

# NODPA News

## Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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WWW.NODPA.COM



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

#### Organic Industry News

Update on the Organic Dairy Crises in the Northeast	1
From the NODPA Co-President	2
Testimony to the House Anti-Trust Subcommittee of the Judiciary Committee	3
The Danone/Horizon and Maple Hill Contract Dump: The Facts	8
Stonyfield Co-Founder Gary Hirshberg Announces New Northeast Organic Family Farm Partnership (NOFFP) to Save Organic Family Farms in the Northeast	10
Pay & Feed Prices	16
Trademark of USDA Organic Seal Creates New Enforcement Tools	19
Future of Organic – National Organic Farmer Workshop	30
The USDA Agricultural Resource Management Survey: Your Farm's Information is Important!	32



#### Organic Production

FEATURED FARM: University of Minnesota's West Central Research and Outreach Center (WCROC), Morris, MN	1
Mower with a Mind of its Own	28
COWBOT! Coming to a field near you?	29



#### Net Update

Recent ODairy Discussions	33
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#### Member Info

Calendar will return in future issues	
Classifieds	34



Brad Heins, Associate Professor of Dairy, and some of the herd at the University of Minnesota's West Central Research and Outreach Center (WCROC), Morris, MN

## FEATURED FARM: UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA'S WEST CENTRAL RESEARCH AND OUTREACH CENTER (WCROC)

### University Organic Dairy Farm: Beyond the Research

By Tamara Scully, NODPA News Contributing Writer

The inner workings of an organic dairy research farm may not be quite as mysterious or glamorous as one may have presumed. After all, that cutting-edge research - whose findings are presented at numerous dairy conferences - can sometimes feel far removed

from the actual day-to-day realities of operating a dairy farm.

But life on the research farm isn't so different from that on any small dairy operation. Or at least it isn't at the University of Minnesota's

*continued on page 20*

## Update on the Organic Dairy Crises in the Northeast

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

The loss of contracts for 135 organic dairies in New York and New England is a continuing crisis. The Northeast Dairy Task Force has reported out their 35 recommendations; Danone has replied to

the petition request from 16,000 consumers and organic groups representing producers; the B Corp has supplied an non-answer to the complaint (a separate petition) by over 8,000 consumers and many organizations

*continued on page 4*

## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## Message from NODPA Co-President

Sometimes it's hard for us dairy farmers to mark time. Days and weeks go by with an eerily similar feeling. Cows get milked, hay gets fed, barns get cleaned, repeat. That's why the new year is a great time to pause and reflect on what changes were made last year, and what we'd like to see in the year to come. Some of the changes we made at Twin Oaks Dairy include updating old barns and rearranging our animal groupings. Hopefully these changes will add up to savings on labor, but it left me wondering when I would ever get a chance to enjoy my farm the way it is for more than a few moments. Our dairy farm business advisor suggests we always be looking 5 years ahead for how we can grow production or add a new revenue stream. It feels like the emphasis on future growth is the only thing that matters. But sometimes I wonder who really benefits from this growth - the farmers, or corporations like John Deere? After all, do any of us truly work less and have more free time? Or do we just end up working more land and milking more cows? How do we benefit from this growth?

Wendell Berry's book *Jayber Crow* tells the story of a rural town in Kentucky in the midst of agricultural industrialization. Those

farmers were encouraged to "get big or get out." Lots of them resisted. They didn't want fancy fertilizer inputs and expensive tractors, nor did they want to be saddled with debt their whole lives. But the sad truth is that those who didn't adapt were left behind and eventually went out of business. Though the story of *Jayber Crow* is fiction, it is one based on the truth lived by many farmers then and now. The mantra of growth is repeated again and again.

It makes me wonder what agriculture would look like today if we the farmers were the ones calling the shots - if our decisions weren't conditioned by financial constraints or some ceaseless need to increase ROI. For example, when my partner Liz started milking cows in our new parlor after working in a tie stall barn for several years, she often remarked upon how much she missed petting the cows. We gained productivity and efficiency when we switched to a parlor, but what was lost? It's important to ask if and how technological changes and growth reshape our relationships to the land and animals, and at what cost.

Don't get me wrong - I love my feed pusher robot and alley scrapers, and I'm not one to advocate for an unrealistic return to some

*continued on page 36*

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

**From the NODPA Desk** - In order to accommodate all the news, the 'From the NODPA Desk' will return in future issues. – Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

## Testimony to the House Anti-Trust Subcommittee of the Judiciary Committee

*The House Anti-Trust Subcommittee of the Judiciary Committee discussed "Addressing the Effects of Economic Concentration on America's Food Supply" on January 19, 2022. The committee shall have "jurisdiction over the following subject matters: bankruptcy and commercial law, bankruptcy judgeships, administrative law, independent counsel, state taxation affecting interstate commerce, interstate compacts, antitrust matters, other appropriate matters as referred by the Chairman, and relevant oversight." The testimony below was submitted by northeast regional organic producer groups, the National Organic Coalition and Organic Farmers Association. The situation in the northeast is of most immediate concern but the impact of consolidation of the organic dairy market gives disproportionate power to international companies to dominate both the national supply side and the retail market. — Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director*

January 18, 2022  
Subcommittee on Antitrust, Commercial, and  
Administrative Law  
6240 O'Neill House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cicilline, Ranking Member Buck and  
members of the Subcommittee,

Our organizations represent organic farmers in Maine, Vermont,  
New Hampshire and New York. We would like to share with  
the Subcommittee a specific example of the impact that

*continued on page 14*



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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## Update on the Organic Dairy Crises in the Northeast

*continued from page 1*

that they should enforce their standards; testimony has been presented to Congress on the corporate monopsony that controls supply and pay price in organic dairy (see page 3) and Gary Hirschberg has launched a partnership with consumers to support organic dairies with their food dollars (see page 10). We have more information on what farms are affected and a timeline for decisions from CROPP Cooperative on when farms might know whether they are being taken on board (see page 8). Unfortunately we are still at the information stage despite all this activity which doesn't lessen the stress for the affected farm families. There are no silver bullets but plenty of opportunities in the mix that we will continue to explore, and will keep putting pressure on.

### Danone and their search to justify their B Corp social responsibility commitments

On the morning of December 13th 2021, the producer groups representing organic dairies issued a press release critical of Danone's delay in answering their request to repair the damage that leaving the entire Northeast region will have on the farm economy and rural communities. That evening, following a media blast, Danone responded to the request from NODPA, NOFA NY, NOFA VT, NOFA NH, MOFGA, OFA and many other groups and 15,000 + consumers. In their response, they explained their 'four-part Northeast Organic Dairy Transition Plan' to provide 'additional and meaningful support for the affected farmers and the region.'

They announced they will meet one of the requests of northeast organic producer groups. They will provide the affected producers with the option to extend their current contract for a total of 18-months, ending on February 28, 2023. They did not meet the request that they offer a contract severance package or contract retirement package. They did provide a small transition payment of an additional amount per hundredweight on the milk purchased from the producers during the last 6 months of their contracts, (6% of the milk check for 6 months or \$2 per hundred pounds of milk). This money will also be paid to farms that have stopped shipping to Danone but received the non-renewal notification- **IF you are in this group of no longer shipping to Horizon and Don't Receive the payment by March 1st – Call** and ask for it, or contact NODPA or your organic service provider. Danone will also provide farm consultants at no charge to the affected farms and explore co-investment solutions for northeast dairy infrastructure. Any questions on contract issues or request for financial

assistance from Farm Credit should be directed to Danone field representative or to Greg Wolfe at [Gregory.WOLF@danone.com](mailto:Gregory.WOLF@danone.com) or (330) 280-2747. Any producers that have difficulty with the process and do not get satisfaction from Danone should contact NODPA or one of their regional organic providers.

Danone sent letters to every group, every member of Congress and any group that objected to the way they treated their loyal farm 'partners' to explain the actions they had set in motion the previous week. They sent a press release to news outlets explaining that they are a responsible company.

On Friday afternoon 12/17/2021, a 30 minute zoom call with Danone and producer group representatives took place to get more clarity on the proposals. There was a clarification from Danone that the contracts incorporating the extension by 6 months to the current contracts, that these producers will have the same conditions for a pay price and terms for cancellation. The 30 day cancellation will be in all the contracts to enable producers to end their contract easily if they had a new buyer or could not continue organic dairy production. Danone stated that they would not drop farms because they are too few farms on the trucking routes as some farms leave. Danone also confirmed that the payment would be an extra \$2 per hundred pounds of milk for their last 6 months of production under contract with them. That is equivalent to a market premium (MAP) that the company has paid at others times. To be very clear, this is not an extra payment based on 6 months of milk averaged over the last three years at an increase of \$2 per cwt which USDA has paid out recently with COVID payments. This is only \$2 added to the pay-price for those last six months. This would still be less than the pay price in 2017. When asked what their thinking was behind the amount they paid out, the reply was a rather testy one that this was something they would not discuss; refusing to discuss any aspect of this payment. We were left with various assumptions on how and when these payments would be made. For those producers that need to upgrade their farms to meet conditions from a new buyer, these payments are inadequate and not timely. For those farms that want to set up an alternative venture, these payments will be too late to ease the stress. The chart below gives an indication about how much money, on average, a producer would receive, accepting that there is no 'average producer.' Producers should sign contracts and re-sign or initial amendments to contracts. If a field rep says you can do something different ask them to sign a statement to that effect before they leave the farm. Creating a legal paper trail does not mean you don't trust the company or their employees, you just never know when you will need a verified record.

*continued on page 6*



***“It takes edema out more quickly than anything else.”***

— Emily Pankratz



**EMILY PANKRATZ**, herd manager  
Holtz Ridge Grass Farm, RUDOLPH, WISCONSIN  
150 cows, Certified Organic, SCC 200,000  
Emily (left) at our Central Plains Dairy Expo booth with her mother Peggy.

“We started using Udder Comfort™ a couple months ago to get better milk quality results. We keep using it because it takes edema out of udders more quickly than anything else,” says Emily Pankratz, herd manager for the 150-cow dairy at Holtz Ridge Grass Farm, Rudolph, Wisconsin, where she loves caring for the cows from calving through dryoff.

Emily stopped by our booth at Central Plains Dairy Expo after buying the donated gallon in the Dairy Forward auction. “Our protocol is to put it on after every milking (post-calving), until the cow or heifer is not high in the CMT anymore. This includes cows that may acquire mastitis or high SCC during lactation.

“What I like most about this product is how fast it works on edema. It helps blood flow and gets our heifers off to a quick start,” Emily explains.

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

### Update on the Organic Dairy Crises in the Northeast

*continued from page 4*

Average annual production for organic dairy cow *	14,000	lbs.
Turn lbs. into cwt	140	cwt
6 months is 1/2 a year **	70	cwt
Payout per cow at \$2 per cwt	\$ 140	
50 cow herd payout at \$2 per cwt	\$ 7,000	
100 cow herd payout at \$2 per cwt**	\$ 14,000	
200 cow herd at payout of \$2 per cwt	\$ 28,000	
Amount Danone would pay for all 89 herds using VT Dept. of Ag calculations of volume of milk from the 89 farms presented to USDA NE Dairy Task Force in November 2021	\$479,933	
* Depends on breed and nutrition. Jersey or Jersey cross would be less as would Grass Fed		
** the six month prior to September would be the time of the Spring flush so might be more than 1/2		

The last 15 minutes of the zoom meeting was spent attempting to get some clarification from Danone about how decisions would be made on their investment in the region. They refused to confirm a dollar amount. They said that all projects could be acceptable for funding but they preferred a transportation cooperative after discussions with other milk buyers with no confirmation of what they actually meant by it. A new milk processing plant was not high on their list of priorities as they saw that the problem was in trucking, not processing. They had had a call with state of Vermont and Maine and were open to talking with New York. They have wrongly assumed that the USDA Northeast Dairy Task Force was a product of Vermont not the whole of the northeast. The impression they gave was that they had no specific allocation of money or process dedicated to 'co-investment solutions that will address some of the systemic challenges related to northeast organic dairy infrastructure.'

### Northeast Dairy Task Force Report

After a lot of hard work by many people, the USDA Northeast Dairy Task Force had its final meeting on 12/3/2021 and sent its final report to the USDA on 12/20/2021. The Task Force had representation from 27 unique organizations including state departments of agriculture, university extension, organic processors, organic associations, farm technical assistance providers, and subject matter experts. The final meeting was able to see the reports from the 6 subgroups: Expansion of Processing; Distribution Logistics; Federal Response; Farm Business Viability; Institutional Purchasing; and Marketing. The Farm Business Viability group recommendations dovetail with those from the Processing Expansion and Distribution

Logistics sub-groups. In order to achieve systems change, all three must be developed together. The Marketing sub group highlighted that it will require a sustained and substantial increase in demand for the region's organic dairy processors to be able to absorb the milk from the dairies that are losing their

contracts, without exacerbating oversupply issues. The best way to generate this increase in demand is through marketing activities that will encourage consumers in the region to choose local organic dairy products. This also will need increased infrastructure as the necessary increase in demand for dairy processing exceeds the available infrastructure, plus there will need to be greater transparency in where milk is sourced to ensure product integrity. In the introduction to the Federal Policy recommendations, the report said, "A variety of federal policies and programs influence organic dairy production systems, enforcement of the organic standard, and the availability of information regarding organic dairy production. ....USDA has an important opportunity to ensure that its policies on everything

from organic certification to FMMO to the use of new federal infrastructure funding are treating organic dairy producers fairly and supporting them in accessing markets." NODPA recommendations included greater enforcement of the pasture rule; publication of a Final Rule on Origin of Livestock with the provision that transitioned animals cannot be sold as organic for milk production; greater transparency and organic data within the Federal Milk Marketing Order; grant funding to create a market and infrastructure for a regionally branded milk; and a moratorium on payments for principal and interest on debt. In addition, there was a great presentation from Diane Bothfeld, Vermont Department of Agriculture, about a short-term Financial Gap program that could be used if a producer could not find an organic market immediately but still had cooperative membership in the conventional market. The program would allow the farm to continue to be organically certified by covering the pay price difference between the conventional price and the organic pay price to cover the increased cost of continuing to purchase organic grain and other higher priced organic inputs. While the pay price being considered is only the break-even pay price for organic production in the northeast, it will compensate any farm family that can't find an organic buyer in this tight market but still wants to farm organically. Once you feed organic animals any non-organic feed they cannot return to organic production, so any farm that has to feed conventional feed but wants to go back into organic will have to purchase new organically certified cows. While its not a program that will make any farmers profitable or put off retirement with a steady income for working 7 days a week, it could be a good stop-gap measure.

## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

The Northeast Dairy Task Force, collaboratively led by Laura Ginsburg – Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center lead and Britt Lundgren – Stonyfield Organic director of organic and sustainable agriculture, offers USDA leadership the recommendations they asked for to support the region's need for long-term systems change in the organic dairy sector. The northeast region, New York and New England, is a natural food shed for the large consumer areas of the east coast and this was a

great example of working together as a region to introduce new opportunities and competition for organic dairy.

### **B Corp and their Non-Answer on Accountability of their Standard**

Below is the letter that we received from the B Corp Standards Management Team. I thought it best to print it all as it is difficult to do an unbiased summary:

*We appreciate your patience in our response, and thanks to you and the petition signatories for playing your role in the accountability mechanisms established as part of the B Corp Certification process. We take complaints against companies who have achieved B Corp Certification very seriously, and as such it sometimes takes more time than stakeholders desire to provide an appropriate response.*

*B Lab acknowledges and is deeply sympathetic to the fact that the farmers affected by this decision find themselves in a difficult financial situation that may affect their livelihood and well-being. Certified B Corps are expected to make decisions with consideration of the impacts on stakeholders in mind. While these decisions may still nonetheless lead to a potential negative impact on a particular stakeholder group, it is also considered how a company engages in ways to mitigate that negative impact to the extent possible.*

*Upon reviewing the information available, including the information shared in the petition, and considering the stakeholder concerns raised and the impact on affected farmers and communities, we have determined that Danone North America's certification is upheld with disclosure of this situation required on its B Corp public profile in order to be transparent with stakeholders around the reasoning for and impacts of its decisions and document the management practices in place so that stakeholders can make their own informed judgment about its impact and the adequacy of measures taken. You may access the information required in their Disclosure Report on their profile [here](#). B Lab will continue to monitor the situation, and if new material information arises related to the decision, a complaint process may be reopened.*

*For more context on our decision, a company must achieve a minimum verified score of 80 points in the B Impact Assessment in order to become a B Corp, which is designed to help measure and manage a company's positive impact across five key impact areas: governance, workers, community, customers, and the environment. The B Impact Assessment awards credit for specific, positive practices of companies to determine their eligibility for the certification, but does not stipulate or mandate specific individual positive practices. For example, while the B Impact Assessment acknowledges as best practices, among other things, supporting small scale and local suppliers, maintaining long term relationships with suppliers (average tenure), and purchases from organic producers, these practices are not required components of the certification if, as described above, the company is meeting the overall score of 80 points.*

*In addition, B Corp Certification also includes a review of potential negative practices that may warrant further action or ineligibility for the certification, and has a complaint process designed to allow stakeholders to raise concerns about existing B Corps who may be violating the spirit of the certification. B Lab investigates material, credible, and specific complaints, with the possible outcomes of any complaint including no further action, additional transparency required, remediation required, or ineligibility for the certification.*

*B Lab uses feedback from stakeholders like yourself not only to determine whether or not an individual B Corp is in violation of the certification requirements, but also to inform the development of the certification requirements over time. We are currently undertaking a comprehensive review of the B Corp certification performance requirements and have recently gone through an extensive stakeholder consultation process regarding the possibility of additional specific minimum requirements as a component of the certification. There will be ongoing opportunities to submit feedback throughout this review. Further details can be found [here](#). Thanks again for your interest and engagement, and we encourage you to provide feedback to continue to improve our standards.*

*Best,*

*B Lab Standards Management Team* ♦



## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## The Danone/Horizon and Maple Hill Contract Dump: The Facts

By Ed Maltby, Executive Director, NODPA

From the beginning of the contract terminations (since July 2021) by these two companies, there has been a shortage of accurate information about the number of farms, their locations, and the volume of milk involved. For Maine and Vermont this was public information. In New York, due to state legal limitations, it was not, despite the fact that New York was the hardest hit in dropped contracts. The charts below give as much information as possible. The volumes of milk are estimates.

There are now three contract termination timelines in the Northeast where farmers will be without a market:

1. Maple Hill has put 21 farmers on notice for effective termination on December 2021.
2. Maple Hill has put a secondary group of 25 farms on notice effective May 2022.
3. Horizon originally had 89 farms on notice for August 31, 2022. Horizon has now offered a 6 month extension extending the original termination date from August 2022 to February 28, 2023.

The major buyer in the region, CROPP Cooperative, is being very transparent in their process of looking at which farms they can bring on board and how they are making decisions. Obviously, each farm is different and has different conditions they need to meet.

The most recent update from CROPP is:

- CROPP Pools staff is evaluating all 135 dropped farms and it will be done in three phases.

1. In November, CROPP field staff did on-farm evaluations for anyone in the Maple Hill December 2021 termination group that was interested in talking with them.

**Total contracts lost since July 2021**

State	Number of Farms	Estimated Annual Volume of milk in million pounds
Vermont Farms	28	25.8
New Hampshire	2	1.5
Maine	13	10
New York	92	21.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>59.2</b>

**New York Horizon Organic Terminated Contracts**

County	Number of farms	Estimated Total lbs./pickup*
Franklin	11	24,709
St. Lawrence	17	12,899
Washington	18	20,865
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>58,473</b>

Data was provided by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets on September 16, 2021.  
\*Pickups occur every other day. This amounts to estimated 1-2 truckloads every other day.

**New York Maple Hill Terminated Contracts**

Region	Number of Farms	Estimated Average lbs./Month
Central NY	10	251,870
Northern NY	27	531,737
Eastern NY	9	146,635
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>930,242</b>

Data was provided by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets on November 23, 2021.

- They reviewed compliance with CROPP policies and standards along routing impacts.
- This information was shared with the CROPP Board of Directors at their November meeting.
- FIVE of these farms joined CROPP as reserve pool members<sup>1</sup> in January 2022, on organic routes.

<sup>1</sup> From Travis Forgues "CROPP reserve pool agreements are very similar to their member agreements. The members have all the same rights commitment from the cooperative. One big difference is that reserve pool members don't need to put in equity until becoming full members. Also, in this particular agreement, because of the risk of bring on supply right now, there is a utilization rate given. So the farmers that join the reserve pool will get the same pay for the region as the other CROPP farmers, but will have a 95% utilization pay instead of the 100% to give some additional risk mitigation. As we move forward, it's our intent to move to full membership as soon as possible"



## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

2. The next group that CROPP evaluated was Maple Hill Group 2 as well as any Horizon Farms that have expressed interest in being Grassmilk producers. Demand continues to expand on Grassmilk, creating a need for additional Grassmilk supply.
  - Evaluations were completed on these farms in December.
  - FIVE farms (3 Maple Hill – NY and 2 Horizon – VT) have been approved for joining the cooperative.
  - There is an additional 3 farms that have been held from consideration due to milk quality. Since these could be routed to Grassmilk, CROPP plan on working with these farms to see if they can improve milk quality between now and their notice period.
  - Start dates will be determined for this group on notice periods (i.e. may be up to 30 days) and meeting our expectations (i.e. Horizon farms need to get OPT certified; filling out paperwork for cooperative membership, etc.).
3. The next group that CROPP will evaluate is the remainder of the Horizon terminated farms.
  - CROPP expect to have these farm evaluations completed by the end of January.
  - Review of compliance and routing will happen in February.
  - This will include reviewing any of the following farms:
    - Those listed in Maple Hill Group 2
    - The Horizon Grassmilk that weren't a good fit for Grassmilk
    - Those that didn't fit into the Grassmilk pick-up routes.

Any terminated farmer that hasn't been visited or contacted by February 1st 2022 should reach out to the regional pool member in the area or call CROPP. Their Farmer Hotline is: 1-888-809-9297, Monday - Friday, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Central or email [farmerhotline@organicvalley.com](mailto:farmerhotline@organicvalley.com)

After finalizing the review of compliance and routing, the CROPP team, headed by Travis Forgues, Executive Vice President of Membership, will be bringing a recommendation to the CROPP Board of Directors on the balance of the milk supply to demand, and projections on how and when they will be able to move forward with taking on new farmers. It is their hope that they will be able to get more information out to farmers by the end of March.

The process may seem slow but there are many considerations that need to be in place, including the interest of existing CROPP members in the region, many of whom have only recently stopped being on a quota. In emailing this update, Travis Forgues has emphasized that he and the Cooperative understand the stress on the farmers waiting for a decision. However, if folks are looking for concrete decisions, he believes it is better to continue to follow their systematic process and not make any promises he is not able to keep. Overall, CROPP is happy to have been able to offer membership to the farmers that were on the most dire timelines. They remain committed to doing all they can to help the farmers that are in flux through these difficult events and will continue to be working to find solutions.

Stonyfield/Lactalis have identified and spoken with a limited number of farms in Vermont and New Hampshire that they believe will work in their direct supply based on many different parameters that include quality, volume, and proximity to their current hauling infrastructure. They are also working on the processing side to expand capacity at their Londonderry plant so they can bring in more regional milk, either through their direct supply or through their agreement with CROPP.

There was no comment from Maple Hill on what farms they are working with as the newsletter was going to press. ♦

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## Stonyfield Co-Founder Gary Hirshberg Announces New Northeast Organic Family Farm Partnership (NOFFP) to Save Organic Family Farms in the Northeast

*By Ed Maltby, Executive Director, NODPA*

The mission of NOFFP is to bring together key stakeholders (consumers, retailers, food service institutions, farmers, processors, government leaders and concerned activists) to take concrete actions to create more demand and market security to support and safeguard the region's organic family farmers. In 2022, NOFFP hope to successfully increase regional demand enough to help the 135 at-risk organic family farms that have been dumped by Horizon and Maple Hill to secure new contracts.

The loss of contracts puts these farms, many of whom have been in business for generations, at serious risk of closure unless they find alternate outlets. Gary Hirshberg, Stonyfield Co-Founder and former long-time CEO, announced the launch of the Northeast Organic Family Farm Partnership, on January



12, 2022. "The Northeast Organic Family Farm Partnership celebrates the fact that when it comes to supporting our region's organic family farmers, it really does take a village," said Hirshberg. "Everyone has a stake in the long-term financial health of these farms and farm families. The simple act of pledging to purchase one-quarter of dairy items from the brands, processors and consumers who support

these family farmers, can help to ensure that these farms will remain healthy, vibrant, financially viable, and environmentally and climate-positive parts of the northeast region for generations to come."

The intent behind the initiative is that the partnership invites consumers to pledge to purchase one-fourth of their weekly dairy purchases from brands committed to increasing their purchases from New England and Eastern New York organic family farms

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

in 2022. Gary Hirshberg's commitment to organic and to the northeast organic dairies is behind this initiative. His incredible amount of work and dedication has made possible the launch of this imaginative partnership so quickly. His drive and infectious personality has made this possible and this is a great step forward in building a better market for northeast organic milk.

Partnership logo at the point of sale and also on-line to enable easy identification by consumers.

Retailers and other dairy purveyors who wish to be identified as partners and to show the NOFFP logo at the point-of-sale and in their digital media will need to sign a licensing agreement

### How will it work?

*continued on page 12*

The NOFFP is inviting three types of Partners to commit their support:

1. Shopper Partners: Consumers can take immediate action to help make an actual difference. Shoppers are invited to sign a pledge to purchase one-fourth of their weekly dairy purchases from among 35 brands ranging from large ones like Organic Valley and Stonyfield to mid-sized and smaller brands like Butterworks, Maine Organic Milk Producers, Strafford Organic Creamery, and many others that have committed to invest in northeast organic dairy farmers by increasing their purchases of northeast organic milk.
2. Brand Partners: Brands qualify as Partners by meeting at least two of three criteria:
  - a. Ensure that at least 50% of the milk in the products they sell in the northeast come from organic family farms from the area hardest hit by the potential farm closures (from NYC to Bangor ME);
  - b. Are owned by organic family farmers in the region and/or;
  - c. Have publicly demonstrated a commitment to increase their supply from the region's at-risk organic family farms.
3. Retail Partners: NOFFP is inviting all dairy purveyors (grocers, restaurants, cafeterias and any outlets that sell dairy products) to also become licensed as Partners. Licensed Partners who have committed to carry Partner Brands and to increase their 2022 organic dairy purchases vs their 2021 sales, will be entitled to proudly display the new



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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## Stonyfield Co-Founder Gary Hirshberg Announces New Northeast Organic Family Farm Partnership (NOFFP) to Save Organic Family Farms in the Northeast

*continued from page 11*

pledging to (a) carry some of the Partner Brands and (b) increase their 2022 sales of products that use northeast organic family farm milk vs. their 2021 sales. This will be self-certified by the

participating brands from their shipping records to the retail outlets. The retail partners will self-certify that they only use the logo only on the partner brands. There will be no outside auditing at this time and the brands will self-certify that the milk used in their product comes from northeast organic dairies.

There have been some questions about why the Partnership prioritizes farms in northern and eastern New York (NY) state counties and not the whole state of New York? NOFFP has stated that the area they understand that has been hardest hit with the largest number of terminated farm contracts is northern NY, eastern NY, VT, NH and ME. NODPA and others recognize that there are also at-risk organic dairy farms located across all of NY, and the area from which the milk is sourced should be from the entire state of New York. This will give consumers and retailers more choices in supporting organic dairies and also provide much need infrastructure for when demand expands and more processing is needed. NOFFP's answer to this is, "The best way to save ALL of our northeastern organic family farms is for consumers, retailers and other dairy purveyors across the northeast to pledge their support for the Partner Brands committed to increasing (not decreasing) their purchases of all these farms' milk. Increasing the demand for organic milk in the defined region benefits everyone in the organic sector no matter where you are." NODPA hopes that the initiative soon grows to incorporate the entire state of New York so that there are no false distinctions within the region and there is no differentiation between organic dairy farmers and processors in the northeast region.

The Partnership Board includes a diverse group of leaders and individuals committed to saving all at-risk organic family farms across the northeast. They include, in addition to Hirshberg, Peter Allison, Farm



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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

to Institution, LLC, (VT); Diane Bothfeld, Agency of Agriculture (VT); Leon and Abbie Corse, Vermont Organic Dairy Farmers; Claire Eaton, VT Agency of Agriculture; Annie Watson, Maine Organic Milk Company and Dairy Farmer (ME); and Eric Ziehm, New York Organic Dairy Farmer (NY). Advisors include Michael Brown, CROPP Cooperative (ME); Rose Forrest, Sodexo Sustainability Director (RI); Ed Maltby, Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (MA); Peter Miller, Miller Family Farm (VT); Britt Lundgren, Stonyfield Organic (NH); and Albert Straus, Straus Organic Creamery (CA).

The number of CROPP Cooperative and Stonyfield people involved in the initiative and the fact that these two brands are the most widely available of the 35 brands promoted on the NOFFP website raises the question as to whether this is a marketing promotion by the two companies to take sales away from Horizon Organic. The NOFFP responds that there are 35 brands who have initially signed on as brand partners who will be recognized and promoted on their website and to local retailers. The partnership states that it is promoting all brands equally in the hope to strengthen all brands using organic milk sourced from the region. If there are any new regional brands that can guarantee that all of their product comes from regional

organic dairy farms and is processed regionally, this initiative will be of great benefit in building sales in retail stores, as store brands or for manufacturing. The simple truth, as well, is that CROPP Cooperative and Stonyfield are the only buyers in the region that can take on large quantities of milk, and they need to be able to justify an actual or projected increase in sales to take on the farms dumped by Danone/Horizon Organic.

For more information please go to:

<https://www.saveorganicfamilyfarms.org/> . ♦

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## Testimony to the House Anti-Trust Subcommittee of the Judiciary Committee

*continued from page 3*

consolidation in the food supply chain has on farm families, by describing a crisis in the organic dairy market in the Northeast that is happening right now.

In August 2021, Horizon Organic (owned by Danone North America) notified organic dairy farms in Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire and several counties in New York that it would terminate their contracts in the summer of 2022. This decision is directly impacting 89 organic family farms. Since the original announcement, Danone announced that it will keep the impacted farms on contract for an additional six months (for a total of 18 months from the original notice), but will still be pulling out of Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire and several counties of eastern New York.

This is a crisis for the 89 farm families who have to cope with the loss of their milk contract, but will also have a devastating effect on the rural communities where these farms are located, other organic farmers who supply these operations with feed and local businesses who provide services to these farms. And we believe it is a useful example of the damage done by the extreme levels of consolidation that are present in every sector of agriculture, even a specialized market such as organic, where many assume that farmers must be better off because organic products are sold for a premium.

While the crisis caused by Horizon's decision to exit the Northeast is focused in one region of the country, extreme consolidation plagues the entire organic dairy sector nationwide. In the organic dairy market there are two national brands: Horizon Organic owned by Danone North America, whose parent company is Danone that is headquartered in France, and Organic Valley, owned by CROPP Cooperative based in Wisconsin. The leading retail seller of organic dairy products is store brand/private label products supplied by CROPP Cooperative and very large, confinement-style, vertically integrated organic dairies, such as Aurora Dairy farms and milk plants in Texas, Colorado and Missouri. The vertically integrated dairies have the economies of scale that allow them to undercut competitors in the price sensitive store brand/private label retail market, which by its nature has a lower retail price than branded organic product. In addition to economies of scale, there are ongoing problems with the

enforcement of organic standards at these large operations, including requirements that organic dairy cows receive access to pasture and rules for how conventional animals can be transitioned into organic production. This enforcement is the responsibility of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which oversees organic certification. This enforcement problem goes hand in hand with the consolidation of the organic dairy sector – as these large vertically integrated operations entered the market, weaknesses in USDA's enforcement system became more pronounced, and small-scale operations now compete on an unlevel playing field that puts them at a significant economic disadvantage in a market dominated by a few large buyers.

Previous decisions by other federal regulators have allowed consolidation in organic dairy to worsen and should be revisited. When Danone purchased White Wave in 2017, the Department of Justice mandated that a condition of purchase was that Stonyfield Organic (owned by Danone with a supply contract with CROPP Cooperative) would have to be sold as a remedy to prevent monopsony in the region. Stonyfield Organic was sold to Lactalis, the second largest dairy company in the world. This means that the exit of Horizon from the Northeast leaves only one major alternative buyer for the organic milk from the 89 farms that are losing their contracts, CROPP Cooperative. CROPP's major customer in the northeast for their raw milk is Lactalis. Lactalis purchases 80 percent of its total milk supply from CROPP and purchases the other 20 percent by direct procurement from Northeast farms or other sources. CROPP milk from New England and eastern New York is also used in packaged product under the Stonyfield Organic label licensed to CROPP by Lactalis.

The consolidation of the organic dairy market gives disproportionate power to international companies to dominate both the supply side and the retail market, which has resulted in a lack of regional processing infrastructure in the Northeast and only one buyer for organic milk. That one buyer can set the price and conditions of any contract or cooperative agreement, leaving the organic dairy farmer only two choices, take the deal or leave organic dairy (or dairy farming altogether), with the resulting repercussions on their family and their rural community.

We appreciate the subcommittee's work to investigate the effects of concentration on the food supply, and hope that this dramatic example of the consequences of extreme consolidation offers useful insight into why regulators must do a better job to address the growing market power of a small handful of firms. We also urge you to coordinate with other committees such as



## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

the Agriculture Committee, which has oversight over the USDA, which is responsible for ensuring that products bearing the organic label are meeting the same high standards, no matter where they are from or what size operation produced them.

In addition to the failed federal oversight of the mergers that led to the extreme consolidation in the Northeast organic dairy sector, there are other regulatory efforts needed to address this problem:

- The Department of Justice should investigate the effect of lack of competition in New England and eastern New York in light of Danone's decision to exit the region, and propose new remedies to restore competition in the region. The results of this investigation should inform future updates to federal guidelines on horizontal and vertical merger approvals.
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of Justice should work with the inter-departmental White House Competition Council (established by President Biden's Executive Order on Promoting Competition in the American Economy) to examine the organic dairy market in

the Northeast as a case study of loss of resilience and harm to farmers caused by consolidation.

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture should immediately finalize long-delayed standards governing the transition of dairy cows into organic production and step up enforcement of organic pasture standards to level the playing field for smaller organic dairy operations.

Thank you for your attention to the critical issue of consolidation in agriculture and the food system. Please contact Patty Lovera of the Organic Farmers Association if you need more information or have questions about this testimony, [patty@organicfarmersassociation.org](mailto:patty@organicfarmersassociation.org), (202) 526-2726.

Respectfully submitted,

Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association

National Organic Coalition


Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Hampshire

Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York



Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont

Organic Farmers Association ♦



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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## Pay And Feed Prices January/February 2022

*By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director*

For the months of October and November 2021, the USDA AMS reports that the total fluid products sales of packaged fluid product shipped by milk handlers was 3.8 billion pounds of milk in both months, which were lower than in 2020, but that was an abnormal year. For organic, the volumes of milk were 224 and 230 million pounds correspondingly, and the comparison with 2020 was -5.4% for October and -1.8% for November. The charts below, and the information on organic sales above, are the information provided by the Federal Milk Marketing Orders (FMMO) for retail sales. Every region of the FMMO produces a monthly statistical report that is published up to 2

months in arrears of the usage. The FMMO data is derived from reports submitted by pooled handlers. The majority of organic milk is processed at FMMO pool plants that also process and manufacture conventional milk. But these reports do not give an accurate picture of utilization of organic milk, especially given the sales of organic yoghurt. Providing only part of the needed data, however, the information can also be combined to get an inaccurate picture of utilization of organic fluid milk in the marketplace and total sales of organic milk.

*continued on page 18*

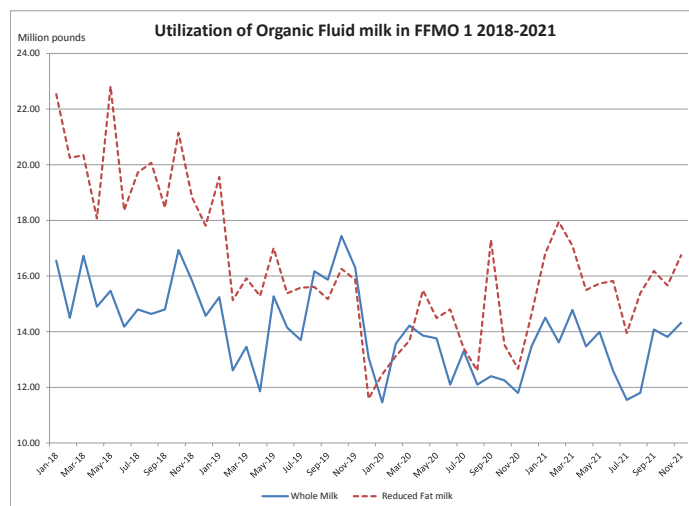
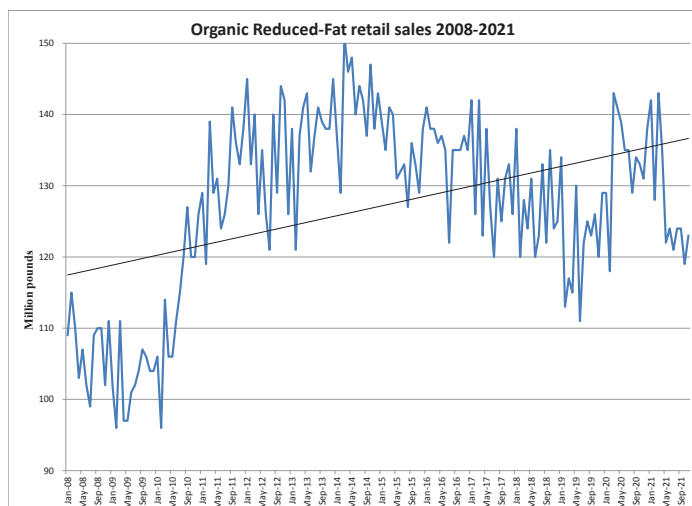
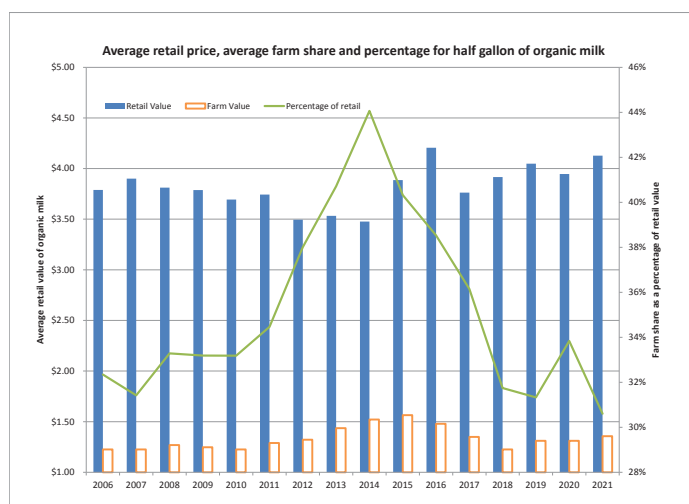
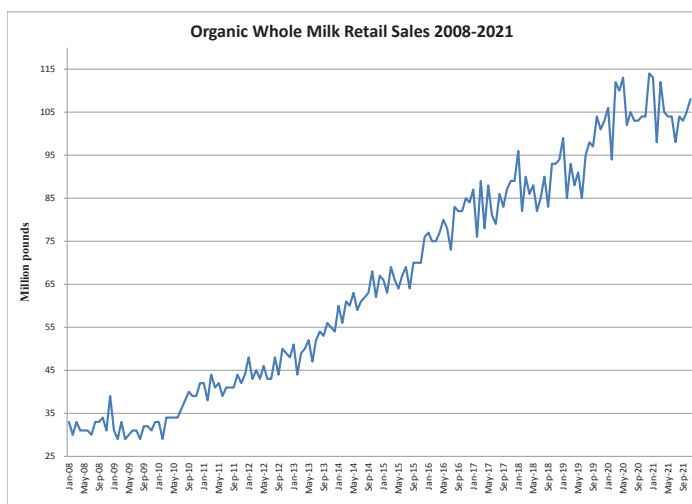
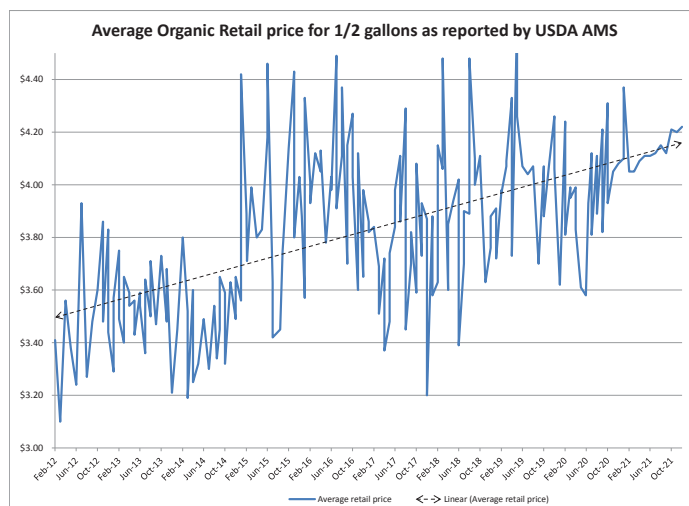
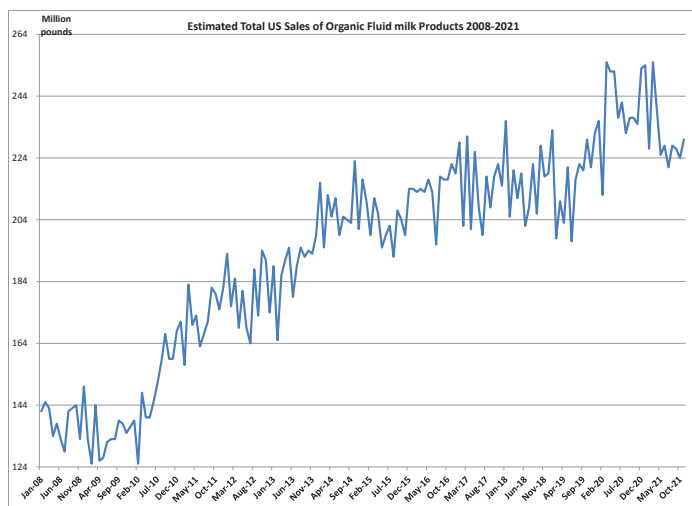
### Estimated total US Sales of Fluid Milk Products (Class 1) for October 2021

Product Name	Sales of Organic Fluid Milk		Change from	
	Oct-21	2021 Year to date	Oct-20	Year to date
	Million pounds		Percent	
Organic Whole Milk	103	1,040	-0.6%	-1.1%
Flavored Whole milk	2	15	10.2%	96.3%
Organic Reduced Fat Milk (2%)	74	794	-11.4%	-3.00%
Organic Low Fat Milk (1%)	25	262	1.2%	-6.0%
Organic Fat Free Milk Skim	14	146	-18.4%	-11.2%
Organic Flavored Fat-Reduced Milk	6	70	-3.6%	3.7%
Other Fluid Organic Milk Products	0	1	158.0%	-3.2%
Total Fat Reduced Milk	119	1,273	-9.5%	-4.3%
<b>Total Organic Milk Products</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>2,328</b>	<b>-5.4%</b>	<b>-2.6%</b>

### Estimated total US Sales of Fluid Milk Products (Class 1) for November 2021

Product Name	Sales of Organic Fluid Milk		Change from	
	Nov-21	2021 Year to date	Nov-20	Year to date
	Million pounds		Percent	
Organic Whole Milk	106	1,146	2.2%	-0.8%
Flavored Whole milk	2	17	30.3%	85.60%
Organic Reduced Fat Milk (2%)	78	872	-5.5%	-3.2%
Organic Low Fat Milk (1%)	25	287	7.6%	-5.0%
Organic Fat Free Milk Skim	14	160	-14.9%	-11.5%
Organic Flavored Fat-Reduced Milk	5	75	-27.0%	0.7%
Other Fluid Organic Milk Products	1	1	64.3%	14.9%
Total Fat Reduced Milk	123	1,396	-5.3%	-4.4%
<b>Total Organic Milk Products</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>2,559</b>	<b>-1.8</b>	<b>-2.5</b>

# ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS





## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## Pay And Feed Prices January/February 2022

*continued from page 17*

Federal Milk Market Order 1 (FMMO-1), in New England, reports utilization of types of organic milk and cream by pool plants. In October and November 2021, Class 1 utilization of organic whole milk totaled 13.8 and 14.32 million pounds respectively, increasing from 12.25 million in October 2020, and increasing significantly from 11.8 million pounds in November 2020. The utilization of organic reduced fat milk in October and November 2021 was 15.66 and 16.75 million pounds respectively, an increase from 13.53 million pounds in October 2020 and up from 12.67 million pounds in November 2020. Year-to-date, there has been an increase of 11% (30.96 million pounds) of organic milk utilized as retail packaged product in the FMMO-1 from January to November 2021 as compared to January to November 2020.

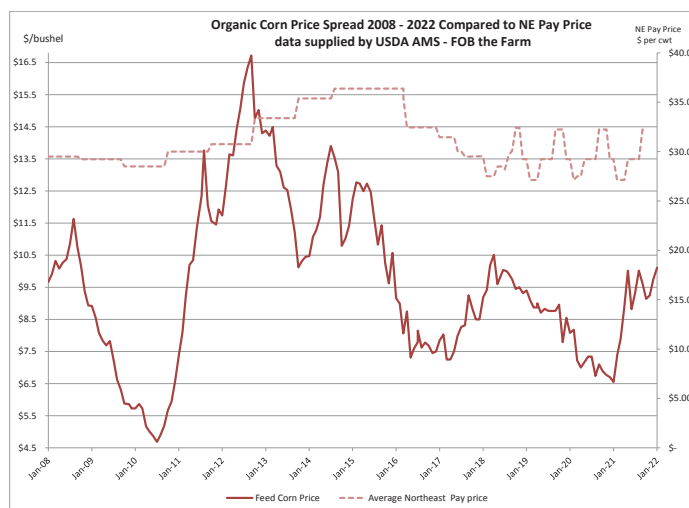
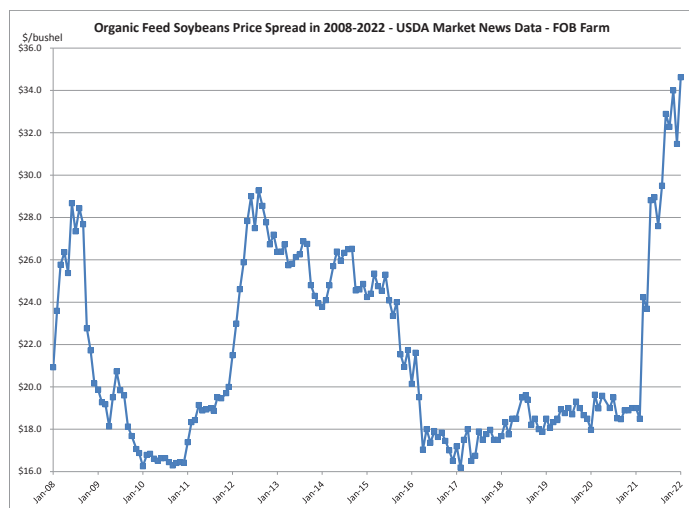
We have no independent tracking of sales of other organic dairy products.

In bad news for organic dairies whose winter ration includes purchased protein, USDA reports that the organic soybean feed price is the highest it's been since their records started in 2008 and organic soybean meal is getting harder to find. USDA reports that spot transactions at the farmgate are averaging \$34.62 per bushel for feed grade soybeans and \$10.50 per bushel for feed grade yellow corn. One of the main factors influencing the price is the slowdown in imports caused by the Indian Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA). In October 2021, they barred four organic certifying agencies from registering any new processors or exporters of organic products, while also issuing a year-long suspension of OneCert International. The National Organic Program (NOP) is requiring all Indian operations recertify through an NOP-recognized organization by July 12, 2022 if they wish to continue selling organic productions in the United States.

The Jacobsen reports that prices on the west coast for Chinese-origin organic soybean meals are quoted near \$1,500 per short ton. U.S. domestic is offered from \$1,550 to \$1,700 per short ton. Organic soybean meal will continue to make its way down from Canada to the east coast of the United States, but the volumes will be a fraction of what arrived from India over the last few years. Mercaris notes the APEDA announcement followed a decision by the European Union, but has global implications. "The EU issued a blacklist to these organizations on the grounds of failing to meet regulatory standards," says Ryan Koory, vice president of Economics for Mercaris. . ♦

### UTILIZATION OF ORGANIC FLUID MILK PRODUCTS AND CREAM BY POOL PLANTS FMMO 1 (Million pounds)

	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2021	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2020	Increase/Decrease over 2020
JANUARY	31.32	23.93	31%
FEBRUARY	31.56	26.69	18%
MARCH	31.87	27.90	14%
APRIL	28.97	29.35	-1%
MAY	29.72	28.25	5%
JUNE	28.41	26.90	6%
JULY	25.50	26.70	-4%
AUGUST	27.18	24.70	10%
SEPTEMBER	30.26	29.70	2%
OCTOBER	29.47	25.78	14%
NOVEMBER	31.07	24.47	27%



## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## Trademark of USDA Organic Seal Creates New Enforcement Tools

The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office has granted the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) final trademark approval for the USDA organic seal. This key milestone increases law enforcement authority to penalize those who attempt to misuse the organic seal.

With official Trademark protection, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Service and the National Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center may seize and destroy shipments when fraudulent claims are found to have been made—significantly raising the risk and cost of crime. In the coming months NOP will work with our accredited certifiers and federal enforcement partners to begin using this new authority to better safeguard the integrity of the organic seal and deter fraudulent activities involving the organic seal. Watch for details this spring. This success is a direct outcome of the collaborative work of the Organic Agricultural Product Imports Interagency Working Group, established by the 2018 Farm Bill.

Learn more about the USDA National Organic Program at [www.ams.usda.gov/Organic](http://www.ams.usda.gov/Organic). ♦



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## FEATURED FARM

**UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA'S WEST CENTRAL RESEARCH AND OUTREACH CENTER (WCROC), MORRIS, MN***continued from page 1*

West Central Research and Outreach Center (WCROC), where Brad Heins, Associate Professor of Dairy, not only leads the dairy research, but can be found doing the daily hands-on work just like any other dairy farmer. In fact, he was recently interviewed while in the barn, doing chores and providing animal care, ringing in the New Year while the student laborers were off-campus for the winter holiday break.

Just as on any dairy farm, concerns center around keeping the animals healthy, milk quality and yields, providing nutritious feed through grazing management and balancing the rations, sourcing or growing ingredients economically, selectively breeding the herd to meet management goals, and keeping the cost of labor low while hiring qualified and dedicated people to do the work efficiently.

And to dispel any thoughts of research dollars flowing in to support the organic dairy: it doesn't work that way. The organic dairy herd here is contracted with Organic Valley. They make it or break it financially based on the bulk tank sales. Because the dairy herd at WCROC is actually a split herd - some are certified organic, while others are managed conventionally - the

organic herd has, over the past several years, been carrying the weight of the conventional herd, where making a profit has been more challenging.

The university dairy has its labor challenges too. The student milkers who work at the farm are paid between \$16.00 and \$18.00/hour, which is paid entirely from the milk check.

"We pay them more because we want good workers and we want to keep them," Brad stated.

Add in old infrastructure, re-purposed equipment, and climate change, and the WCROC is struggling through challenges similar to those which most dairy farmers - organic or not - are familiar. The University farm can't apply for any government programs, as they are a government entity.

"We see a lot of the issues that other dairy farms do," Brad said.

In addition to the day-to-day dairy farming responsibilities, research studies, designed to assist dairy farmers making real life decisions about how to manage their herds, are conducted on the farm. Some are multi-year projects, and many happen simultaneously. Finding alternate cow breeds for organic systems, exploring calf-rearing systems, searching for effective pain management techniques for calf disbudding, and exploring the opportunities of solar grazing dairy cows are some of the current studies on which the WCROC is working diligently. All of the research is meant to assist farmers in decision-making, and result

in positive economic outcomes for dairy farms.

**Inside the Dairy**

The dairy herd at the University of Minnesota has been around for more than 100 years, and to prove it the old tie-stall barn remains a part of the farm's infrastructure. Heins' predecessor, Dennis Johnson, began grazing the confined, conventionally-raised herd, which then consisted of 80 registered Holsteins, in the late 1990s. The grazing component was expanded throughout the years, as it helped economically; reducing labor and feed costs, and cows did well. By 2008, Dennis made the decision to transition the dairy to organic production.



**At WCROC, research takes place simultaneously with daily dairy operations.**



## FEATURED FARM

“It was a natural progression,” he said, with the positive benefits of rotational grazing leading to organic certification, just as happens on many private dairy farms.

Certification was completed in 2010. Only one-half of the herd was transitioned, along with the dairy’s 400 acres of pasture and 225 tillable acres. Those crop acres are used to grow corn for grain and silage; alfalfa for silage; oats or other small grains for grazing, silage or grain; and roughly 20 acres of organic soybeans per year. Sorghum-Sudangrass is grown in rotation for grazing or silage, as are cover crops such as turnips, which can provide additional grazing opportunities.

The herd has been a closed one for about 20 years now, and it has been expanded and crossbred. The dairy is a 300 cow dairy, with 120 head of cows certified organic, and 180 conventional. While one-third of the herd remains Holstein, another third has been cross bred in a ProCROSS system with Holstein, Viking Red and Montbéliarde. The remaining third is a GrazeCross crossbred system of Jersey, Viking Red and Normande.

“We like to look at different breeds for grazing and organic production systems,” Brad said.

Studies at the dairy show that GrazeCross cows have 12 percent higher total fatty acid levels than other breed groups. These fatty acid profile studies can help assist farmers to respond to consumer demand. Higher short-chain FA profiles in milk are of interest to consumers from a nutrition and health standpoint.

The two herds share the same milking parlor but use separate bulk tanks, the same feed equipment, graze on the same ground, and even share the same organic feed crops. The conventional herd is managed primarily in confinement, with some grazing, while management intensive grazing (MIG) is utilized for the organic herd. The heifers all are raised together, grazing on organic pastures.

*continued on page 22*

**Of the 300 cow dairy, 120 head of cows are certified organic, and 180 conventional.**



**Heifers on pasture.**



## FEATURED FARM

**UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA'S  
WEST CENTRAL RESEARCH  
AND OUTREACH CENTER  
(WCROC), MORRIS, MN***continued from page 21*

Sharing a New Zealand style swing-9 parabone milking parlor, as well as the feed mixer means that things are carefully and thoroughly cleaned between uses, so the integrity of the organic cows - and their milk - is not compromised. Should an organic cow need antibiotics, it does allow the flexibility of treating and keeping the cow in the conventional herd. But with a focus on prevention, most cows would be culled from the herd after treatment and the appropriate withdrawal period, Brad said.

**Grazing Strategies and  
Low-Input Farming**

The pastures are all a mixture of meadow fescue, orchard grass, brome grass, red and white clover, and occasionally some alfalfa. Nine permanent pastures are fenced by a three-rail high-tensile perimeter, and range in size from seven to 20 acres. The pastures are further divided with polywire, creating paddocks which typically are designed to hold 1.25- 1.50 cows/acre, translating to 300,000 - 400,000 pounds of animal weight per acre.

The pastures require no further fertilization, due to the distribution of the manure and urine as the cows graze intensively and quickly rotate onto other paddocks. The organic milking herd is rotated once or twice per day, after milking. The herd receives 60-70 percent dry matter intake from pasture on an annual basis. For 2021, when severe drought was a problem, the herd achieved 40 percent DMI.

When pastures need renovation, winter rye is planted and grazed the next spring. From there, they either directly replant pasture or plant a season of sorghum-Sudangrass, depending on weather and feed needs, before re-establishing perennial pasture.

Heifers, from one-year of age, are grazed together in one group, along with dry cows, and are 100 percent grass-fed in summer, with free choice minerals available. Heifer pastures are located more than a mile from the milking facility. Heifers may be provided some organic hay in the winter. Younger heifers are given a 50/50 mix of pasture grazing and total mixed ration, in order to keep growth rates strong.



**New Zealand style swing-9  
parabone milking parlor.**

If conditions allow, the milking herd can be maintained on 100 percent grass in May, June and July. About 15 acres of annual sorghum-Sudangrass, grown as rotation crop for corn, are available most years for summer grazing.

“A lot of it is very weather-dependent,” Brad said of their grazing strategy. “It is very flexible, year to year,” with the goal to “just get feed for animals,” whether that is through extended grazing or making silage.

Year-round, any supplemental grain is fed at a minimal rate of six pounds per cow. The TMR consists of corn silage, haylage and corn grain. Soybean meal - about two pounds mixed in the ration - may be fed to the milking herd, depending upon the quality of haylage. Primarily, the soybean meal is used for feeding calves.

The diet, which is balanced by a nutritionist, isn't meant to push the cows' production to the highest levels. Instead, it is a simple diet designed to keep feed costs low while providing nutrition



## FEATURED FARM

**Calves raised on mom.**

to maintain health and productivity. A nutritionist has only been used for the past five years, and herd health has dramatically improved since then, which Brad feels is a direct result of a properly balanced ration. They do purchase organic vitamins and minerals to supplement the ration.

Per cow milk production averages 14,000 pounds per year. The milk fat averages 4.0 percent, while the protein averages 3.6 percent.

### Low-Input Housing

The farm grows about 45 bushels of organic soybeans per acre, and yields 180 - 240 bushels of organic corn per acre, competing with conventional yields. They do so by using only manure for fertility.

The manure comes from the compost bedded-pack shelters - basically open-sided barns with a straw bedded pack - which are provided for the organic herd during extreme weather, as well as for the calves. The shelters are utilized during the hottest part of summer days, as well as in wet and cold conditions. The organic dairy herd is out-wintered, remaining on pasture year-round.

**Out-wintering feeding.**

“We practice out-wintering here,” even with the -17 degree Fahrenheit winters in Minnesota, Brad said.

Out-wintering of the dairy herd has, of course, made its way into research studies at the dairy. This low-input model of dairy farming was shown to have benefits including enhanced animal health and cleanliness when compared to confinement housing in a compost-bedded packed barn stall, and to reduce labor and bedding costs. The study concluded that out-wintered animals do require 30 percent more feed than animals maintained indoors, and require adequate wind protection and proper teat dry-off after milking. No differences in milk output or somatic cell count were seen between out-wintered and indoor cows.

<https://wcroc.cfans.umn.edu/research/dairy/outwintering-2018>

*continued on page 24*



## FEATURED FARM

### UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA'S WEST CENTRAL RESEARCH AND OUTREACH CENTER (WCROC), MORRIS, MN

*continued from page 23*

Calving can occur outside, but there is also a bedded pack maternity barn, where it is easier to keep an eye on the birth, and where it is generally a cleaner environment. All animals except the bull calves, which are sold, are raised on the farm from birth until death or culling. The oldest cow on the farm is 10 years old, although an 18 year-old cow was recently culled.

#### Precision Technology

Cows are all bred via artificial insemination. The use of a clean-up bull was discontinued about 10 year ago. Breeding here isn't quite as low-tech as the housing, with heat monitoring systems in place to make things more efficient. Heifers - who roam pastures more than a mile from the barn - are monitored for heat using ESTROTECH patches, plus activity monitors to alert them to changes indicating a cow is entering heat. They have a portable corral system with a chute that is used to breed them right in the pasture. They set up a temporary corral for the heifers and bring them in every day for breeding purposes.

For the past six years, they have been using the CowManager system to monitor for heat in heifers. Solar-powered readers are utilized to read the sensors in the pasture, and transmit the

results to the computer system and smartphones in real time. The data can be integrated with farm management software.

They can detect heats with much greater accuracy with this automated system, as evidenced by the first service reproduction rate, which has risen from 35 to 55 percent. It has been so successful that they now have too many heifers to raise.

"It took a while for everyone to adjust," Brad said of using the system to detect heats, but "things have really improved a lot."

With the increase in reproduction rates, they've begun breeding some heifers to beef breeds. They sell organic cull cows to Organic Prairie, and are in their third year of beef X dairy crosses. They've been breeding half of the herd to Limousine and now to Angus, as they began increasing reproduction rates, and can now take advantage of the premium value of beef and dairy crosses.

There are actually three sensors on all cows at the dairy. The Afimilk pedometer-based program is able to detect heat, monitor calving, and provide alerts when cow wellbeing is compromised from illness, social stressors or other conditions causing behavioral changes. Afimilk is also a farm management system, which has allowed them to manage employees, monitor milking times and monitor animal milk production. Prior to its implementation two years ago, they were relying on Boumatic's Dairy Herd Information

The cows are also equipped with Heatime® LD-HR Tags from SCR Dairy, which have been in place since 2013.

This system monitors rumination via a microphone in the collar to detect jaw movement. It also provides activity monitoring.

A smaXtec bolus is now being added to the mix. In this system, a bolus inside the cow is constantly monitoring temperature and activity levels, to detect fertility, mastitis and other diseases, and calving issues as soon as possible.

"All of these are just tools to help," Brad said.



**Portable corral system with chute used for breeding right in the pasture.**

## FEATURED FARM

### Herd Health

The organic dairy herd has demonstrated overall better health than the conventional herd at the research center. The organic herd has low rates of respiratory illness, less overall disease concerns, and has no displaced abomasum. While there are some health issues, including milk fever, retained placenta and metritis, “it is not at the level of what the majority of conventional herds do,” Brad said.

While there has been an improvement in herd health since becoming certified organic, the biggest health concern in the organic herd is mastitis. The SCC in winter runs about 100,000, but averages 250,000 throughout the year. They’ve begun culturing all cases of mastitis to try to determine what the primary causes are, and attempt to control what they can, focusing on prevention.

“We are beholden to weather and mud and rain,” and the SCC fluctuates throughout the year, Brad said. “It’s not one thing; it’s a bunch of things we do to help with the mastitis.”

The focus is on preventing issues, rather than trying to treat them. Cleanliness, proper milking techniques and timing, and culling cows with chronically high somatic cell counts all help to control mastitis. They do use Veterinary Dairy Liniment™ from Crystal Creek on the teats to reduce swelling, which helps with mastitis prevention. They also use PhytoMast™, from Dr. Hue Karreman.

They will use garlic and aloe at times, for severe cases of mastitis or for digestive issues or if animals are off-feed, but not nearly as much as they did five years ago. Brad is not convinced of the effectiveness of some of the homeopathic treatments, and with improved nutrition and focus on prevention, they really haven’t been necessary.

Vaccinations for *Escherichia coli* and mastitis are given to the dry cows. Calves are given three different vaccines - Inforce 3®, Once PMH® and Bovalis® - to control respiratory illnesses. They have been effective in controlling scours, which is the biggest calf health concern on the farm.



**Groups of five to ten calves are maintained together until weaning.**

By avoiding winter calving, they’ve also decreased the number or calf health problems, Brad said. There are no calves born on the dairy for six weeks, beginning late January, so they do not have the labor need for feeding calves at that time. They don’t have calves to feed in the heat of summer, either. The calving season occurs twice per year, from mid-March through the end of May, and from mid-September through the end of November.

Excellent colostrum management, a high quality calf starter, constant access to clean water, and a clean environment are imperative for calf health and emphasized at the research dairy.

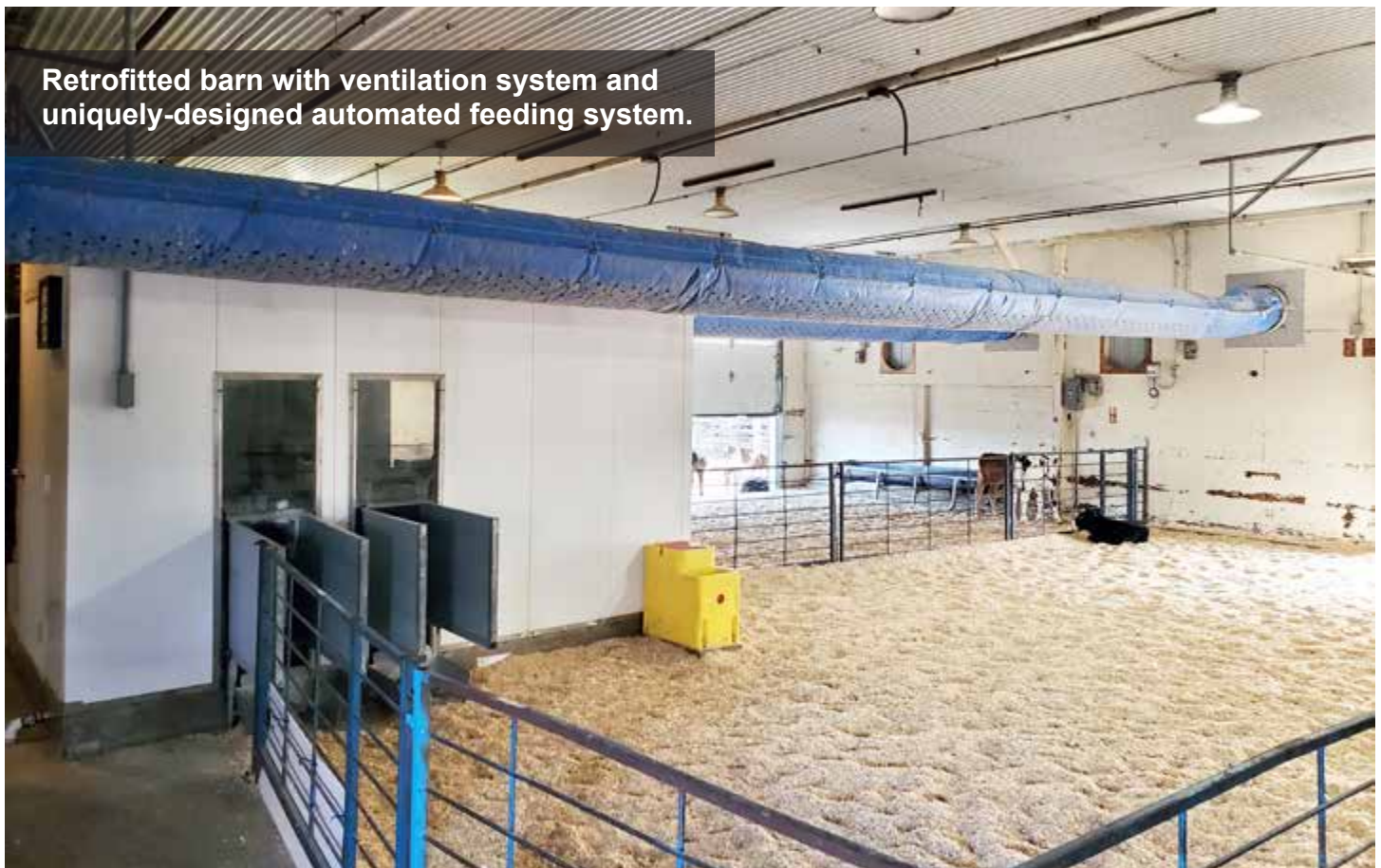
Newborn calves are housed in individual pens in the calf barn, and fed two liters of colostrum per calf for two days. They remain with the mother for three days, after which they are provided free choice water continually, and fed whole pasteurized milk, along with an 18 percent protein calf starter ration which is mixed in the barn using an old feed mill. They’ve been mixing their own calf feed for about eight years, and it is “cost effective,” Brad said.

Once taken from the mother, calves are housed together, with no more than 10 days of age difference in each pen. Groups of five to ten calves are maintained together until weaning. If the calves are on the automated feeding system, groups are larger, up to 20 per pen. Calf housing currently is split between outdoor group hutches and an automated feeding system in pens which allow outdoor access.

*continued on page 26*



## FEATURED FARM

**UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA'S WEST CENTRAL RESEARCH AND OUTREACH CENTER (WCROC), MORRIS, MN**

*continued from page 25*

In the uniquely-designed automated feeding system, the feeders are located in a retrofitted barn, where a ventilation system has been installed. The calves are in groups of 15, with 49 square feet of space per calf, in pens bedded with dry straw, for warmth and burrowing. The goal is to have all calves raised, eventually, in this system.

More information on the automated feeding system in place at WCROC can be found here: <https://wcroc.cfans.umn.edu/research/dairy/auto-calf-feeder>

As the calf housing system continues to evolve on the dairy, one thing is constant.

"I want my calves outside," Brad said, as calves reared outdoors have decreased health problems.

The dairy has significantly increased the amount of milk fed to calves over the past 11 years. They were feeding four liters per

day, and are now up to 10 liters - about 2.6 gallons - of milk per day. Those calves fed ad libitum on the automatic feeder are consuming 14 liters per day.

Calves are healthier now that they are consuming more milk.

"All our calves grow well. But I also think that they are healthier, with less disease issues, when feeding milk," Brad said.

Calves are weaned at eight or nine weeks, and re-grouped into groups of up to 20 head. Hay is typically introduced at weaning. At five months old, calves are ready for pasture, but those born early in the fall calving season will be about eight months old before they are pastured in the spring. When turned out on pasture, group size is between 50 and 80 heifers.

A continuing research project on group housing of dairy calves has been ongoing for the past year, comparing four systems: individual; pair; group housing with six calves per group; and calf-on-cow.

The goal of the research is "to show dairy farmers that there are different ways to raise calves. Also benchmarking calf growth and calf health and improving calf-rearing systems," Brad said.



## FEATURED FARM

Calves raised on cows out on spring pasture.



Calves in individual hutches.



Another study is looking at alternative pain management for disbudding calves. They have compared results with Dull It, and herbal tincture containing white willow bark, St. John's wort, chamomile, arnica, fennel, alcohol, and apple cider vinegar, to those of the standard lidocaine injection when hot iron disbudding. Measuring cortisol levels in serum samples, they've found that while both groups of calves experienced the same cortisol levels during and after the procedure, the Dull It group did not have as many behavioral signs of pain as measured by head jerks. The research on disbudding pain management is ongoing, including looking at NOT disbudding.

<https://wcroc.cfans.umn.edu/research/dairy/disbudding-dairy-calves>

"There are lots of things happening out here from a research standpoint," he said.

And from a dairy farm standpoint, the cows need milking, the feed needs mixing, the calves need tending and the chores need finishing. It's just another day at the University of Minnesota's Organic Dairy Research Farm. ♦

Brad Heins can be reached at: [hein0106@umn.edu](mailto:hein0106@umn.edu), 320-589-1711 ext. 2118, 46352 State Hwy 329, Morris, MN 56267. Visit the West Central Research and Outreach Center to stay up-to-date with dairy research at: <https://wcroc.cfans.umn.edu/research/dairy>

## ORGANIC PRODUCTION

## Mower with a Mind of its Own

### *A Partnership between University of Minnesota Researchers and a Minnesota Company aims to Make Farming More Sustainable*

*By Gayla Marty, Minneapolis-based freelance writer*

**A**bout 250 crossbred Holsteins graze on grasses and cover crops at the West Central Research and Outreach Center (WCROC) near Morris, Minnesota. The herd is part of the center's ongoing research on dairy production.

But the cows don't eat everything, and the weeds left behind will spread unless cut. That's when the cowbot goes to work.

The little 25-horsepower tractor-like machine works something like a combination of a robotic vacuum cleaner and a lawn mower. Weighing in at nearly a ton, it has four-wheel drive and can "think" and navigate on its own. When power runs low, it returns to its charging station, a trailer with solar panels.

The mission of the cowbot is to explore a new way to reduce agriculture's carbon footprint—a priority at donor-supported WCROC, which is committed to using renewable energy to reduce fossil-fuel consumption in agriculture. In addition, the cowbot aims to lessen the use of herbicides and save farmers' time.

The cowbot is the result of collaboration between WCROC, part of the University of Minnesota (UM) College of Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resource Sciences; the College of Science and Engineering; and Bloomington-based Toro Co.

Toro was interested in converting its diesel-powered GM3280 mower to electric for testing as a quiet vehicle on parks and golf courses. When WCROC contacted the company about an earlier project, the mower project found a home. Toro contributed the original mower plus more than \$124,000 for parts and engineering design, software, fabrication, and assembly labor to create the prototype. The company continues to provide engineering support through testing.

"Our overall mission is to take things that are available and see if they will work in new ways." — Eric Buchanan

"Toro's mower was designed for more formal turf, not pastures, but it works great here," says WCROC lead researcher Eric Buchanan, who received a grant from Minnesota's Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to study the use of autonomous vehicles for weed control.

The three-year project began in 2018 with a focus on pasture mowing. This summer, it branched into early weeding of row crops, specifically corn and soybeans. The final year will be devoted to fine-tuning hardware and software, and developing and testing safety protocols.

"Our goal is not to develop a new commercial vehicle. Our overall mission is to take things that are available and see if they will work in new ways," Buchanan says.

Field tests resumed this summer. With different mowing patterns developed in 2019, the U of M robotics team is flying a drone to spot weeds, collecting images for a database that allows the cowbot to recognize them. Weed identification will become more important as testing moves into weeding row crops.

"The terrain is very bumpy so we're mowing very slowly, less than two miles an hour," says Jack Gust, a chief engineer in research and development for Toro. "But if you're a robot, time is not that big of a deal." ♦

*Gayla Marty lives in Minneapolis and works as a writer and editor with an interest in culture, agriculture, and natural history. She can be reached at [gaylamarty@gmail.com](mailto:gaylamarty@gmail.com).*

## The Annual NODPA Fund Drive is Underway!

Your support is especially important this year, so please remember to send in your membership donations or visit the NODPA membership page on our website: <https://nodpa.com/index.cfm?p=x.5>

For more information, email Nora Owens, [noraowens@comcast.net](mailto:noraowens@comcast.net) or call NODPA at 413-772-0444.



## ORGANIC PRODUCTION

**COWBOT! Coming to a field near you?****Q & A: Renewable energy scientist Eric Buchanan tells us a bit more about the Cowbot***By Joel Haskard, photos courtesy of Eric Buchanan*

**L**eave it to the amazing team at the West Central Outreach & Research Center outside of Morris MN to be experimenting with a solar-powered Cowbot.

### • What is Cowbot and what does it do?

The Cowbot is an autonomous mower for weed control in cow pastures. It is a collaboration with researchers in the Computer Science and Engineering department (CSE) and The Toro Company. The Cowbot can come into a pasture after cows have grazed and cut down the weeds the cows didn't eat without cutting the grass. This is especially important in organic pastures where herbicides cannot be used. It uses a flail mower instead of a standard deck mower to better cut large weeds like thistles that are typical in pastures.

The Cowbot is driven around the area to be mowed while an operator logs the GPS coordinates. The onboard controller then calculates the most efficient path to mow that area and returns to a charging trailer when finished.

***The Cowbot can come into a pasture after cows have grazed and cut down the weeds the cows didn't eat without cutting the grass. This is especially important in organic pastures where herbicides cannot be used.***

***- Eric Buchanan, Renewable Energy Scientist***

### How is Cowbot powered?

The Cowbot started life as a diesel powered Toro fairway mower, but was converted to run with an electric motor and to be "drive by wire" which means it can be operated electronically including steering, throttle, and engaging the mower. The battery pack can hold 29 kWh of energy and can be recharged in the pasture with a custom built solar charging trailer. The Cowbot can mow for up to 4 hours before recharging.



**Eric Buchanan and the Cowbot mower.**

### • Tell us about the trailer? Can you buy these somewhere or do you have to build them yourself?

I have not seen a commercial charging trailer, but I have seen several different versions of custom built trailers. We added 10 solar panels (just over 3 kW) to the roof of an enclosed 17 foot trailer large enough to haul the Cowbot. There are three levels of panels. The top level is fixed, but the bottom two levels slide out on heavy duty drawer slides to collect sunlight. Inside the trailer a charge controller manages the charging of a 48 volt battery pack. The batteries are deep-cycle, solar lead-acid batteries. DC power from the batteries is turned into AC power by a power inverter. The AC power then feeds a few outlets and a level 2 electric car charger which is used to charge the Cowbot, but can also charge electric cars.

So, for now, you will still have to build a charging trailer yourself. The Cowbot itself is still in the research phase so you will get strange looks if you ask your Toro dealer for one.

### • Finally... does the Cowbot moo?

The Cowbot has not yet learned to moo, but it has learned to mooow! ♦

*Eric Buchanan, Scientist, Renewable Energy, can be reached at [buch0123@morris.umn.edu](mailto:buch0123@morris.umn.edu), 320-589-1711, ext. 2111, WCROC 46352 State Hwy 329, Morris, MN 56267.*



## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

**Future of Organic – National Organic Farmer Workshop**

Wednesday, March 2, 2022, 1:00 PM-5:00 PM EST

It has been 30 years since the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) was signed into law and while the organic sector has made many advances, there is still much to be done to ensure the continued success of the organic movement and truly achieve the gold standard in food systems. The Organic Trade Association (OTA), the Organic Farmers Association (OFA), and the Swette Center for Sustainable Food Systems at Arizona State University (ASU), led by Dr. Kathleen Merrigan, are embarking on a partnership to bring together organic farmers nationwide invested in the continued success and growth of organic.

Collectively, the organic stakeholder workshops will explore what has and has not worked since the federal organic program was established and set a new pathway for the future. Participants are encouraged to bring their new, old, radical

or repurposed ideas to take us through the next 30 years of organic farming. Individual organic farmers are encouraged to apply to attend the workshop and share their ideas directly. The outcomes of the workshop will contribute to a report that will outline improvements or clarifications necessary to the law and regulatory process within USDA and inform updates to the Organic Foods Production Act and other priorities in the next farm bill.

For those who are able to attend the workshop virtually, register here: <https://cvent.me/xwRMRR>

For those unable to attend the workshop, the printed survey can be downloaded at:

<https://bit.ly/PrintFB> and the online survey can be completed at: <https://bit.ly/FarmBill23>



ORGANIC FARMERS  
ASSOCIATION

**Breakouts Topics at the Workshop**

This workshop includes four breakout topics to address important issues for the future of organic. Registrants will select their preferred and alternate choices from the following topics during registration. Prior to the workshop, all participants will be provided their assigned topic along with a Workshop workbook.

**BREAKOUT TOPIC 1:****USDA & NOP  
Standards development,  
certification, fees, and  
other federal services**

The structure of the U.S. organic regulatory framework has a truly unique, participatory structure that comes with high expectations from stakeholders. This breakout will explore the responsibilities that government and stakeholders have in developing and implementing the organic standards and areas for improvement. We will explore how to improve the certification and inspections process, certification fees and cost-share. Also we will explore how to improve access and effectiveness of the various programs and services offered across USDA agencies for organic producers.

**BREAKOUT TOPIC 2:****CONTINUOUS  
IMPROVEMENT  
Advancing environmental,  
human health and social  
justice outcomes**

Organic certification is based on a commitment to continuous improvement. Unfortunately, the original aims of the Organic Foods Production Act have not been fully realized, the organic standards do not include labor, social and emerging environmental and animal welfare issues. This breakout will explore how continuous improvement should be defined in organic standards. We will examine how USDA programs and services can better support organic farms and to advance outcomes related to the environment and conservation, labor and social justice, and accessibility to more nutritious organic foods.



## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

### BREAKOUT TOPIC 3:

#### FARM & MARKET VIABILITY

#### Market development, label claims, fraud prevention

A healthy market for organic products in to the future requires a clear market distinction backed by strong standards and enforcement. Industry consolidation, and fraud threaten farm and market viability and consumer trust in organic. This breakout will explore factors that are holding back growth in organic markets and identify solutions across sectors, geographies, demographics, and markets. We will explore how to support farm viability and develop strong organic markets in the face of competing label claims, fraud, industry consolidation, and other challenging industry dynamics.



### BREAKOUT TOPIC 4:

#### ORGANIC TRANSITION

#### Overcoming barriers to successful transition to organic and managing market impacts

Organic farming presents a promising opportunity for U.S. farmers, yet less than one percent of domestic farmland is certified organic today. The three-year land transition after the last application of a prohibited substance is an important prerequisite to becoming eligible for organic certification, many farmers face steep challenges and barriers when seeking to transition to organic production. This breakout will explore the opportunities for supporting farmers to transition and stay in organic production. We will explore various incentives, support programs, and transitional certifications that can help farmers through the transition process. We'll also examine concerns that you may have about new farms transitioning to organic and how to manage market impacts to support a healthy organic market for all.



For more information: <https://organicfarmersassociation.org/farm-bill-listening-sessions/> or [kate@organicfarmersassociation.org](mailto:kate@organicfarmersassociation.org) or PO Box 709, Spirit Lake, IA 51360 -202-643-5363

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Are you a certified organic dairy producer? YES NO

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

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

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

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

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Card #: \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_ 202\_\_ Security Code on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

# The USDA Agricultural Resource Management Survey: Your Farm's Information is Important!

*By Jim Barrett, National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA*

**H**ow did 2021 affect your bottom line? An Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS) from USDA will reach a sample of dairy producers soon. This survey asks questions about standard and organic dairy costs and returns. Producers are encouraged to complete this survey to help their industry and policy makers better understand farm operation's financial data in these challenging times.

The last time this survey sampled organic dairy producers was in 2016, so it is important to make sure your operation is represented with current information. Survey results from 2016 indicated organic milk output per cow was



14,214 pounds/year. How much has that changed since 2016? By completing the survey, we can answer that question.

The 2016 ARMS collected detailed information about the production practices and costs on dairy farms in 28 States which represent more than 90 percent of national milk production. A

subsample of organic dairy operations was included as part of the 2016 ARMS. A set of estimates are available from the survey that presents milk costs and returns for 2016 by State, size of operation, and region for all milk producers, and for conventional and organic dairies. Estimates are reported for groups deemed to have a sufficient sample for statistical reliability. These estimates are an update to those reported from the 2005 and 2010 ARMS.

To view the estimates of milk production costs and returns estimated from the 2016, 2010 and 2005 ARMS, visit their website: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/commodity-costs-and-returns/organic-costs-and-returns/>.

Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS) is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's primary source of information on the production practices, resource use, and economic well-being of America's farms and ranches. The results of this survey are the only source of information available for objective evaluation of many critical issues related to agriculture and the rural economy.

Farmer participation in ARMS ensures that policy makers and others, including farmers and ranchers themselves, base important decisions on facts straight from the source. ARMS also tells the story of American agriculture to the public that has less and less direct contact with the farm community. ♦

*For more information, contact Jim Barrett | Public Affairs Officer | National Agricultural Statistics Service | Office of the Administrator | Public Affairs Office | U.S. Department of Agriculture | 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Rm 5033 | Washington, DC 20250 | o(202) 690-8124 | c(202) 577-7604 | [jim.barrett@usda.gov](mailto:jim.barrett@usda.gov), [www.nass.usda.gov](http://www.nass.usda.gov)*



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## NET UPDATE

## Recent ODairy Discussions

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

A 450-cow grass fed herd was having issues with rancidity in their milk. Rancidity occurs in milk when the membranes around fat globules are weakened or broken. One person responded that the most common cause of rancidity is agitation and foaming, so care should be taken to eliminate air leaks in the milking system that cause too much agitation. Some areas to focus on include: check inflations for cracks or holes, minimize the amount of air let into the milking claw, keep pipeline joints airtight, minimize the number of “risers” in the pipeline, maintain automatic pumps from the jar into the bulk tank, and make sure that your milk is cooling rapidly. Another producer forwarded a link to information from Penn State University which points to some additional factors that can affect rancidity. These include lack of adequate protein or energy in the cow’s diet, milking cows for more than 305 days, added stresses on cows, freezing milk in the bulk tank, or over-agitation in the bulk tank. A feed specialist had seen some farms with this issue and shared, “It seems to be connected to forage made at too high moisture, above 70%. Above 68% provides a fermentation environment to form excessive butyric acid; as well as a higher risk of clostridium growth leading to a possibility of botulism. (It is) most often seen with sorghum or sorghum-sudan forage at too high of moisture. It can occur with other forages as well.” He suggested that feed be mixed with dryer forages, and 6 to 8 oz. of Redmond Conditioner be fed to bind some of the toxins. Another farmer/feed mill operator added that this is a corn mycotoxin year, and she suggested two good toxin binders, AllTech Integral and Crystal Creek Fuse 207.

A hay producer was looking for suggestions on preservatives that could be used to bale hay at 30% moisture. A producer suggested, “In my experience preserving hay at 30% moisture

in any consistent manner is a pipe dream. We’ve used Agri-King’s Organic Silo-King on hay that was 20-22% successfully but higher than that started fires on at least 2 occasions.” Other producers suggested that it be baled and wrapped for baleage at that moisture level; the costs of the plastic vs. the cost of the preservative at that point may be much the same.

Planning to install automatic takeoffs in a swing-8 parlor, this farmer asked for suggestions on which brands to get or avoid. Several farmers were happy with the reliability and longevity of the De Laval takeoffs. One producer is happy with his 7 year-old Dairymaster takeoffs, but feels that the annual maintenance costs seem high.

A fresh first calf heifer wasn’t letting her milk down. The farmer asked for suggestions, and another farmer replied that they could try putting the calf on her to get her started, then switching to the milker. ♦

### Subscribing to ODairy:

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.

To sign up for the  
ODairy listserv, go to:

[www.nodpa.com/list\\_serv.shtml](http://www.nodpa.com/list_serv.shtml)

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# Classified Ads

## ANIMALS

**WANTED: Cows.** Looking ahead... We are looking for 4 to 6 certified organic Holstein heifers mid-April. Ideally, L1 but we will consider others. Shaw Farm, Dracut, MA. Call Warren at 978-835-7423 or email: [warren@shawfarm.com](mailto:warren@shawfarm.com).

**Location: Dracut, MA**

**WANTED: Certified organic beef cattle, angus or similar breed preferred.** Looking for steers, open heifers, animals born in 2020 and/or 2021. Please email or call the farm, [northhardwickfarm@gmail.com](mailto:northhardwickfarm@gmail.com), 802-472-8889

**Location: Hardwick, VT**

**For Sale: 10 certified Bred Heifers** Due March 20 - July 18 at 22-24 months old. Four registered Jersey, 4 mostly Jersey, 2 Jersey Cross. No grain since May, could be transitioned to grassmilk. All are AI bred to Stoney, sired by high component Jersey AI bulls. Good body condition since they have been eating dairy hay and pasture after the milking herd was sold last spring. Friendly- most are halter trained. \$1200 each (half the cost of raising them) Call Brian 802-623-6584 [drbrianhowlett@gmail.com](mailto:drbrianhowlett@gmail.com).

**Location: Whiting Vermont**

## FEED, GRAIN, HAY FOR SALE / WANTED TO BUY

**FOR SALE: CERTIFIED ORGANIC HAY products for 2021-2022:**

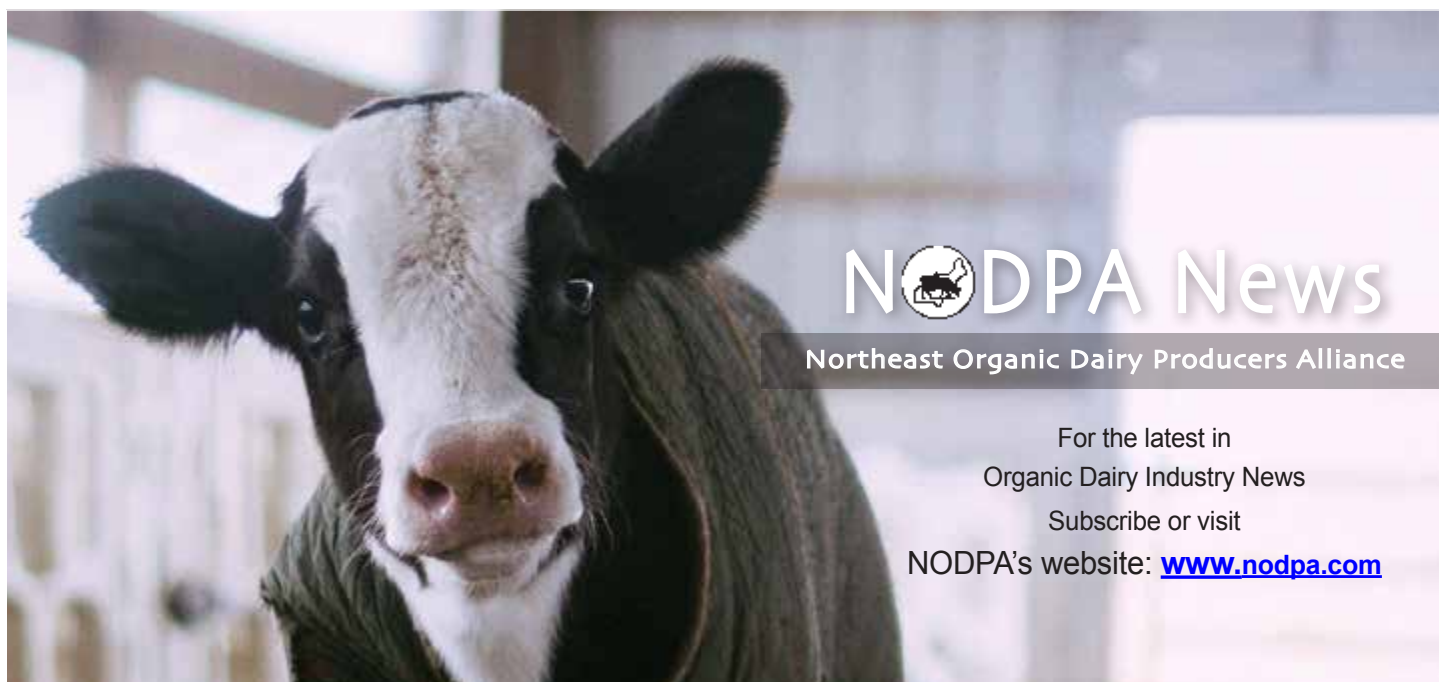
- Small square bales: 1st cutting \$4.50 per bale; 2nd cutting \$5.50 per bale
- Bedding or mulch hay small at \$2.50 per bale
- Large square bales 3 x 3 x 7 1st cutting \$70 per bale
- Baleage bales 1st cutting grass hay at \$50 a bale
- Baleage bales 4th cutting alfalfa at \$90 a bale

All square bale hay is stored under cover. Forage tests available at [marzfarm.com](http://marzfarm.com). Delivery available or pickup at the farm. Samples available. Contact Tony Marzolino: 315-378-5180 call/text, or [marzfarm.com](http://marzfarm.com). Marz Farm, 3624 Wilson Creek Rd, Berkshire NY

**Location: NY Southern Tier between Binghamton and Ithaca in Tioga County**

**FOR SALE: MOSA Certified organic high quality hay.** Individually wrapped bales. No rain. Alfalfa-grass mix. All tested. First through fourth crops. Also, Triticale-Peas and new seeding. RFQ up to 204. Call Randy Stein at 608-525-2510.

**Location: Ettrick, Wisconsin**



# NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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Photo: Amber Kipp, Unsplash

**FOR SALE: Quality organic dry hay and baleage.**  
\$50.00/bale. Pick up at the farm. Call Dexter Knapp,  
603-728-5904.

**Location: Piermont, NH**

## EQUIPMENT

**EQUIPMENT WANTED: 10'-20' roller crimper for rolling cover crops.** Any condition. Willing to travel.  
Contact Thaddeus McQuaide, [temcquaide@gmail.com](mailto:temcquaide@gmail.com),  
724-496-5509.

**Location: Saltsburg, PA**

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

### Certification Specialist

**Pennsylvania Certified Organic (PCO)** announces a job opening for a 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; conducting inspections, as assigned; evaluating inspection reports and writing/issuing reports to our clients; providing customer service and working collaboratively within the Certification Review Team. This position is primarily remote office-based with some minimal 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 at PCO. This is a full telecommuting position.

PCO is a growing non-profit organization that works with organic farmers and food producers across the US. PCO provides organic certification services to approximately 1700 operations and employs approximately 33 staff and sub-contracts with 40 field inspectors. Our team is dedicated to our mission: to ensure the integrity of organic products and serve our farming community.

This is a full-time, exempt, Telecommute position.

Salary range: \$47,500 to \$58,000, depending on experience. To view a job description, visit: [www.paorganic.org/jobs](http://www.paorganic.org/jobs) Benefits: health, dental, vision, disability, and life insurance; Simple IRA, generous holiday, volunteer time, vacation, paid time off, and paid leave.

This position will remain open until Friday, 2.18.2022.

Please submit a resume and cover letter to PCO Job Openings by Friday 2.18.2022.

# 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

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

### Discounted rates for commitments of 6 months or more.

Interested in one or both of these opportunities?  
For more information, contact Nora Owens at:

Email: [noraowens@comcast.net](mailto:noraowens@comcast.net)

Phone: 413-772-0444

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**January, March, May, July, September & November**

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](http://www.nodpa.com/directory.shtml) or contact Nora Owens.

**2021 Ad rates and sizes listed below.**

**Deadline for advertising in the March 2022 issue is February 15, 2022.**

**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](mailto:noraowens@comcast.net).

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



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**Message from NODPA Co-President**

*continued from page 2*

imagined past. But there's something that we farmers have to offer the rest of the world that gets forgotten in the endlessly accelerating pace of change. After all, isn't it the steady slowness of farming that sets our work and lives apart from others? On a farm, time moves in seasons, years, decades, and generations. The rate of expansion is always tempered by the shape of the land. These are the conditions that industrialization and growth seek to eradicate, compressing time and space into fungible units of measurement to be traded on the stock market.

So this new year is perhaps as good an opportunity as ever to stop and reflect on what we really want our farms and our lives to look like, and to ask what kind of a world would support those desires. It's especially true for white farmers like myself to learn from the

thousands of years of knowledge built up by Black and Indigenous farmers, who's seed keeping and land stewardship practices have now been appropriated for the sake of "growth."

Wouldn't it be something if we the farmers (and the eaters!), rather than the economy, the "experts," and Big Ag, set the pace of change and growth? Would that not be a more democratic way of producing food? I don't have all the solutions, but I do know that us farmers, together with people who eat food, have the power to imagine and create a different world, perhaps one that is slower and more equitable than the one we have now.

*This month's column is co-written by Kirk Arnold, NODPA Co-President, and Elizabeth Pickard, who is a PhD candidate at Cornell University and farms with Kirk Arnold at Twin Oaks Dairy.*

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