:
413-772-0444 or email noraowens@comcast.net.

Please send a check with your ad (made payable to NODPA).
30 Keets Rd., Deerfield, MA 01342

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.

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Become a Member of MODPA!

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

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

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From the MODPA Treasurer

Greetings from Wisconsin,

As I write this there are definitely signs of spring in the air. By the time that you receive this, hopefully, spring will be in full swing. The last couple of years' spring has been late to arrive here and has made for a challenging year. My winter was much more of a traditional one. The last two have been extremely cold and snowy.

Many of the winter conferences have wrapped up and are in the book of memories for their respective organizations. I hope that you were able to get out and attend some of them. Soon we will be in the season of pasture walks, always another good time.

The organic market continues to have its share of struggles. One local processor is looking for milk but, from what I have been hearing, pay price is an issue. Many producers that I have heard from fear what the summer cuts in prices will do to their bottom lines. The winter premiums were barely covering the basic costs of production and now they are faced with cuts because of the spring flush. I am not so certain that there actually is that much of a flush anymore. Most producers that I know are feeding for maximum production year round. The ability to have cheaper production costs for the farmer should not be a penalty to them. Pasture has been one of the few things to bring some balance back into our budgets. Our processors seem to feel that it is good and also okay to show a profit. Is it not okay for a farmer to have the same opportunity? Some days I wonder if the processors even consider who truly pays their way.

On a more personal note, I myself have been on a mission to get back into milking full-time. I am in the process of starting it up again. By the time you get this I should be at it full tilt. I am going to stay on the smaller side with around 40 cows but I also know how much work one person can do. I hope to be able to keep up and be efficient like all of our experts say that we need to be. I have been looking forward to this for quite some time.

I hope that your planting season is filled with hope for a good year and that your pastures grow thick and fast. May 2020 be a very good year for all of us.

Don't forget to take time to stop and smell the clover.

Bruce Drinkman, MODPA Treasurer

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Ridgeland, WI 54763

715-977-1314

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Deerfield, MA 01342

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Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

National Organic Standards Board – Spring Meeting Logistics

From the USDA Organic Insider

Hello organic community! Thank you for your calls and emails over the last several days. USDA is working hard to respond to current challenges during this COVID-19 National Emergency. We are committed to ensuring the health and safety of our community and employees, while providing timely delivery of our services.

As always, communication between the organic industry and government is key. People have expressed the importance of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) spring meeting, while also expressing concerns about traveling.

Together, we can both support personal safety and accomplish the important work of the Board.

With input from the Board and the organic community, we are modifying the NOSB Spring Meeting 2020 to be held live online, instead of in-person. This will allow the Board to move forward with deliberations in an open and public setting, without needing to travel.

Public Comment: We are expanding the two webinar-based public comment periods on Tuesday, April 21 and Thursday April 23. Comment sign up instructions are already online, and we will add time slots to accommodate more people if needed.

NOSB Spring Meeting: The public meeting will be held live online via webinar on Wednesday, April 29 and Thursday, April 30. Watch the NOSB Spring meeting webpage for details on the times and agenda. We are working to accommodate participants across different time zones.

The virtual meeting will be open to the public and the transcript will be posted online after the meeting, as usual.

The deadline to register for an oral comment slot for the comment webinars is 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, April 3, 2020.

Commenters will be scheduled in the order in which they registered, beginning with the Tuesday, April 21 webinar. Requests will be accommodated where possible.

In an effort to accommodate the greatest number of people in a limited period of time, commenters are limited to one 3-minute speaking slot per meeting.