

NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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Severy Farm, LLC, Cornwall, VT

FEATURED FARM: SEVERY FARM, CORNWALL, VT

Generational Farming at Severy Farm: Conventional to Organic to 100% Grass-fed

By Tamara Scully, NODPA News Contributing Writer

Nathaniel and Kerianne Severy, along with their young children Caleb and Rachel, are carrying on the family dairying legacy in Cornwall, Vermont. It hasn't been a

straightforward journey, as there have been twists and turns along the way, but the family has finally arrived at their destination. They've just moved into the Severy family

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Organic Dairy: What's Next?

The 22nd Annual NODPA Field Days Returns to Vermont September 29 & 30, 2022

Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7823 • 530 Exchange Street, Middlebury, VT

By Nora Owens, NODPA Field Days Coordinator

For the first time in ten years, NODPA Field Days returns to Vermont. Have you made your travel plans yet? You don't want to miss out on two farm tours, 7 different workshops especially

pertinent to organic dairy farmers at this time of great change, a dynamic trade show, excellent food, and plenty of time to catch up with old friends and to make new ones. Even

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Message from NODPA Co-President

Every year we plan on how we can make the most of our pastures and keep the cows more comfortable in these hotter and drier days we call the “summer slump”. I look over our list of actions for this year; no-till in seed on a few weak areas of the permanent pasture; apply manure to other pastures; extend the pasture for heifers; clip off the over-mature growth. And it’s still a season of excess: too hot, too many flies, and slow regrowth. It’s great weather for hay making; not so much for pasture growing. We are paying even more attention to our pastures these days since we began our transition to grassfed

production back in the spring. My hat is off to those of you that have mastered this level of grazing on your farms!

That’s just one of the reasons I am looking forward to NODPA’s Annual Field Days in Middlebury, Vermont in September! You will see more information on the presenters, farm field trips and schedule in this newsletter. It will be great to reconnect with everyone who can make it there. Hope to see you in September.!

*Liz Bawden, NODPA Co-President
Hammond, NY | Phone: 315-324-6926*

The 22nd Annual NODPA Field Days - September 29 & 30, 2022

Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7823, 530 Exchange St., Middlebury, VT

EARLY BIRD RATE NODPA is offering an early-bird rate for those who register by Saturday, September 17th. You can still pay in-person, if you prefer, but you must let us know that you are planning to attend (by phone, email or mail) by September 17th.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS, PLEASE SEE THE REGISTRATION FORM ON PAGE 16.



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NET UPDATE

Recent ODairy Discussions

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

There was a discussion on the best course of action to take with a torn teat on a milking cow. A number of producers had suggestions for speeding the healing of the wound while still being able to milk out the quarter to avoid compounding the problem with mastitis. A vet suggested that if milk was coming out anywhere other than at the bottom, the teat should be stitched. Others suggested the use of Transpore surgical tape or KT tape to cover the wound. Homeopathic arnica was suggested as it will help to control the swelling. And a large bore inflation was suggested to accommodate the swollen teat while milking. Calendula salve was recommended.


A farmer in northern NY who lives off the grid asked the group about passive ventilation. Midsummer heat makes it “way too hot in the barn for the animals that choose to come in to get away from the flies during the day time.” Another producer suggested an overhanging gap at the peak of the roof (Penn state style) along with side opening windows or curtains

to provide natural air convection even with little to no wind. Cupolas or chimneys with dampers were also suggested.

One farm was experiencing a large number of cases of pinkeye this year. While a case or two per year usually responds to a homeopathic nosode in the water, with wound spray in the affected eye, this year it is running through all cattle groups. One vet suggested that a culture would be very helpful because the outbreak could be complicated by mycoplasma or IBR. He reminded us that factors in a pinkeye outbreak include flies, dust, lack of shade, and low trace minerals like selenium and copper.



Another vet laid out the following strategy for treatment: “If caught early (just “weepy and sleepy” looking), any spray can be useful if applied a few times a day and the animals are kept in the dark. Definitely no exposure to continued sun. An

continued on page 31



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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

The 2023 Farm Bill – What You Can Do

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

Whether you believe what the House of Representative conservative Republican Study Committee has proclaimed in “Blow up the Farm Bill”, or that the farm bill is one of the main opportunities for stakeholders to engage on the federal policies that shape our food and agricultural system, or that it’s too slow and only for policy nerds, the negotiations for the 2023 Farm Bill in the U.S. Congress have begun. Passed every five years, the Farm Bill sets the stage for many farm support programs and SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) which have been key elements in bills that include food aid, export promotion, agricultural research, rural economic development and crop insurance. The 2023 Farm Bill might be even more complicated if the House and/or the Senate switch from Democrat control to Republican, with different committee Chairs and members.

When it comes to dairy, the assumption has been that organic dairy would benefit from the conventional programs and other general organic provisions but this year CROPP cooperative successfully advocated for one of its leading executives, Travis Forgues, to be a panelist and present testimony in person to the House Agricultural committee on dairy. CROPP’s testimony covered a broad spectrum of energy programs and an investment in conservation, plus many other areas. His testimony is available on NODPA’s website or by request.

NODPA is a member of the National Organic Coalition (NOC), Organic Farmers Association (OFA) and the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC). NODPA supports their Farm Bill platforms plus in-person advocating in Congress. These organizations represent many different interests and all help move the process of support for organics forward. Only occasionally will a priority that directly benefits only organic dairy make it to the list of priorities that these organizations necessarily have to develop from a wide variety of urgent issues – the Origin of Livestock was one case in point where that priority became one for all organic organizations.

Below is a short introduction followed by a list of priorities, as identified by NODPA for organic dairy. Why would you be interested in such boring stuff that will take a long time to work its way into practice? We received a call today from an irate woman that wanted to know why the neighboring organic dairy was using sprays and fertilizer and stopped being organic. The farmer told her it was because they were losing too much money. “But I pay more for my organic milk, she said. Organic milk is more expensive to produce. Doesn’t the government provide support?” “Why no,” we said. “Why not?” she asked. She ended

by saying that she was sorry that the farmer was telling the truth, which she wasn’t expecting, and that conditions were so dire.

The following are potential remedies that can be implemented as soon as possible to begin to address the disadvantages facing American Organic Dairy Farm Families.

- **Develop an Organic Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) Program**
- **Address the Lack of Competition in Organic Dairy:** Congress should instruct USDA to work with DOJ to investigate the effect of the lack of competition in New England and eastern New York in light of Danone’s decision to exit the region.
- **Expansion and investment in dairy processing**
- **Consistent Regulation Enforcement:** The issues around sustainability for the small to mid-size operations (80-1,000 organic cows) hang on how well the USDA’s NOP enforces the regulations. Inadequate and inconsistently implementation for regulations has allowed the supply side of organic dairy to be exploited by low cost operations that exploit loopholes.
- **Request for more detailed organic milk data to reflect the depth of information provided for non-organic milk production:** We request that the committee instruct USDA to establish mechanisms for publishing data for organic milk so that organic farmers can understand their market in ways similar to the conventional market.
- **Financially reward the good work that organic farmers are doing regarding climate change**
- **FSA/Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCSSP)**

1. Develop an Organic Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) Program
Develop a program that analyzes organic milk price and feed cost data to determine possible benefits of an organic counterpart to the existing Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) Program which has been used effectively in conventional dairy. We are asking that FSA, in coordination with NASS and AMS, use available organic price and feed data to develop an organic DMC program. To the extent possible, USDA should use organic data that is as comparable as possible to the data sets used under the DMC program. If there are data sets used for the DMC that have no comparable organic data set, we urge USDA to note that deficiency and provide analysis of the potential to start collecting those organic data.

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The 2023 Farm Bill – What You Can Do

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- o The Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) Program, developed as part of the 2018 Farm Bill, is a national risk management program that offers margin protection to dairy farmers, defined as the difference between the national all-milk price and national average feed costs. The program is particularly

targeted to benefit small-and-medium scale dairy farms, since these sized operations are the ones that are suffering the most in organic dairy. Producers can choose their level of coverage. While premiums increase based on level of

coverage chosen, those premiums are highly subsidized for a producer's first 5 million pounds of milk production annually, which is the mechanism used by Congress to target the benefits to small-and-medium-scale conventional dairy farms. Producers can buy coverage for production above the 5-million-pound threshold, but the premiums for coverage above that are significantly higher, by design.

- o The factors used to calculate the monthly margin DMC payments are the average national all-milk price minus national average feed costs (including corn, soybean meal, and alfalfa hay). The all-milk price is reported monthly by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). The corn and alfalfa hay prices are also reported monthly by the National NASS, and the soybean meal price is reported monthly by the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) uses those data to administer the DMC program.
- o Conventional and organic dairy producers are eligible for the program. However, the price factors used to calculate the margin are based on conventional prices. While in some circumstances this can be beneficial to organic producers, the current and future situation will have an adverse effect on organic dairy as the pay price is low and inputs high in organic but the conventional price has a high pay price even though inputs have increased in price. In 2022, Class 1 price is, in many cases, higher than the organic base price.



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2. Expansion and investment in dairy processing

Congress should make the investment in scale-appropriate dairy processing a priority in the 2023 Farm Bill. Investment must be made in both existing successful track-record processors who are positioned and can scale production quickly and in new scale-appropriate processing facilities to continue to develop system flexibility.

The creation of a new supply-side model for organic dairy is needed that addresses the immediate loss of milk markets for organic dairy producers and provides them with long-term sustainability. It is clear that the major dairy companies in the US are quickly moving away from rural communities in favor of more cost-effective supply chains and huge, vertically integrated operations. It has become apparent that the whole organic milk supply-side model needs to change. The current model for the supply-side of organic dairy is obsolete, with many organic dairy farms facing extinction now, and many more likely to follow. A long-term analysis of the future of organic dairy family farms will be regionally based. A new organic dairy supply-side model is needed, and a successful model will feature regionally owned, scale-appropriate facilities to process regional milk that will be sold into the regional market as a source-identified local product

that will give an adequate pay price that ensures a living wage to organic family farms in the USA.

3. Address the Lack of Competition in Organic Dairy:

Congress should instruct USDA to work with DOJ to investigate the effect of the lack of competition in New England and eastern New York in light of Danone's decision to exit the region. New remedies should be proposed 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 crisis in New England and eastern New York, caused by Danone with their Horizon brand decision to cancel their supply contracts with 89 farm families, is a vivid regional example of the impacts of consolidation that plagues the entire organic dairy sector. Previous government decisions have allowed this consolidation to worsen and should be revisited. When Danone purchased White Wave in 2017, the Department of Justice mandated 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.

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The 2023 Farm Bill – What You Can Do

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Stonyfield Organic was sold to Lactalis, the second largest dairy company in the world. Now, effectively, there is only one buyer of organic milk in New England and eastern New York: Lactalis. Lactalis purchases 80% of its total milk supply from CROPP and purchases the other 20% either directly 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.

4. Consistent Regulation Enforcement

Increase enforcement to level the playing field with consistent implementation of all regulations

Finalize the rule to crack down on organic fraud, the 'Strengthening Organic Enforcement' Rule.

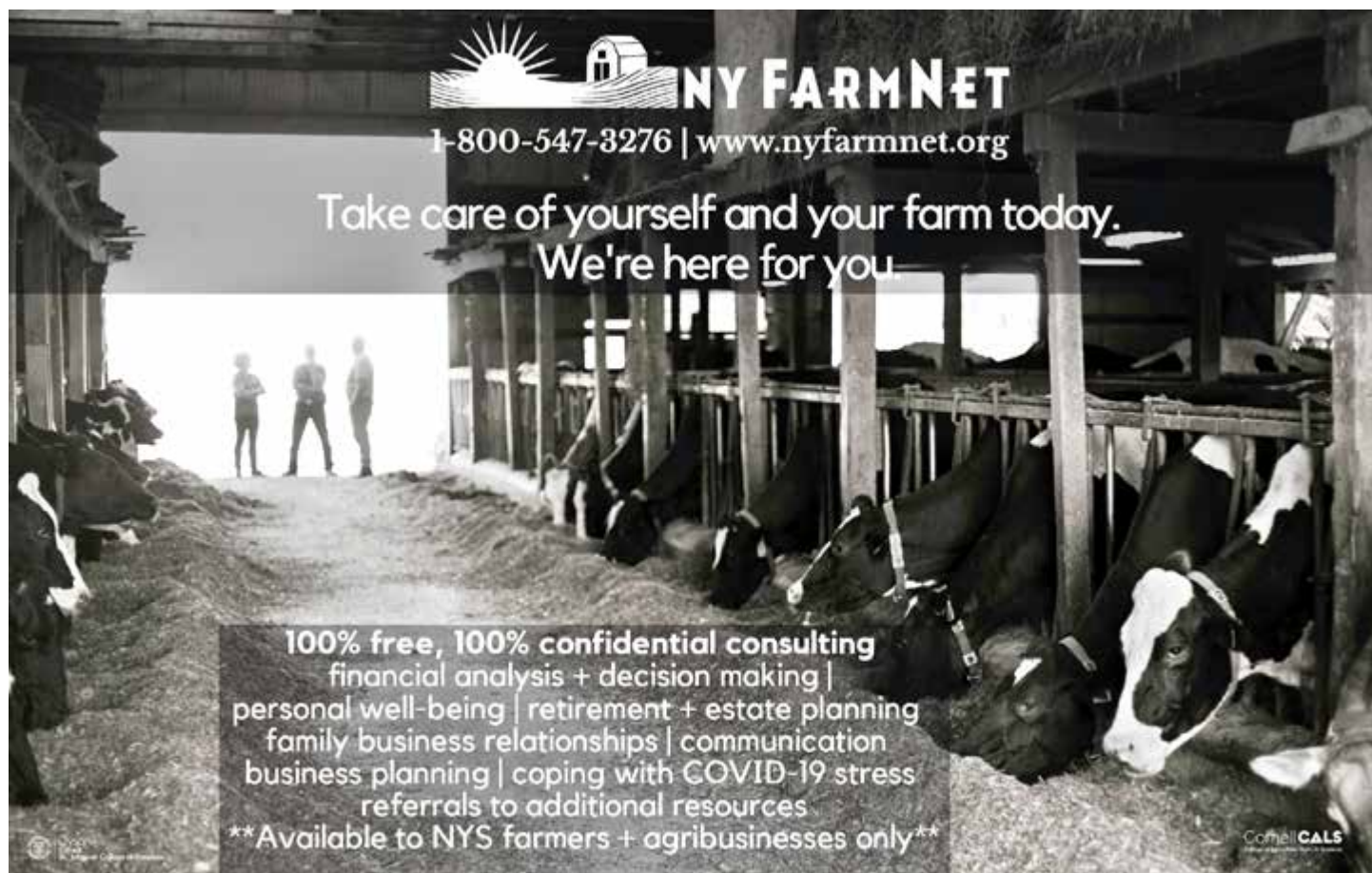
Fraudulent organic imports and domestic fraud undermines consumer confidence in the organic label and undercuts prices for U.S. organic producers. Congress required USDA to issue a final rule to strengthen organic enforcement by December 19, 2019. The comment period on the Proposed Rule ended on Oct 5, 2020. The rule is still under review by USDA.

This is unacceptable. We are asking that Congress urge USDA to move this rule forward as swiftly as possible.

Strengthen pasture rule enforcement with particular attention to high risk Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO)

Particular attention needs to be paid to the following:

- a. Certifier's inspection reports are inconsistent in detailing the growing season applicable to each operation. There is published data that reflects the growing season for each area. The operation must follow the applicable growing season rather than fall back on the minimum of 120 days.
- b. In evaluating percentage of dry matter consumption from pasture, each class of animal is required to be assessed separately.
- c. Attention needs to be paid to the crop rotation within the OSP with pasture as a crop.
- d. There is a lack of certifier/inspector expertise in evaluating the dairy rations of large-scale dairies that use sophisticated technology and teams of veterinarians/nutritionists to



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prepare reports that may be impossible for the average dairy inspector to interpret when they analyze dairy rations and tie them to production and pasture consumption. NOP needs to mandate that these dairies are inspected by highly qualified dairy nutritionists experienced in pasture management. Surprise inspections of all pasture usage on large-scale dairies during the growing season needs to be required.

- o NOP needs to continue to level the playing field in providing inspectors who can interpret the unsophisticated but honest record keeping of small-scale dairies that do not have the technology, money or time for reports to satisfy desk audits. An experienced dairy inspector can take a walk in the pastures, noting the locations of water, shade and access pathways that are well worn by animals and view the unique signs of grazing within pastures, to assist in their evaluation of meeting regulations.
- o NOP should continue its Dairy Compliance Program; NOP should provide a detailed update with information that would help identify inconsistent enforcement that may be contributing to economic disadvantages for Northeast organic dairy operations

5. Request for more detailed organic milk data to reflect the depth of information provided for non-organic milk production

We request that the committee instruct USDA to establish mechanisms for publishing data for organic milk so organic farmers can understand their market in ways similar to the conventional market.

- a. Pay price for organic dairy farmers is set either by direct marketing of products to the consumer; a personal contract with the buyer (organic brand, dairy processor or, in the case of vertically integrated organic CAFO's, retailer), or as part of a cooperative agreement as a member of a cooperative. There is a scarcity of organic data available for the farmer to make decisions on the state of the organic market, projections on potential changes in supply and demand and the value of their product.
- b. The Federal Milk Marketing Order program (FMMO) already receives data that allows them to provide information on the organic dairy sector. Statistics on dairy also are found at the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (USDA NASS) and the USDA's Economic Research Service (USDA ERS). Every

region produces a monthly statistical report that is published up to 2 months in arrears of the usage.

- c. 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 and are required to report to the FMMO. Only FMMO 1 (the Northeast order) reports some of this information in its monthly statistical reports, in limited form. The FMMO 1 Monthly Statistical Report breaks out organic Class I fluid volumes for Whole Milk and Reduced Fat Milk (2%), which limits how the report can be used. 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 Order and marketplace.
- d. USDA Dairy Programs asserts that it only has the statutory authority to collect Class I (fluid milk) data in the detail necessary to separate milk produced under organic production. We request that the Committee instruct USDA to identify this deficiency and provide analysis of the potential to start collecting that organic data for all Orders.

The collection of the following data is within the statutory authority of the FMMO but is not published on a regular basis:

- a) Utilization of organic Fluid Milk products and cream from Producer Receipts and Other Sources: Class I milk:
 - i. Marketing Area;
 - ii. Other Federal Markets;

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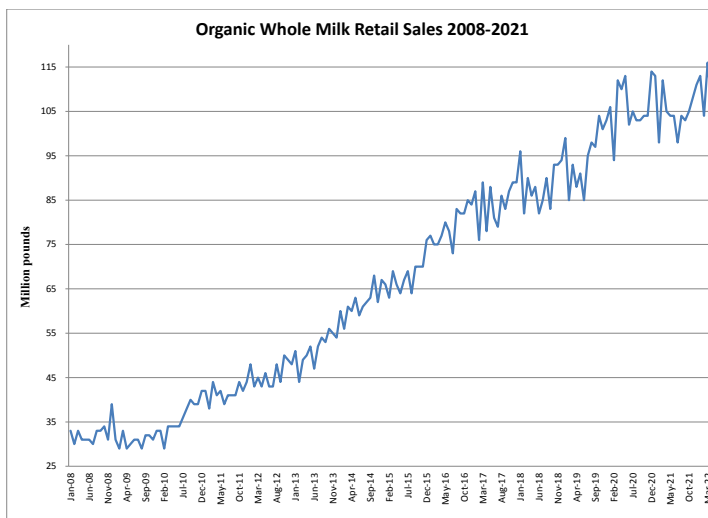
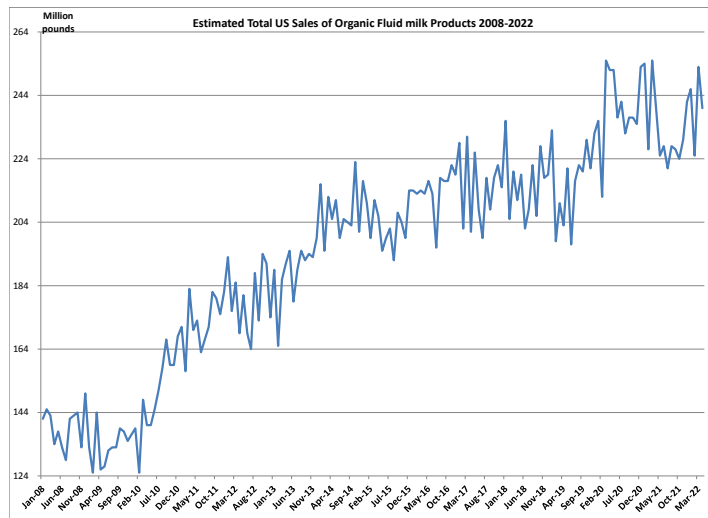
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Pay And Feed Prices July/August 2022

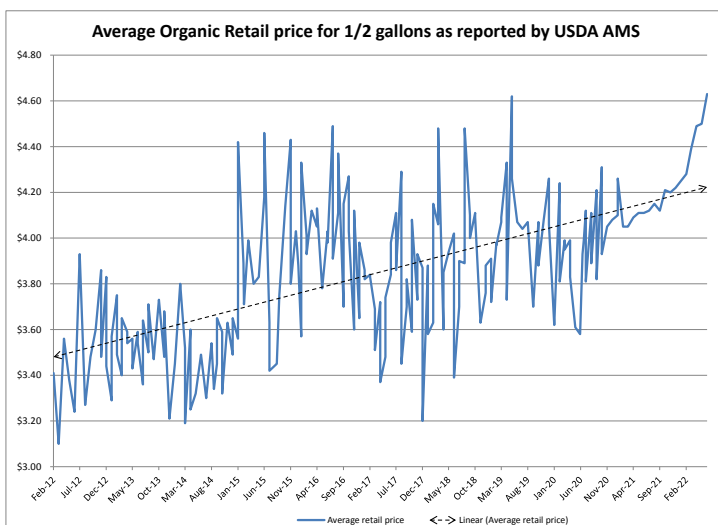
By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

In April 2022, the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service estimated that sales of both conventional and organic milk fell in comparison to the same period in 2021, by 2% and 3.4% percent, respectively. Sales of organic Whole Milk and organic Fat Reduced Milk, in April 2022, saw a decrease over April 2021, with sales of 107 million pounds for organic Whole Milk, a drop of 3.3%, and sales of 131 million pounds of Fat Reduced Milk, a drop of 3.4%. The retail price of organic packaged milk has jumped, with a national average of \$4.63 for half gallon, with a high of \$6.39 and a low of \$3.84. These prices may not be reflective of actual prices but are collected by the Federal Milk Marketing Order between the 1st and 10th of each month but brands, including Organic Valley and Maple Hill have said they would be raising retail prices to cover the business costs. The retailer sets the final retail price.

Estimated Total Sales of Organic Fluid Milk Products for April 2022

| Product Name | Sales of Organic Fluid Milk | | Change from | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------|--------------|
| | Apr-22 | 2022 Year to date | Apr-21 | Year to date |
| | Million pounds | | Percent | |
| Organic Whole Milk | 107 | 440 | -3.3% | -1.4 |
| Flavored Whole milk | 2 | 7 | -9.4% | 5.6 |
| Organic Reduced Fat Milk (2%) | 86 | 332 | -0.1% | -4.3 |
| Organic Low Fat Milk (1%) | 24 | 100 | -9.9% | -11.8 |
| Organic Fat Free Milk Skim | 14 | 59 | -9.5% | -6.1 |
| Organic Flavored Fat-Reduced Milk | 7 | 25 | -6.7% | -16.9 |
| Other Fluid Organic Milk Products | 0 | 0 | 0.0% | 0 |
| Total Fat Reduced Milk | 131 | 516 | -3.4% | -6.7 |
| Total Organic Milk Products | 240 | 964 | -3.4 | -4.3 |

In the Northeast Federal Milk Marketing Order 1, the utilization of organic fluid milk in April 2022 was 15 percent above April 2021, and in May 2022, the utilization of organic milk was 3% above May 2021. The utilization of organic milk in the first 5 months of 2022 was higher than 2021 and 2020, the years before and during the shutdown due to COVID restrictions. As we have written before, it's increasingly difficult to estimate the real utilization of organic milk in the northeast because there are so few large manufacturers of organic yogurt in the order that it would be a conflict of proprietary knowledge for USDA to publish that data. Stonyfield/Lactalis yogurt and manufacturing dominates this



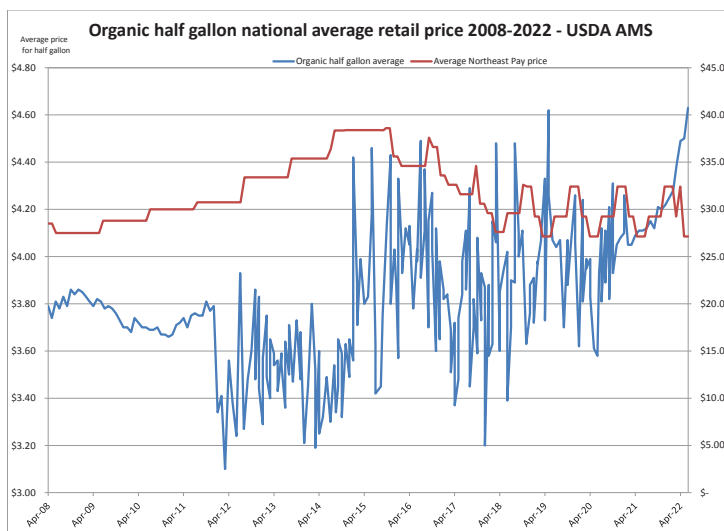
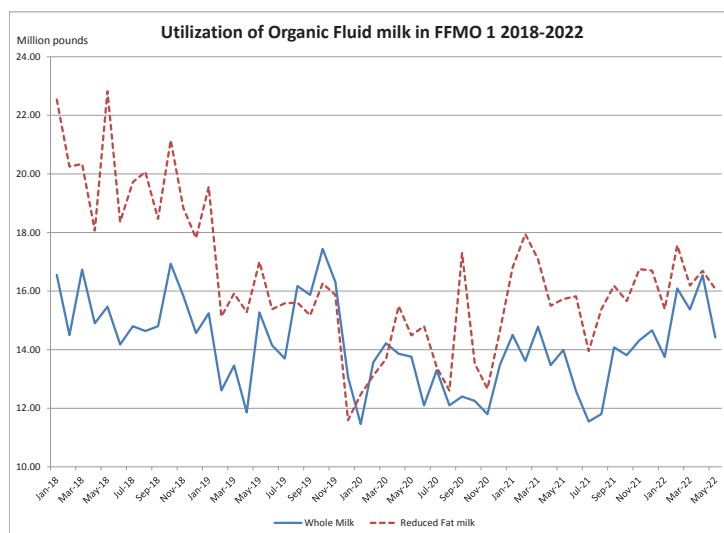
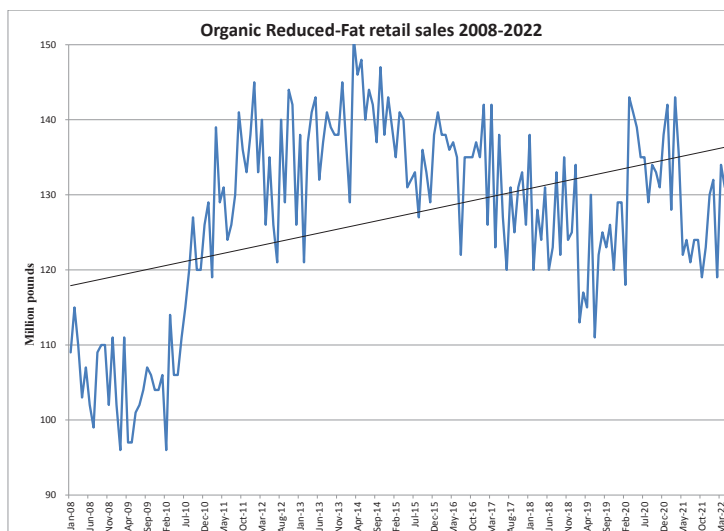
ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

area. There is still no reporting of the breakdown of organic milk that comes from outside the Federal Order, which would be significant information for producers in the Northeast.

Utilization of Organic Fluid Milk Products and Cream by Northeast Pool Plants (Million Pounds)

| UTILIZATION OF ORGANIC FLUID MILK PRODUCTS BY POOL PLANTS (Million pounds) | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| | Fluid retail Organic Milk 2022 | Fluid retail Organic Milk 2021 | Fluid retail Organic Milk 2020 | Increase/ Decrease of 2022 over 2021 | Increase/ Decrease of 2021 over 2020 |
| JANUARY | 29.14 | 31.32 | 23.93 | -7% | 31% |
| FEBRUARY | 33.65 | 31.56 | 26.69 | 7% | 18% |
| MARCH | 31.56 | 31.87 | 27.90 | -1% | 14% |
| APRIL | 33.23 | 28.97 | 29.35 | 15% | -1% |
| MAY | 30.49 | 29.72 | 28.25 | 3% | 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% |
| DECEMBER | | 31.36 | 28.13 | | 11% |
| ANNUAL | 158.07 | 356.68 | 322.50 | | 11% |

The news from CROPP Cooperative that affects the northeast is that their reserve pool has been closed, meaning all farmers that were in it are now full members with the full regional pay. Those farmers that are scheduled to be starting up the agreement with CROPP on or about August 1st will be starting as full members with no reserve pool utilization pay. This is because CROPP has been able to utilize all their milk and the CROPP Board has decided that the risk is very low to current members. The strong utilization has enabled the Board and management to move more quickly than they anticipated with giving full membership to all new



continued on page 12

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Pay And Feed Prices

continued from page 11

member-owners. Travis Forgues (Executive Vice President of Membership) commented: “We continue to work on returning dollars back to the membership, and the board is looking at our performance month-to-month, to see if there is room to move. At this stage, the board has decided to stay stable and not move price, as we are not outpacing our meager profit goals at the moment, and the risks outweigh the benefits. That being said, everyone is keenly aware of the challenges in the countryside and we continue to look for ways to move more dollars to our membership.”

Producers and Lancaster Farming have reported that Maple Hill is taking on some organic dairies in New York which are strategically placed to provide organic milk for the recently retooled infant formula facility, ByHeart Inc. The company purchased the Reading, PA, plant in 2019 and has an additional \$26 million in plant upgrades. ByHeart’s proprietary formula is more than 70% dairy, with organic, grass-fed whole milk as its primary ingredient. The company was already a customer of Maple Hill.

Pete Hardin, publisher of Milkweed, reported further consolidation in the dairy industry with the purchase of eastern NY milk hauling company Greene Trucking, Inc.(GTI) by Dairy Farmers of America (DFA). It is uncertain what will happen to existing customers of GTI and how the new owners will support trucking of milk from non DFA members. Pete Hardin reports that non-members of GTI must join DFA or find another hauler by July 1, 2022.

Danone/Horizon continues on their trail of making life more difficult for small to mid-size organic family farms. In a letter dated June 13th 2022, they devoted 10 pages to explain the standards for milk quality and the process toward termination after first fining the producer for not meeting their standards. To receive any bonuses Danone still requires the producer to meet all its quality requirements which now number a total

of 5: Standard Plate Count (SPC) <8,000/ml, PI Count (PI) <35,000/ml, Somatic Cell Count (SCC) <235,000/ml, and Lab Pasteurized Count (LPZ) <300/ml. The chart below shows the different tiers for paying quality bonuses – miss one and any bonus drops down to the lower bonus. The second chart is for a deduction for average to poor quality milk.

Payment incentives

| TEST | Tier1 (\$3.00/cwt total) | Tier 2 (\$2.00/cwt total) | Tier 3 (\$1.00/cwt total) | Tier 4 (\$0.50 /cwt total) |
|------|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| SPC | <2,000/ ml. | < 3,000 /ml. | <5,000 / ml. | <8,000 / ml. |
| PI | <10,000 / ml. | < 15,000 /ml. | < 25,000 / ml. | < 35,000 / ml. |
| SCC | < 125,000/ ml. | <160,000 / ml. | <200,000 / ml. | < 235,000 / ml. |
| LPC | < 300 / ml. | < 300/ ml. | <300/ ml. | <300/ ml. |

Quality Deduction

| TEST | Result for the month | Deduction/Calendar Month/cwt |
|------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| SPC | >50,000/ml avg. | -\$0.50 / cwt |
| PI | >100,000 ml. avg. | -\$0.50 / cwt |
| SCC | >400,000/ml. avg. | - \$1.00 / cwt |
| Cryoscope* | >1 test or >-0.530 | -\$0.50 / cwt |

*Test for water in milk by freeze temperature

Federal regulations require that bacteria and somatic cell counts of Grade “A” raw milk not exceed **100,000 Standard Plate Count (SPC) and 750,000 Somatic Cell Count (SCC), respectively.

Other standards that producers must meet are Grade A standards, be enrolled and in good standing with the Farmers Assuring Responsible Management (FARM), complete a third-party audit for Buyer’s Quality and Care Program, uphold and comply with the Humane Practice & Quality and Care Program, have a functional properly installed and calibrated temperature recorder, and, of course, be organically certified. While the contract of other buyers are not published, NODPA’s informed research shows that Danone contracts are the most difficult for producers to achieve and that the buyer is giving themselves plenty of opportunity to end the contract or deduct from the pay price.

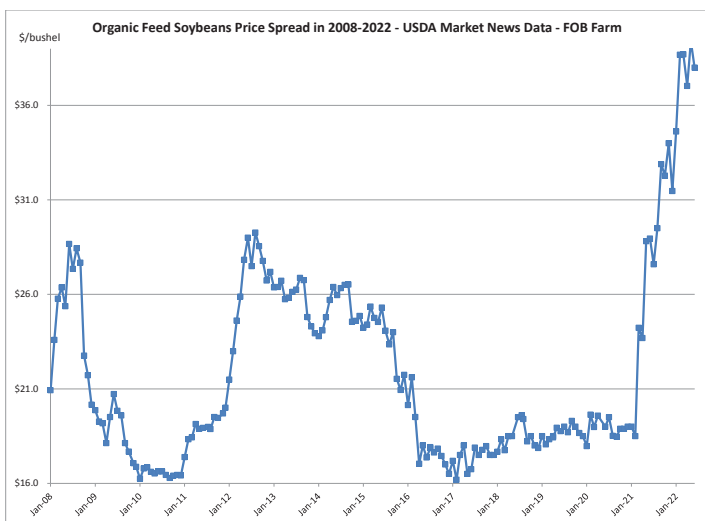
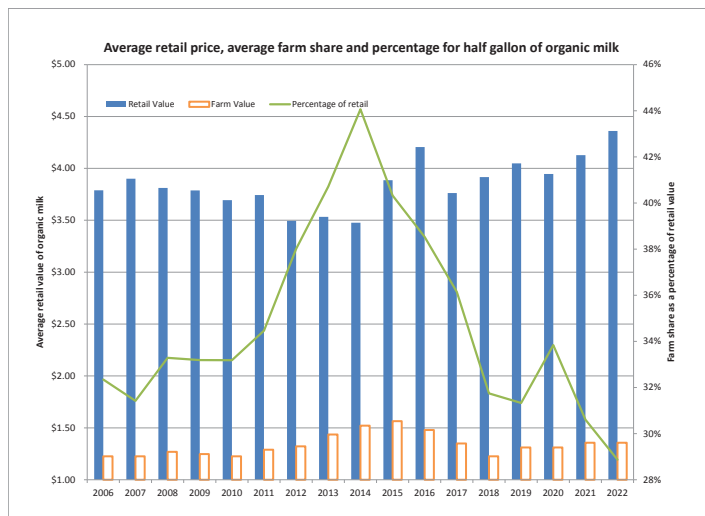
Stonyfield’s Save Gen F program

In an article in the Dairy Reporter, Katy Askew quotes Stonyfield Farmer Relationship Manager Jason Johnson as saying, “We are facing a uniquely challenging moment for organic dairy farmers in the northeast, where the cost of production is at an all-time high and pressure on farms is

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

further intensified through the lack of local processing in New England and the growth of large organic dairy farms in the west leading to an oversupply of organic milk.” The article further quotes Johnson as clearly outlining the problems for organic and conventional dairy industry in the northeast. As an answer to these very real problems, from generational transfer to capital for new entrants and the need for increased diversity, he is quoted as saying that Lactalis donated \$100,000 to the Northeast Organic Family Farm Partnership for promotion of organic; they have extended contracts for better cash flow projections; and provide producers tech tools for collecting data and decision making related to soil health and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. He misses one of the key points: a pay price that is clearly many dollars short of breaking even. If the income does not match the expense there is no sustainability and no new entrants. I have no data but it is a rational conclusion that Stonyfield is the biggest consumer of raw organic milk in New England. Stonyfield is owned by Lactalis one of the largest dairy companies in the world. Given the size and market reach, Lactalis should be a leader in the market and pay a fair pay price for raw milk to their 34 farms and to the Northeast CROPP farms that supply them. It’s a little too simple but they are the good guys and seen by consumers as doing good works.

There is no encouraging good news on the feed front. Purchased feed continues to be expensive. Making your own forage is expensive in diesel and other inputs. If you are in an area that has had a good balance between rain and sun, then your grazing may be up to standard but many have had extremes of both with reports of muddy fields and drought conditions. Midwest soybeans are \$39 FOB the farm and corn is a little better at \$11.68. ♦



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NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance



The 22nd Annual NODPA Field Days

Organic Dairy: What's Next?

continued from page 1

with COVID's newest variant always in the background, we are planning a safe, healthy event and welcome you all.

While everyone across America seems to be impacted by the current high prices, supply side delays, and economic downturns, organic dairy farm families are even more impacted. Many farmers are asking how they can continue to feed grain with the astronomical price for it; they wonder what practices can be adjusted to keep their cows healthy without costing too much; and how do they figure out how to manage their farms based on the cost of production vs. what the current pay price is. It is, indeed, a challenging year.

At 8:30 am, Thursday, September 29th, we gather at Severy Farm, 6039 Route 30, Cornwall, VT 05753 for a tour of Nate Severy's grass based organic dairy farm that he operates with his wife and two young children. Nate assumed full ownership of the farm business from his father in 2021. Please see the featured farm article about Severy Farm in this issue for more information.

Registration and lunch will follow at noon at the NODPA Field Days meeting site, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 7823 in Middlebury, and workshops start at 1:00 pm. In the first session, Heather Darby, Sara Ziegler, and Bill Kipp will address the impact of high grain and inputs' costs, and offer strategies to help you maintain cow health and good production levels.

Producer meetings always circle around to how organic dairy farmers can achieve a sustainable pay price in order to support their families and farms. The next workshop examines a variety of models that might be employed to develop a sustainable pay price for organic dairy. A panel of experts with a depth of knowledge on



these models will share their ideas and strategies, and participate in a discussion with the audience.

During the summer of 2021, 89 Horizon/Danone organic dairy producers had their contracts terminated, and in the past year, there's been a lot of activity to address the situation. In this next session, those people actively involved will give a review and update on the current developments and initiatives that have grown out of this crisis.

Late Thursday afternoon, everyone gets a chance to relax a bit with the Social Hour and the opportunity to visit the trade show that will be full of the many businesses and organizations that support the organic dairy industry. It's also a great opportunity to catch up with old friends and make new ones. The dinner banquet and NODPA's Annual Meeting take place at 6:00 pm.

We are honored to have long-time organic dairy farmer and organic dairy advocate, Jim Goodman delivering the keynote presentation, "Now that I No Longer Milk Cows..." Jim, who is Board President of the National Family Farm Coalition, will offer his views and

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FARM CREDIT EAST



LAKEVIEW
ORGANIC
GRAIN

The 22nd Annual **NODPA Field Days**

perspective on organic dairy, the regenerative label, current competition, and much more. There will be plenty of time for questions and discussion.

Friday starts early with the Producer-Only Meeting at 7:00 am, preceded by continental breakfast at 6:30 am. Breakfast will be available for all other attendees until 9:00 am when the educational program begins.

Friday morning's workshops start out looking at the current costs of organic dairy production, with discussion from a farmer panel about how they make it work when the cost of production is higher than current pay price. NOFA-VT's Farmer Services director, Jen Miller, will share results from her Cost of Production research that NODPA featured in the May 2022 NODPA

News. Sarah Flack, Independent Dairy Consultant, will facilitate the panel and add her insights on how farmers can manage with these conditions. There will be additional time for everyone to share their thoughts on this very important topic.

Closing out the morning session will be two veterinarians, Dr. Dayna Locitzer and Dr. Elizabeth Martens, heading up our ever popular session, Ask the Vets. This Q & A session will include time for audience participation and will accept written questions ahead of time.

The educational portion of the 22nd Annual NODPA Field Days closes with lunch and final announcements. Afterward, everyone will head over to Harrison's Homegrown Organic Dairy Farm in nearby Addison where Melanie and Patrick Harrison will lead a tour of their farm. The Harrison's are well

continued on page 16

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NODPA

Thanks all of our Sponsors,
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22nd Annual
NODPA Field Days

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* Trade Show

^ Food Donation

September 29 & 30, 2022
Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7823
530 Exchange Street, Middlebury, VT

REGISTRATION FORM**The 22nd Annual NODPA Field Days
and Producer Meeting
and Dinner****Early Bird
Rates Until
September 17th!**

| COST | | QTY | TOTAL |
|-------|---------|-----|-------|
| Early | On-Site | | |

REGISTRATION: Thursday & Friday

| | | | |
|---|------|------|-----|
| Organic dairy & transitioning dairy producers | FREE | | \$0 |
| All who aren't organic dairy producers | \$35 | \$50 | \$ |

MEALS: Thursday & Friday

| | | | | |
|---|------------------------|------|--|-----|
| Thursday lunch for Adults | \$10 | \$15 | | \$ |
| Thursday lunch (under 11) | \$5 | \$10 | | \$ |
| Thursday dinner for Adults | \$25 | \$35 | | \$ |
| Thursday dinner (under 11) | \$12.50 | \$15 | | \$ |
| Transitioning farm member. Thursday evening dinner | Free | | | \$0 |
| Friday breakfast (7:30-9am) | \$5 | \$10 | | \$ |
| Friday lunch | \$10 | \$15 | | \$ |
| NODPA NEWS SUBSCRIPTION (6 issues) | \$50 | | | \$ |
| DONATION TO NODPA | \$_____ | | | \$ |
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<https://nodpa.com/x/7/22nd-Annual-NODPA-Field-Days-Registration>

The 22nd Annual NODPA Field Days

Organic Dairy: What's Next?*continued from page 15*

known and respected for their forage management strategies, as well as many innovative practices.

Take Advantage of the Early Bird Rates!

Are you planning to come to the 22nd Annual NODPA Field Days? Would you like to save some money? **You can take advantage of the Early Bird rates by registering no later than Saturday, September 17th.** If it's more convenient, you can pay when you arrive on-site but we must hear from you by the early bird rate deadline in order to get the money-saving rates. This year, with higher prices for everything, we'd like to be able to offer you 2015 NODPA Field Days prices! So, please register early! Details and the registration form are on page 17, plus the NODPA Field Days brochure will be in your mailbox in the next week.

Final Details

Once again, NODPA is keeping the costs of attending Field Days as low as possible, with free registration for all farmers and their families, and a minimal registration fee for non-farmers, with only the cost of meals passed along. We are grateful for our sponsors, supporters, and trade show participants for helping us keep the costs low, and for their ongoing support for NODPA's work. Please be sure to visit all of them at the trade show!

Lodging

There are many options for lodging in or near Middlebury. It is booking up fast as tourists plan for the fall leaf-peeking season, so you are encouraged to make plans now rather than waiting until September. A Google search or your favorite travel site is the best place to start. These days, cancellation policies are pretty flexible, so keep that in mind if you aren't totally sure you will be able to attend. In addition to hotels, inns, camping and RV sites, VRBO (www.vrbo.com) and Airbnb (www.airbnb.com) offer vacation rentals, ranging from single rooms to whole houses; there are even Yurts on organic farms offered!

Finally, due to the rise of the different variations of COVID, we encourage everyone to be vaccinated and boosted, and we will have masks and hand sanitizer on hand for anyone that prefers to use them, and we will follow all requirements from the state of Vermont.

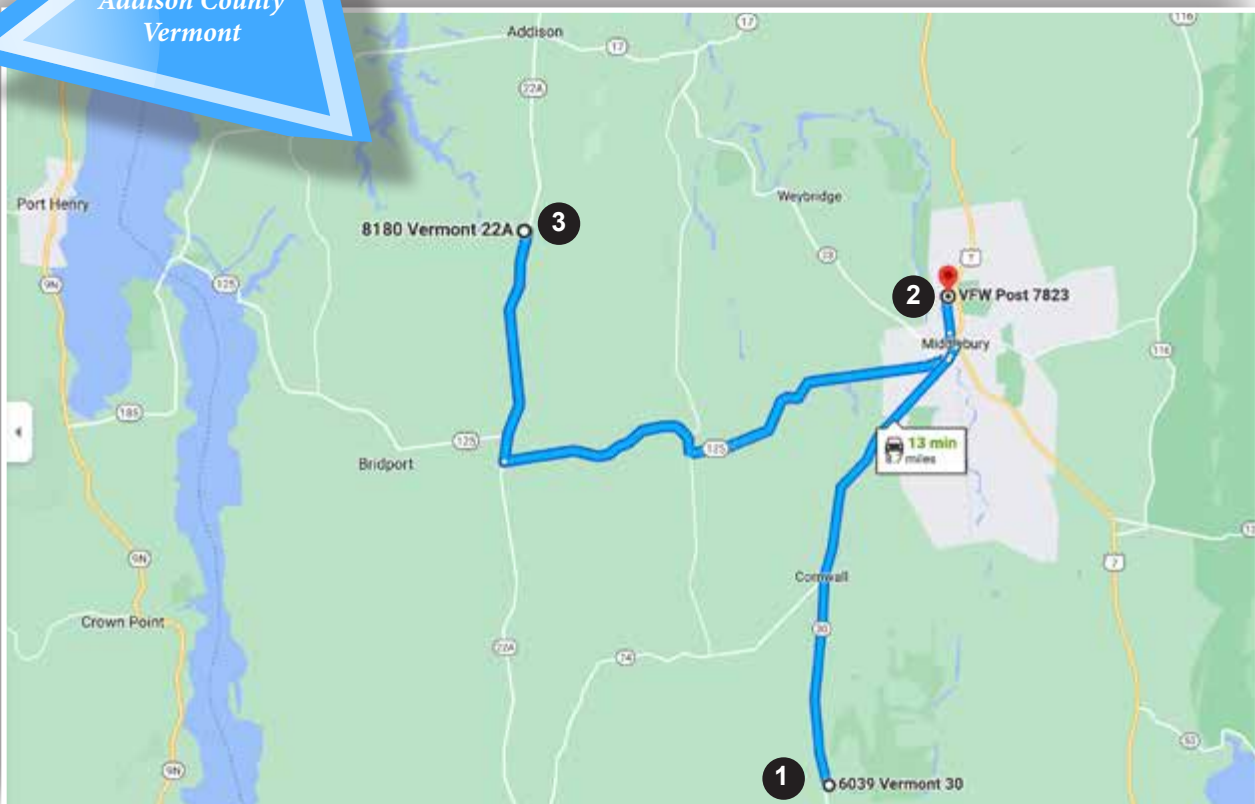
We hope to see you at the 22nd Annual NODPA Field Days in Vermont on September 29th and 30th. Please contact Nora Owens, NODPA Field Days Coordinator, if you have questions or to register early. Please call 413-772-0444, if you reach the voicemail, please leave a message, or email her at noraowens@comcast.net. ♦

The 22nd Annual **NODPA Field Days**



*Locations in
Addison County
Vermont*

- 1** Thursday morning's Farm Tour will be held at **Severy Farm**, 6039 VT Route 30 in Cornwall, VT. (See map below)
- 2** The NODPA Field Days program will be held at the centrally located **Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7823**, 530 Exchange Street, Middlebury, VT
- 3** Friday afternoon's Farm Tour will be at **Harrison's Homegrown Organic Dairy Farm**, 8180 VT 22A, Addison, VT.



The 22nd Annual NODPA Field Days Schedule

Thursday, September 29, 2022

8:30-11:30 am ***Farm Tour: Severy Farm, 6039 Route 30, Cornwall, VT 05753***

Noon - 1:00 pm **Registration and Lunch**
Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7823,
530 Exchange Street, Middlebury, VT

1:00 - 2:30 ***Best Nutrition Strategies at Times of High Grain and Input Costs***

Sara Ziegler, Soils and Crops Coordinator, UVM Extension, Heather Darby, Agronomic and Soils Specialist and Extension Professor, UVM Extension, and Bill Kipp, Nutritionist and Dairy Consultant, Independent Dairy Consultants, Inc., Middlebury, VT

2:30 - 2:45 **Break**

2:45- 4:00 ***Strategies for a Sustainable Pay Price for Organic Dairy - What could work: Supply Management? State & Federal Subsidies? Retail Subsidies? Producer Controlled Branded Product?***

Panel Discussion with: Jim Goodman and Siena Chrisman, National Family Farm Coalition; Tade Sullivan (Maine Dairy Industry Association (MDIA), Dan Smith, New England Dairy Compact author; Sharad Mathur, DFA

4:00 - 5:00 ***Organic Dairy Producers' Contract Termination: How the Organic Dairy Community is responding: A review and update on the current developments and initiatives focused on this issue, including:***

- NY-NE Organic Dairy Consortium:
NY-NE Organic Dairy Processing Plant
– Daniel Moran
- DBIC grant to NODPA and NOFA VT
– Ed Maltby
- Northeast Organic Family Farm Partnership
– Olga Moriarty (invited)
- ALLPUR Nutrition Inc. Innovative Dairy Beverages – Mary Ann Clark, CEO
- Maine Organic Milk Producers
– Annie Watson, President, (invited)

5:00 – 6:00 **Social Hour**

6:00 – 7:30 **NODPA Annual Meeting and Banquet**
Liz Bawden and Kirk Arnold, NODPA Board Co-Presidents, and Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

7:30 – 9:00 ***Keynote Presentation: "Now That I No Longer Milk Cows..." Views and perspective on organic dairy, the regenerative label, competition, and much more with Jim Goodman, Board President, National Family Farm Coalition and retired organic dairy farmer***

9:00 pm **Program ends**



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The 22nd Annual NODPA Field Days

Schedule

Friday, September 30, 2022

- 6:30 – 9:00 am **Continental Breakfast:**
Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7823,
530 Exchange Street, Middlebury, VT
- 7:00 – 9:00 ***Producer-only Meeting: A meeting in which producers can speak freely about all things related to the organic dairy industry***
- 9:00 – 10:45 ***Cost of Production: How the numbers impact current and future organic dairy operations***
Presenters: Jen Miller, Farmer Services Director, NOFA-VT, Sarah Flack, Independent Dairy Consultant and Author, Farmer Panel: Sebastien Latraverse, Spring Brook Farm, Westfield, VT, Kirk Arnold, Twin Oaks Dairy, Truxton, NY, and Sarah Boutin, Happy Cow Farm, Newport, VT (invited).
- 10:45 – 11:00 **Break**
- 11:00 – 12:00 pm ***Ask the Vet: Come with all your cow care questions for this Q&A and Discussion***

Presenters: Dayna Locitzer, DVM, Green Mountain Bovine Clinic, Chesterfield, NH and Elizabeth Martens, DVM, Valleywide Veterinary Services, Bridport, VT
- 12:00 – 1:15 pm **Lunch and final announcements**
- 1:15 – 1:30 **Travel to Harrison's Homegrown Organic Dairy Farm, 8180 Vermont Route 22A, Addison, VT 05491**
- 1:30 pm ***Farm Tour: Harrison's Homegrown Organic Dairy Farm, Melanie and Patrick Harrison***

Farm Tours

Nate and Kerianne Severy, Severy Farm, LLC Cornwall, VT

Nate and Kerianne Severy own Severy Farm LLC, a 60-milking head 100% grass-fed organic dairy farm and Kings AgriSeeds seed dealership located in Cornwall VT. We strive to produce high quality products that nourish, protect, and enhance the people, animals, and ecosystem that we serve in a manner that is forward thinking and preserves the heritage, traditions, and history of our community. Milk is sold to both Organic Valley for fluid milk, and to Champlain Creamery for Artisanal Cheese. The Severy's recently bought the cattle and equipment from Nate's father and are working on the final details of buying 125 acres of the family's main farm where Nate grew up.



Melanie and Patrick Harrison, Harrison's Homegrown Organic Dairy Farm Addison VT

Patrick and Melanie Harrison manage 900 acres of forages, milk 180 Jersey cows and raise 150 heifers in Addison, Vermont. Since transitioning to organic in 2012, their goal of producing high quality forages has meant focusing on building fertility and improving sward density and composition while managing compaction on their heavy clay soils of the Champlain Valley.



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The 22nd Annual **NODPA Field Days**

Organic Dairy: What's Next? **September 29 & 30, 2022**

Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7823 • 530 Exchange Street, Middlebury, VT

Speaker Spotlight

Workshop name: Best Nutrition Strategies at Times of High Grain and Input Costs

SARA ZIEGLER

Sara Ziegler is a research specialist focused on perennial and annual forage production and pasture management with UVM Extension's Northwest Crops and Soils Team. She works closely with farmers on developing and maintaining nutrient management plans and manages several research projects focused on organic and grass-fed dairy systems.



HEATHER DARBY

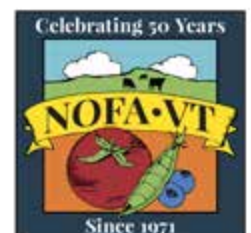
Dr. Heather Darby is an Agronomist and Soils Specialist with UVM Extension. She has worked collaboratively with organic dairy farmers over the last 19 years to develop and deliver relevant forage and soil research to the organic community.



BILL KIPP

Nutritionist and Dairy Consultant with Independent Dairy Consultants, Inc., Middlebury, VT

Supporters



The 22nd Annual NODPA Field Days

Speaker Spotlight

Workshop: Strategies for a Sustainable Pay Price for Organic Dairy

SHARAD MATHUR

Sharad Mathur worked for Dairy Marketing Services (DMS) and Dairy Farmers of America (DFA – Northeast Area) for over twenty years; recently retiring from his full time position as Chief Operating Officer; now serving part-time as Director, Operations and Projects, where he is involved in mentoring the younger generation and overseeing special projects.



Prior to DMS & DFA, Mr. Mathur worked at Parmalat for two years and had full responsibility of purchasing all raw milk for the company. Prior to Parmalat, he spent eighteen years with the Sunnydale Farms in Brooklyn, NY and rose to the position of Chief Financial Officer after holding a variety of positions in finance, procurement, and production. Earlier, he was part of the Team at Sunnydale Farms that created and marketed Natural By Nature Organic products.

JIM GOODMAN

(Also Keynote Speaker),
National Family Farm Coalition
Board President

Jim Goodman is a retired organic dairy farmer, board member of Family Farm Defenders, and board president of National Family Farm Coalition.



SIENA CHRISMAN

National Family Farm Coalition
Communications Advisor

Siena has been an advocate for family farmers for nearly 15 years. She is a freelance writer and editor whose work has appeared in publications including Civil Eats, Modern Farmer, Edible Brooklyn, and has worked as a research consultant for Farm Aid, Real Food Challenge, Illinois Stewardship Alliance, and other local and national farmer organizations.



TADE SULLIVAN

Theodore ‘Tade’ Sullivan, executive director of The Maine Dairy Industry Association (MDIA), is a recognized expert in the US Farm Bill, Renewable Energy, and Federal Crop Insurance. Tade has over 20 years’ experience in lobbying and public affairs, specializing in advocating for our nation’s farm families in private practice, agricultural trade associations, and government, and has been involved in the development of significant legislation on behalf of our nation’s farmers, including portions of the US Farm Bill.



DAN SMITH

Dan Smith served as founding Executive Director of the Northeast Dairy Compact Commission, April 1996 through May, 1998, and served as the Commission’s Executive Director and General Counsel until the expiration of the Compact. He served as the lead staff person for the Northeast Interstate Dairy Compact Committee, which oversaw the interstate adoption and Congressional approval of the Dairy Compact. He is a lawyer in private practice in Montpelier VT.

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September 29 & 30, 2022

Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7823 • 530 Exchange Street, Middlebury, VT

The 22nd Annual
NODPA Field Days

Speaker Spotlight

Workshop: Cost of Production: How the Numbers Impact Current and Future Organic Dairy Operations

JEN MILLER

Jen Miller is the Farmer Services Director at NOFA-Vermont, and authors the annual Cost of Production on Vermont Organic Dairy Farms which is featured in the NODPA News each year.



SARAH FLACK

Sarah is an author, consultant, and speaker specializing in grass-based livestock farming systems. She is passionate about helping farmers find ways to be financially viable while caring for both their land and livestock. She lives on the farm she grew up on in Northern Vermont where she is surrounded by pastures, wetlands, forests, livestock and wildlife.



Farmer Panel:

KIRK ARNOLD

Twin Oaks Dairy, Truxton, NY and Co-president, NODPA Board

Kirk Arnold has been a partner in Twin Oaks Dairy LLC for 10 years and is the third generation on the farm. His focus on the farm is the cropping and the machinery side of the business along with farm and pasture infrastructure.



SEBASTIEN LATRAVERSE

Spring Brook Farm, Westfield, VT



September 29 & 30, 2022

Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7823 • 530 Exchange Street, Middlebury, VT

The 22nd Annual NODPA Field Days

Speaker Spotlight

Workshop: Ask the Vet

DAYNA LOCITZER, DVM

Dr. Dayna Locitzer has over 10 years' experience working with pasture-based dairies in the Northeast. She currently works as a large animal veterinarian at Green Mountain Bovine Clinic in Chesterfield, N.H. and worked on organic dairy farms in New York's Hudson Valley for 6 years before starting veterinary school.



ELIZABETH MARTENS, DVM

Dr. Martens grew up on an organic farm in the Finger Lakes region of New York. She attended Cornell University for her Bachelor's degree in Animal Science and then went to Panama for 2 years as an agriculture volunteer with the Peace Corps. She completed her Veterinary degree from Cornell in 2020 and has been working as a dairy veterinarian in Addison County ever since.



Keynote Speaker



JIM GOODMAN

National Family Farm Coalition Board President

He and his wife, Rebecca, ran a 45-cow organic dairy and direct-market beef farm in southwest Wisconsin for 40 years. His farming roots trace back to his great-grandparents immigration from Ireland during the famine and the farm's original purchase in 1848. A farm activist, Jim credits more years of failed farm, trade and social policy than he cares to think about as his motivation to advocate for a farmer-controlled, consumer-oriented food system.

Jim is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Platteville with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Animal Science. He also holds a Masters Degree in Reproductive Physiology from South Dakota State University.

September 29 & 30, 2022

Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7823 • 530 Exchange Street, Middlebury, VT

FEATURED FARM



Caleb Severy in front of round bales

**SEVERY FARM,
CORNWALL, VT***continued from page 1*

farmhouse, and are working out the final details for purchasing the home and the main farmland from Nate's parents in the coming months.

The family farm was established by Nate's father, Joseph in 1975, when he was only 20 years old. Joseph grew up on a neighboring dairy farm, and was eager to begin his own dairy. Nate explained that back then, the dairy industry was actively recruiting young farmers, offering them assistance and mentoring, and lenders were eager to work with new dairy farmers. "It was a different time," he said.

Although the herd was conventional, Joseph stopped growing corn in the mid 1980s. Instead, the cows were fed haylage, alfalfa silage, and some dry hay with a bit of purchased grains. They were outside grazing at nights by that point too, and Joe was experimenting with grazing during the day as well. The farm's registered Holsteins had top herd averages in the county during the 1990s, even while most other conventional herds were being fed corn silage-based diets and confined to the barn.

In the early 2000s, several Jersey cows were purchased with high quality genetic lineages, and the transition to an all-Jersey herd began. By 2005, Nate's father had decided to transition to

certified organic production. The transition to organic was a natural progression, as the herd had been a grazing herd for quite some time, with the cows brought into the barn only for milking during the grazing season. They were already producing well on a low grain diet. The only real difference in management after certifying as organic was no longer utilizing antibiotics and dry cow treatments and switching to homeopathic remedies, which was "a bit of a learning curve," Nate said.

Succession Planning

Nate and Kerianne met at the University of Maine, and married in 2013. Nate worked for the Vermont Association of Conservation Districts in St. Albans while also working part-time on a small dairy farm. A year later, the young couple had the opportunity to move closer to Cornwall. Nate did agronomy outreach for UVM Extension, promoting reduced tillage and cover cropping to farmers, and started working for his father part-time. In 2017, he and Kerianne formed an LLC with his parents to buy shares in the farm. Nate stopped working for UVM, and by 2019 was full-time at the farm, too.

The original plan was to purchase a few shares in the farm each year. Instead, they purchased a house in need of renovation in Salisbury, and spent five years making improvements on the home so they could sell the house and use the money to buy the dairy business - the cows and the equipment- and some real estate. That plan came to life spring of 2021 and they began renting a home in Middlebury while the families sorted out a land and house purchase agreement.

FEATURED FARM

They worked with Jen Miller of the Vermont Farm Viability Program on the sale of the farm land and buildings.

“Having an outside person definitely helps,” Nate said. “It allowed Kerianne and I to talk to someone who doesn’t have any stake in it but understands the complexity, both financial and emotional,” of the sale of the family farm between generations. Their VFVP advisor also helped them to refinance existing debt, to improve their financial standing.

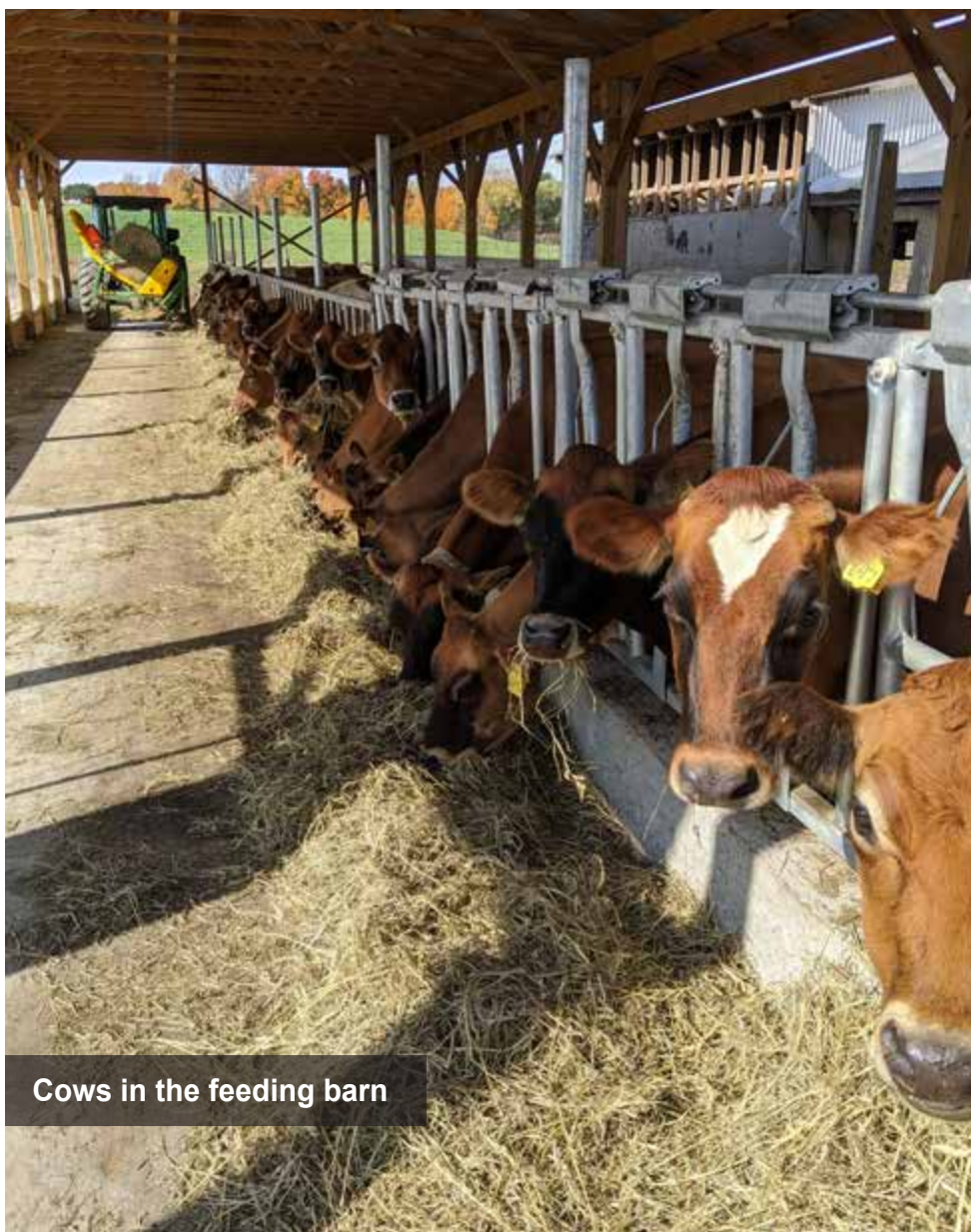
Today, Nate and Kerianne have just finalized the purchase of 125 acres of the main farm, including the house and barns, in Cornwall, Vermont. There are additionally 70 acres of land that sits over the border in Whiting, Vermont - an adjacent parcel separated by hedgerows – which will be leased by Nate in a rent-to-own agreement. The total farm is 220 acres, which includes some land that his parents will retain. His parents relocated to a home down the road. Nate and Kerianne additionally rent hay land and pasture for heifers from neighbors.

Now that the young family is settling into the farmhouse where Nate was raised, Nate no longer has to commute to the dairy. By virtue of the road - Route 30, a main artery - which bi-sects the farm, separating the farmhouse from the barn and most of the farmland, he gets help compartmentalizing work and home life, he explained. The children cannot cross the road, so when he is farming, he is “at work” just as if he was going to the office, but is still just a couple steps away if he needs to go up to the house.

Herd Dynamics

In the summer of 2019, the herd started the transition to no-grain.

“I figured I had two choices if I was going to make the finances work in 2019; grow corn as high moisture cornmeal in an AgBag, or stop feeding grain” Nate explains. “Spring 2019 was so wet I couldn’t plow and then we got tied up making hay, so Mother



Cows in the feeding barn

Nature made the decision for me, and looking back she made the right choice.”

They were fully off-grain by October and were on the no-grain truck by November. Filling cows on pasture alone - even cows used to minimal grain - requires increasing the amount of nutrients available in that pasture, keeping dry matter intake high, and finding a way to keep things consistent. During the summer, the cows consume 85-90% of the DMI directly from grazing. The cows are fed medium-good dairy quality first cut baleage in their new feeding barn to balance their summer diet.

Winter rations require mixing different qualities and types of hay. They consist of one bale of first cut baleage, one bale of second

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FEATURED FARM

**SEVERY FARM,
CORNWALL, VT***continued from page 25*

cut dry, and one bale of either third or fourth cut of baleage, providing the herd with a consistent diet year-round which keeps the rumen healthy and the cows full. Year-round, the herd has a free-choice mineral pre-mix available as well.

The milking herd consists of 60 head of primarily Jersey genetics, plus a bit of Ayrshire mixed in. “I really like our Ayrshire crosses for grazing,” Nate said.



Nate has started to use beef breeds, primarily Limousine or Angus, on the cows that don't take the first two times or are lower quality in the herd. The bigger, stronger half beef calves do better and sell for more at the consignment sales in town.

All cows are inseminated with AI. They began using sexed semen last year, after “three years in a row of a crazy bull run” which left them losing money selling Jersey bulls, and left them without enough replacement heifers, Nate said. Normally, they raise all of their own replacements, but at that time were forced to purchase a few to keep herd numbers stable.

Bull calves are sold at the Addison County Commission Sales in Middlebury at one week of age. They don't raise the bulls to be older because it does not make financial sense to feed their milk—a premium at 100 percent grass-fed—to a meat animal that is not going to recover that cost.

The dairy herd is housed in an old tie-stall which was converted into a freestall, by jackhammering and removing the center alley and pouring a slab on top of the old gutter cleaner floor. The barn is bedded with sawdust, which they purchase by the truckload, using several truckloads per year.

The new milking parlor was installed by Nate's dad 18 years ago, and was built as a double four herringbone, with room to expand. In 2019, Nate expanded it to a double six by moving the gate back and adding two units. The parlor is accessed through the old tie stall barn via a crossover alley into the holding area. Once they are milked, the cows exit back into the barn and have the option of going back to the pasture or eating hay in the feeding barn that Nate built in the winter of 2019 - 2020.

The business will be spending \$130,000 to install a new manure management system over the summer and fall. A new barnyard along with stacking area for manure, plus a small manure pit will be installed. The stacking area will be used in the winter and wide enough to insure that a day's worth of manure can be stacked and will freeze overnight and allow stacking up to six feet high, Nate explained. The manure will then be spread in the summer with a box spreader. The leachate from the stack, along with the washing water from the milking parlor, barn, and holding area will be directed into the manure pit, where a small irrigation pump will then allow them to irrigate directly from the pond. If they ever find themselves with excess liquid, Nate's uncle has a large manure spreading business just down the road.

Calves are raised on milk, and are fed twice per day. They have tried nurse cows, but the calves “were way too wild for me,” Nate said. Their current facilities also don't work well for nurse cows. Instead, calves are housed in single stalls near the milk house to give them time to develop their immune system while they are bottle-fed. Then they are moved to small groups of two to four

FEATURED FARM

calves in pens. In the summer calves are raised in small outdoor paddocks, surrounded by sheep netting, with shelter provided by super hutches.

When really young, the paddocks are moved for fresh pasture every week. By the time the calves are two months of age, they are being moved to new grass every other day.

“They grow phenomenally outside on pasture,” Nate said.

They are fed milk using a homemade nipple bucket feeder, made from a 15 gallon barrel with Peach Teat® placed two feet up and all around the bucket. Kerianne’s father is a blacksmith, and he created metal stands for the buckets, which are then placed in the middle of the pens. Nate and Kerianne really like the Peach Teat® brand for how much it requires the calves to suck which both activates the spit glands helping along the development of their digestion system, and because it satisfies their urge to suckle so they are less likely to suck on something they shouldn’t and get sick.

Calves are fed milk until they are three or four months old. Nate gradually begins to back them off the milk at three months, and has found that if he removes the nipple buckets prior to four months of age they are more likely to suckle each other. Calves are never fed grain but they get water and hay at a couple weeks old.

Nate finds it very useful to train the calves to halters, as well as to the fence, and to teach them two commands: “get up” and “whoa.” This makes it much easier to move them. “Having



Rachel Severy bottle feeding a Jersey calf



animals recognize some commands is extraordinarily useful,” he said.

The total herd numbers about 100 at any given time. Two rented parcels of land - 28 acres and 60 acres - are home to the heifers. There is permanent fencing and water, and the heifers

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FEATURED FARM

**SEVERY FARM,
CORNWALL, VT***continued from page 27*

are rotationally grazed, getting moved once or twice every week depending on season. They also recently began to contract graze heifers for other farms.

Grazing and Agronomy

The farm utilizes Sarah Flack as a grazing consultant, and is part of the benchmarking for no-grain herds being conducted through UVM. The benchmarking provides them with a cost of production analysis for the farm every year, and allows them to see “where we are in relation to everyone else” who is also no-grain dairying in the region.

As Nate’s degree is in soil science, agronomy is his specialty. And with the soil profile on the farm, that has come in quite handy. The land is a mix of Vergennes clay and Adams sandy loam. The clay is a marine-type clay with up to a 90 percent clay content, and “the workability of that soil is extremely difficult,” Nate said. There is almost no water infiltration, but the organic matter is high, in the four to six percent range. In spring, the clay soils don’t dry out, and while it is moderately well-drained in the summer, the permeability is so low that rain runs right off of it or down into the fencepost-deep cracks.

The only thing that consistently grows on that clay soil type is hay. The county’s average yield for corn silage is only 12 - 15 tons per acre due to the prevalence of this soil type. The Severy’s seed their clay pastures to meadow fescue, timothy, rye and clover. The land is surrounded on two sides by the Cornwall Wildlife Management Area, which is part of one of the largest swamp complexes in the state, Nate said.

In contrast, Adams sandy loam soils become excessively dry and prone to drought. This soil type is found at the top of the hill behind the barn, where the pasture supports orchard grass, alfalfa and brome grass. Adams sandy loam and Nellis loam cover about 45 acres of the 100 acres of land behind the barn, as well as being found on other parts of the property. These sandy areas are surrounded by the clay soils, which makes for a patchwork of these two soil types which are vastly different.

“If you know how to manage it, there is some resilience built in,” Nate said of his soils. That’s because different things grow well on different soil types, and knowing when to graze and when to let the fields rest to regenerate is key. Early in the season, the Adams sandy loam can be grazed hard, and then it needs to be rested in the dry summer, when the Vergennes clay soils are ready to be grazed.

As the season progresses, more fields are ready to be added to the rotation, Nate explained. All of the 100 acres of pasture located behind the barn are in permanent fencing, and are



Kerianne tedding hay on the ridge

FEATURED FARM

rotationally grazed at some point during the season. Nate also plants between five and 10 acres of millet or sorghum sudangrass to stretch out the rotations and lengthens rest periods in the rotations until there are three leaves on an average grass plant. Depending on timing, the Severy's plant cover crops like winter rye and triticale to protect the soil and graze the following spring before seeding down to hay again.

The last aspect of land management that Nate spends a lot of time thinking about is soil fertility. Since they are not buying grain, there is a net loss of nutrients leaving the farm in milk and meat. So, they have been buying more fertility in the form of chicken compost and woodash to make up for this nutrient imbalance.

Milking It

The milking herd is moved to new pastures several times per day, depending on the pasture forages. But these moves are not synched to the milking times. That's because Nate has an unorthodox milking schedule, no longer milking at the twice per day traditional schedule. Before moving into the farmhouse, he was traveling to the farm to milk, he was working off-farm, the kids needed to get to and from daycare and Covid-19 was causing lots of scheduling issues: all of which were making it very difficult to milk twice per day.

In August 2021, Nate opted to implement a schedule of milking that allows him weekly consistency, but also spreads his milking intervals out to 14 -17 hours. He was familiar with another small farm using 16 hour milking intervals, but that ends up in a two week rotation, Nate said. Milk truck pick-up is the same time every week so he needed weekly consistency. By tweaking things a bit, he found a way to still have the same amount of milk in the bulk tank each week, while spreading out milking intervals.

It works like this: the first day is a morning milking and a late evening milking; then the next day is a midday milking, and the following is an early/late milking again. On Fridays - on a day after a midday milking - there is a "hiccup day," as Nate likes to call it, where he milks early and then in the afternoon. The following day is again an early/late day, repeating the cycle from the beginning.

"I have three long days, but four nights off," he explains. This has increased his time at home with the family, and enhanced his quality of life, allowing flexibility and leisure. "I like the old saying - look before you leap, but those who hesitate are lost".

The unique milking schedule hasn't significantly hurt milk production or quality. Using DHIA data, Nate's been able to test the effect of his customized milking schedule. The herd is producing an average of 9,000 pounds of milk per cow annually,

only a couple pounds per day less as when they were on a twice per day schedule.

The herd's somatic cell count averages about 140,000, and varies between 100,000 and 160,000. The protein falls between three and four percent, while the butterfat percentage ranges from 4.3 - 4.8% in the summer, and 5.25 - 5.5% in the winter months.

Herd Health

Nate has found that the trick to no-grain dairy farming is to keep the herd's DMI up. When a cow does become ill, and it goes off feed, he's found that health can deteriorate rapidly. Even though the body condition on all of his cows is good, once a cow goes off feed, it loses condition readily. He's recently decided that if a cow goes off feed, he is going to provide it with grain supplementation, to prevent the loss of the cow.

They do have an excellent herd veterinarian, Elizabeth Martens, whom they regularly use for health checks. She is familiar with organic dairy production, being the daughter of Klaas and Mary-Howell Martens of Lakeview Organic Grain, and has been a valuable resource.

Routine health care includes: garlic tinctures on calves and young heifers that are ill; a homemade electrolyte for cows that have scours; calcium bolus and aspirin on freshening cows and Cinnatube teat sealant for high-risk cows at dry-off; and routine vaccinations according to their veterinarians recommendations. The Severy's also administer Multimin® and a vitamin B complex to newborn calves to boost their immune system.

Future of Organic Dairy Farming

Nate and Kerianne know firsthand that entering the dairy business can be challenging, as the capital investment needed is so large, and the return on investments is so low. Even when dairy farming has been the family business, it is no longer an easy road for new dairy farmers starting their own operations. And for those without any dairy farming background, who need to start fully from scratch to purchase a herd, land, equipment and buildings - as well as find a market for their milk - the industry can be less than welcoming.

While the organic dairy industry grew via grassroots efforts in the 1990s, and welcomed many new farmers in the early 2000s as the industry rapidly expanded, the industry consolidated by 2017 and opportunity is no longer readily available for those entering organic dairy farming today, Nate said. However, he thinks the cycle will turn again, and young organic dairy farmers will be needed. There is opportunity for young dairy farmers if only because many dairy farmers are aging out of the business, and at some point, young start-up dairy farms will again be needed.

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FEATURED FARM



**Nate & Karianne Severy
of Severy Farm**

SEVERY FARM, CORNWALL, VT

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Farming is no longer a profession that requires little or no education. "You need to be intelligent and business savvy to make it in the market today," Nate says, as he reflects on the value of being a lifelong learner. "Ninety-five percent of your success comes mastering the basics, and the remainder is split between skill and luck."

Through twists and turns, the Severy family has found a way to pass ownership of the family dairy from one generation to the next, in a manner that makes sense - financially and emotionally - for both generations. The journey to organic dairy farming in one generation led to the 100 percent grassfed dairy farming being done on the farm today. All along the way, having outside advisors and taking advantage of consulting services available, as well as learning from other farmers in the industry, have proved invaluable to their success. ♦

Nate and Karianne Severy can be reached at Severy Farm,
6039 Rte 30, Cornwall, VT, 05753, 1-802-999-0025,
severyfarmllc@gmail.com

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Location: Wells, VT

FOR SALE: Certified organic herd including 62 cows and 45 heifers. Cows are producing 63.2 lbs in high group, 45.2 in low group. SCC averages 99,000 or lower. Winner of highest quality award in Agrimark Region 8 for 2020 and 2021, 2.98 protein and 3.94 butterfat. Freestall herd milked in parlor, well-bred animals using AI from ABS. The herd is majority Holstein with a few Jersey and Jersey Holstein crosses. Please call 802-236-1920.

Location: Southern VT

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NET UPDATE

Recent ODairy Discussions

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eye patch can be helpful but isn't really a treatment, per se. In general, pinkeye will take about 3 weeks to go away. Keep animals in the dark. 95% of animals will simply have a small white dash, a telltale mark of having had pinkeye. The other 5% will have a ruptured eye or may have an enormous bulging eye, permanently." At this early stage, the vaccine can be useful; it can stop a case pretty well.

"Once the eye starts squinting (indicating intense pain), spraying the eyes is a waste of time and not helpful. Then there needs to be more aggressive intervention, such as having a vet inject about 1-2 ml of BoviSera (antibodies against gram-negative bugs like pinkeye) under the first layer of the eye; can use 1-2 cc of milk as an alternative. Restraint is needed, both physical and chemical (xylazine, butorphanol and lidocaine are all allowed as needed). That procedure can be quite helpful. Another once and done procedure is having a vet sew the third eyelid (nictitans) across the eyeball itself to the far side and then stitching the eyelids shut. Sutures

dissolve around 10-12 days; very effective. None of this takes a veterinarian that knows organics. Any bovine vet can do this.

MultiMin was recommended along with Vitamin A. Some people put iodine in the water. One farmer highly recommended his Fly-Vac, calling it a miracle worker. "That and using Cedar-cide oil mixed with some iodine and sprayed on cows' backs and legs have rounded out our fly program. It was getting pretty bad with fly bite dermatitis until the FlyVac was installed. It took a solid week of training to get them to go through the FlyVac."

A homeopathic vet weighed in to suggest that individual prescribing is often the way to go: "Painting with a broad brush, those ugly, ulcerated, super painful, look-like-they-are going-to-dissolve, liquefying eyes will often respond to repeated doses of homeopathic Mercurius. Dose the cow, not the eye. You can couple that with some euphrasia tincture *diluted in water* and applied to the eye, or some calendula tincture *diluted in water* and applied to the eye, or some calendula and hypericum tincture (50 / 50) *diluted in water* and applied to the eye." ♦

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

The Tale of Two Cold-storage Warehouses: Automating Aurora Organic Dairy

*How a Dairy Producer Used Westfalia AS/RS
to streamline processes in two locations.*

By John Hinchey

This article is reprinted with permission from the author and from Dairy Foods, the online publication where it first appeared on July 8, 2022 <https://www.dairyfoods.com/articles/95746-the-tale-of-two-cold-storage-warehouses-automating-aurora-organic-dairy>


Aurora Organic Dairy (AOD) is a producer of store-brand organic milk and butter for U.S. retailers, operating several farms and facilities across the nation. Based in Boulder, Colo., it oversees heifer farms and organic dairy farms in Colorado and Texas, as well as organic dairy processing plants in Platteville, Colo. and Columbia, Mo. It manages the entire product lifecycle — from its farms to its processing facility — with a dedication to organic standards and sustainable production at every stage. To

meet these standards and ensure the highest quality product for their customers, Aurora needed an efficient solution to build an in-house cold-storage warehouse.

And so, Aurora's partnership with Westfalia began — in Platteville.

Platteville: An Expansion, Years in the Making

AOD's integrated cow-to-carton model began in 2003 with an on-farm milk plant in Platteville. Its organic dairy products are distributed nationally, and AOD has a large inventory of extended shelf life (ESL) products, which helps to balance supply and demand while providing excellent customer service levels. As AOD grew through new channels and an expanded product assortment, the company outgrew its third-party warehousing,



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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

and needed a small-footprint, in-house cold storage facility on-site at its milk processing plants.

Challenged with a lack of space to accommodate a large warehouse addition, Aurora reached out to Westfalia Technologies to design an Automated Storage/Retrieval System (AS/RS). The AS/RS allowed them to build a highly automated cold-storage warehouse adjacent to the milk plant to accommodate their growth within limited square footage and transform the entire warehousing process, from production to shipping to staging.

“As a company with a strong foundation of sustainability, we liked that we could build a smaller warehouse for long-term energy savings,” said Joe Harmon, senior manager of technical resources at AOD. “We also felt that Westfalia offered a more flexible design than other companies. The racking design allowed us to build a custom facility based on the sheer number of pallets we needed to store on the square footage we have available.”

The custom solution is tied directly to production, allowing flexibility to process orders in advance. With pallet accumulation on the inbound and outbound system, orders can be fed to the dock to allow for quicker truck turns. In addition, two

high-speed tandem pallet cranes provide the high throughput necessary to support future growth. This not only makes the production and distribution process more efficient, it also eliminates the need for manual touches—reducing labor costs and improving product freshness and quality.

AOD was pleased with Platteville’s AS/RS which exceeded the company’s initial throughput and energy efficiency goals. Harmon noted Westfalia’s continued support and expertise throughout the design and installation process was one of the major benefits of the partnership.

“The biggest challenge to implementation was that we were running the plant and producing products during the warehouse construction and commissioning process,” said Harmon. “Westfalia was a great partner to be able to work with a fully operational facility and allow us to keep it running while they completed the commissioning of the warehouse, train employees, and troubleshoot any issues.”

When it came time to expand once again, AOD decided to build a second dairy processing plant in Columbia. With the success of

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

The Tale of Two Cold-storage Warehouses: Automating Aurora Organic Dairy

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Aurora Organic Dairy

the Platteville cold-storage facility behind them, they knew that this time, it would be automated from the start — with Westfalia by their side.

Columbia: Taking AS/RS to the Next Level

Aurora selected Westfalia to design, manufacture and install a second AS/RS within their new Columbia cold-storage warehouse in 2018. While the AS/RS solution was similar to the Platteville installation, the Columbia location was a greenfield site; this offered far greater flexibility in square footage, capacity and solution design.

Without space restrictions, Westfalia designed an AS/RS with a true outbound staging system. With two outbound staging lanes to pre-stage products ahead of time, trucks at the Columbia warehouse can turn in under 30 minutes at the dock. This further maximized warehouse and distribution efficiency.

“We developed a solution that worked well for us in Colorado, so it was natural to implement a very similar solution for our second location,” Harmon said. “The fact that the warehouses are so similar and designed by Westfalia also provides flexibility in maintenance and training between the two facilities, as well.”

The addition of the Columbia warehouse meant Aurora could expand its product offerings to customers and ship milk from another key location. Ultimately, Aurora’s continued partnership with Westfalia resulted in another streamlined production and distribution site, with even faster truck turns and higher throughput.

A Continued Partnership

Integrated with Westfalia’s AS/RS, both the Platteville and Columbia cold-storage warehouses saw improved efficiency, higher throughput, and more control over inventory — all contributing to the delivery of a higher quality product to their customers. In addition, Aurora saw cost savings from building an in-house solution, rather than relying on third-party cold storage providers. A consistent AS/RS design also allowed for simplified training and maintenance across facilities, with Westfalia experts to assist along the way.

With a long-standing relationship and two successful projects under their belt, Aurora Organic Dairy and Westfalia Technologies continue to work closely together to implement the best solutions for the future. ♦

John Hinchey is vice president of Sales at Westfalia Technologies. With over 22 years of experience with the company, he ensures that all customers are provided with the clarity necessary to run a successful operation. His day-to-day involves engaging with clients to understand their challenges in warehousing and distribution as well as working internally with a team to perform data-centric analysis with an eye on optimization. Hinchey and his team provide customers all over North America with proper guidance and peace of mind when it comes to choosing the right automated solution. He can be reached at 717-764-1115.

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

The 2023 Farm Bill – What You Can Do

continued from page 9

iii. Non-Federal Markets

b) Utilization of Fluid Milk Products and Cream by Pool Plants for Class 1 Milk, for all Orders:

1. Organic Whole Milk
2. Organic Reduced Fat Milk (2%)
3. Organic Low Fat Milk (1%)
4. Organic Fat Free Milk (Skim)

c) Organic Mailbox Price by region

d) Export of organic dairy products

6. Financially reward the good work that organic farmers are doing regarding climate change

Organic agriculture should be front and center in policies that address the role of agriculture in combating climate change, and organic dairy farmers should be at the table for these discussions. Congress should reward the good work that organic farmers are already doing and should assist others interested in transitioning to organic.

We are asking that Congress should include provisions in the 2023 Farm Bill to:

- Support organic farmers and help others to transition to organic.
- Increase funding for organic research related to climate change.
- Increase funding for USDA conservation programs to reward regenerative organic farming practices.
- Modernize USDA risk management programs to reward, not penalize, regenerative organic farming practices.

Include provisions in the FY 2023 Agriculture Appropriations bill to:

- Increase funding for USDA's National Organic Program with focus on increased enforcement of existing soil health requirements
- Increase organic research funding related to climate change.

7. FSA/Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCSSP)

In the previous Administration, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) unilaterally cut reimbursements to organic farmers under the Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP), in conflict with the 2018 Farm Bill directive. As a temporary stopgap, USDA created a parallel Organic and Transitional Education and Certification Program (OTECP), which NODPA has supported.

OTECP is currently slated to provide stopgap funding through FY2022.

For FY 2023, it is critical to fully fund the OCSSP. The OCSSP is especially important for small and mid-size farms and for underserved producers. A recent survey conducted by the Organic Farming Research Foundation <https://ofrf.org/research/nora/> shows that the cost of organic certification was identified as a major challenge - 29% of all organic farmers listed this as a challenge & 61% of Black, Indigenous and other farmers of color identified this as a challenge. Thus far, USDA has not committed to fully restore the program for FY23, so we are asking Congress to fix the problem through the FY 2023 appropriations process.

Summary

The future for all small to mid-size organic dairies must include regulations that maintain organic integrity, not undermine it for the benefit of large operations, milk handlers, increase sales and retail margins. We must have strong enforcement and certifiers that understand the regulations. We need a well-funded USDA NOP that can ensure consistent enforcement at all levels of production. We must also look at processing infrastructure that is scale-and market-appropriate. If we have regulations that are strongly enforced, the processing, packaging and marketing infrastructure will have a secure base to build on. For organic dairy, that will mean having modern processing facilities that are designed to process and package smaller quantities of milk to meet the needs of the value-added products that have a strong market with discriminating consumers. When the next pandemic or weather crises happens, will the food supply chain be more protected or more exposed with less processing capacity and a smaller rural population? Please go tell your federal representatives that we need their help now, either in the next Farm Bill or in Congressional appropriations.

If anyone is interested in working on these issues, please be in touch with NODPA by calling 413-772-0444 or visiting the NODPA website's Contact Us page (www.nodpa.com). ♦

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Classified Ads

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ANIMALS

FOR SALE: Certified 100% grassfed organic dairy heifer calves. Mostly Friesian & Jersey New Zealand genetics. Central NY/PA area. Rob Moore 607-699-7968, cowpoke2@verizon.com

Location: Nichols, NY

FEED, GRAIN, HAY FOR SALE

FOR SALE: Organic dry grass hay net-wrapped 4X5 round bales. Organic early cut grass baleage 4X4 individually wrapped bales. Delivery from Ithaca, NY by

seller in NYS or arranged for other states. Call Carl at 607-275-1647 or e-mail cac22@cornell.edu.

Location: Central NY

FOR SALE: Certified Organic dry square and round baled hay. Email or call for prices: Raymond E Tardif, juno2557@aol.com, 802-309-9152.

Location: Swanton, VT

FOR SALE: Certified organic dairy baleage. 1st cutting \$50, 2nd \$60 per bale. Discount available on large quantities. 570-727-2322 or 570-396-3280 Contact Jack Downton, downtonk@yahoo.com, 570-727-2322

Location: Starrucca, PA