NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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Member Info

Daughter, Jessica, bottling milk at Coulter Farms.

FEATURED FARM: COULTER FARMS, HONEY GROVE, PA

Owned and operated by Kinley Coulter and Family

Balancing Act

By Tamara Scully, NODPA News Contributing Writer

Kinley Coulter and family milk purebred Jerseys on their certified organic dairy in Honey Grove, Pennsylvania. They don't sell their milk to any processors, and the milk doesn't travel off farm until it is sold to the end consumer. They are the processors for 100 percent of the milk their cows produce, marketing and distributing their products via high-end farmers' markets on the Washington

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Strengthening Organic Enforcement: Closing Loopholes (and Leaving Potential Loose Threads?)

By Christie Badger, Independent organic inspector & consultant

With the publication of the Strengthening Organic Enforcement (SOE) final rule on January 18, 2023, the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) published the most significant update to the organic regulations since the publication of the original Organic Food Production Act (OFPA) in 1990. SOE is aimed at protecting organic integrity and bolstering consumer confidence in organic

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Message from NODPA Co-President

If you have figured out how to balance your farm work and still have quality time for your family and community, then my hat is off to you! It is something that has creeped up on us. When we started farming, we knew we just had to get the work done; it meant putting your "shoulder to the wheel" every day. We could catch up with friends on rainy days. Our families, all located some distance away, soon learned that if they ever wanted to see us, they needed to come to the farm. Our son rode behind the seat in the cab tractor from the time he was a baby as we baled hay and planted crops. He fell asleep on a bed made of square bales and Carhartt coats in the barn during night chores.

And then, over more recent years, we have had some great people working as part-time relief milkers and equipment operators who helped us get the jobs done, and sometimes provide some much needed time off.

But it can be hard to prioritize work-life balance when it seems at odds with the traditional farming lifestyle and rural work ethic. In communities where hard work and agriculture are a part of one's identity, it can be difficult to create that separation. And small farms often cannot afford to hire full-time employees, relying on part-time contract labor to fill in the gaps.

As we move into the season of spring work, I hope we can all find a balance to cherish our families and nourish our communities. Because, as the old story goes: Said no farmer ever on his deathbed, "I should have spent more time in the barn".

And just an added highlight – We are delighted to announce Alvin and Marianne Peachey of Allensville, PA have agreed to host one of the farm tours at the NODPA Field Days in September! Alvin's Saddlers Run Farm was the Featured Farm in the September, 2021 issue of the NODPA News, and he is well known for his approaches to produce high quality forages for his grass-fed herd. He will be presenting at the meeting, too. So save the dates: September 28th and 29th in the Reedsville/Allensville region of central Pennsylvania.

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

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From the NODPA Desk:

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

In March, I will be spending two weeks in Washington DC. For the first time in a few years the meetings will not be on Zoom. The first week will be the Organic Farmers Association (OFA) annual meeting, meetings with USDA and with members of Congress. For the second week it will be with the National Organic Coalition (NOC) for their annual NOC Hill Days and meetings. This will be a chance to check in with allies and supporters as we enter yet another crucial year for Organic. These meeting build trust and understanding with different groups of organic farmers/ranchers, environmental activist and groups advocating for consumer rights. We also have meetings arranged with Congress and the USDA as part of the activities of both weeks. These two organizations (OFA and NOC) have very similar policy proposals, so we can hit those who write regulations and laws twice in one month with the reality of organic farming as the Farm Bill gets written by Congress.

The first meeting in DC is with OFA from March 6th-10th. Unlike the Organic Trade Association, which is a trade group, OFA represents producers. It is governed by producers; its policy is set by producers; and it supports producer-based groups throughout the country. Its mission is to "provide a strong and unified national voice for domestic certified organic producers." OFA's Policy Platform is wide ranging and covers the many aspects that affect organic production, including organic integrity, climate and conservation, organic research, USDA programs, organic infrastructure, building a better food system and, of course, organic dairy. A summary of the OFA organic dairy policy is: *Organic dairy farmers across the country are facing severe economic challenges. The NOP can increase enforcement of the organic standards (including access to pasture and the updated Origin of Livestock rule) with no changes to the Farm Bill. In addition, the next Farm Bill could provide long-needed support for the organic dairy market, like what conventional dairy has received for many years:*

- *Investment in regional organic milk processing infrastructure around the country to spur the entrance of new buyers for organic milk.*
- *Immediate support to address dramatically increased organic input costs for organic dairy farms.*
- *Support for regional programs to collect and publish cost of production data for organic milk (including all costs, not just organic feed).*
- *Require USDA to regularly publish regional reports on:*
  - *o Receipts of Organic Fluid Milk Products and Cream*
  - *o Utilization of Organic Fluid Milk products and Cream by pool plants*
  - *o Receipts of Organic Milk produced, by state.*
- *Creation of a safety net program for organic dairy farms, such as organic-specific margin coverage.*

NOC's meeting is March 21st-24th. NOC is "devoted to protecting the integrity of the organic seal and advancing organic agriculture. Through education, research, and advocacy, NOC provides policy makers and the public with information about the benefits of organic systems. Our coalition also protects organic standards to ensure that they reflect core organic principles, are enforceable, and are consistently applied. NOC brings together diverse organic stakeholders to advance organic food and farming. NOC has positions on all the twelve titles in the Farm Bill in the knowledge that organic reaches into every aspect of agriculture. On Organic Dairy their position is: **Economic Safety Net for Organic Dairy Farmers:** *Organic dairy farmers across the country are facing severe economic challenges. USDA's National Organic Program (NOP) should increase enforcement of the organic standards (including access to pasture requirements and the updated Origin of Livestock rule) to ensure that all organic dairy farmers are following the same rules. This stepped-up enforcement can take place with no changes to the Farm Bill.*

In addition, the next Farm Bill could provide long-needed support for the organic dairy market, like what conventional dairy farmers have received for many years, including:

- *Investment in regional organic milk processing infrastructure around the country to spur the entrance of new buyers for organic milk;*
- *Immediate support to address dramatically increased organic input costs for organic dairy farms;*
- *Support for regional programs to collect and publish cost of production data for organic milk (including all costs, not just organic feed);*
- *Requirement for USDA to regularly publish regional reports on:*
  - *o Receipts of Organic Fluid Milk Products and Cream;*
  - *o Utilization of Organic Fluid Milk products and Cream by pool plants; and*
  - *o Receipts of Organic Milk produced, by state.*
- *Establishment by USDA of an Organic All Milk Price Survey, analogous to the existing NASS All Milk Price Survey, to gather and report monthly data about what organic farmers are being*

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Strengthening Organic Enforcement

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sales in light of an organic landscape that has changed dramatically in the past twenty years. The rule has an implementation date of March 19, 2024.

According to the press release (https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2023/01/18/usda-publishes-strengthening-organic-enforcement-final-rule#:~:text=What%20does%20the%20rule%20do,enforcement%20of%20the%20organic%20regulations) published on usda.gov, the new rule accomplishes its aims by "supporting strong organic control systems, improving farm to market traceability, increasing import oversight authority, and providing robust enforcement of the organic regulations." The release lists key updates to include:

- Requiring certification of more of the businesses, like brokers and traders, at critical links in organic supply chains.
- Requiring NOP Import Certificates for all organic imports.
- Requiring organic identification on nonretail containers.
- Increasing authority for more rigorous on-site inspections of certified operations.
- Requiring uniform qualification and training standards for organic inspectors and certifying agent personnel.
- Requires standardized certificates of organic operation.
- Requires additional and more frequent reporting of data on certified operations.
- Creates authority for more robust recordkeeping, traceability practices, and fraud prevention procedures.
- Specify certification requirements for producer groups.

On a webinar introducing the new rule on February 21, 2023, Deputy Administrator Jenny Tucker was quick to point out that the new provisions work with existing regulations, layering, supplementing, and modifying the existing body of regulations. She also noted that there are a lot of components to the rule, and then provided a focus on four overarching goals, which we will focus on here, as follows:

- Reducing the number of uncertified entities
- Requiring the use of organic import certificates

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Strengthening Organic Enforcement

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- Strengthening recordkeeping and supply chain traceability
- Strengthening oversight of accredited certifiers

Reducing the number of uncertified entities

Through the expansion of the definitions of *handle*, the rule requires more businesses in the organic supply chain to be certified.

> *Handle*. To sell, process, or package agricultural products, including but not limited to trading, facilitating sale or trade on behalf of a seller or oneself, importing to the United States, exporting for sale in the United States, combining, aggregating, culling, conditioning, treating, packing, containerizing, repackaging, labeling, storing, receiving, or loading.

During the comment period, there were many suggestions for what should be included in the definition of handle, and while many of the suggestions were included, many were not.

That being said, the NOP addresses this in the explanatory text, noting:

> The definition of handle is not an exhaustive list of activities that must be certified. There may be additional activities not listed in the definition that are similar to the listed activities and require certification, or different words or synonyms for the same or similar activities. The absence of a specific term in the definition of handle does not mean the activity is not handling or that an operation conducting this activity does not need certification.

And therein lies the rub. While many of the suggested activities to be included in the definition are addressed in different areas throughout the explanatory text, some are not. Unfortunately, the NOP did not, in all cases, address the process by which it decided which of suggested activities would be included in the definition and which would not. This is one of the areas where stakeholders will most likely be referencing the explanatory text a great deal

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and will most likely lead to additional clarifications that need to be made.

How will this affect your business? Perhaps the biggest takeaway here is to take a close look at your supply chains. Many businesses that did not previously require certification will now need to get certified, including supply chain intermediaries, such as traders, commodity brokers, and importers. In addition, those producing organic products will want to ensure that their suppliers are appropriately certified to maintain the organic status of their products.

Limited exemptions are outlined in the rule, as follows:

- An operation with annual sales of less than $5,000
- A retail establishment that does not process organic products, or only processes them at the point of final sales
- Shipping and handling operations, and distributors, under very limited conditions
- Customs brokers

That being said, there are many nuances and caveats within these limitations, and a close reading of the rule is required to begin to try to understand them. For example, an operation with annual sales of less than $5,000 does not require certification; however, producers claiming this exemption must not represent the agricultural products they produce as certified organic, must not use the USDA organic seal, and products produced or processed by these exempt operations must not be identified or represented as organic in a product processed by another operation.

When it comes to the exemption for retail establishments, one must first ensure that the business meets the designation as a "retail establishment."

> The regulations define *retail establishment* to include a range of transaction modes for selling to consumers that commonly occur in the modern marketplace. Retail establishment includes restaurants, delicatessens, bakeries, grocery stores, or any retail business with a restaurant, delicatessen, bakery, salad bar, bulk food self-service station, or other eat-in, carry-out, mail-order, or delivery service of raw or processed agricultural products.

However, don't forget to "read the fine print." While "mail-order" and "delivery service" are included on the list, the explanatory

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text provides further detail. "Retail establishments may use virtual transactions for sales, but they must also have a physical location for consumers to purchase products." In addition, it is clearly stated that "businesses which sell to other businesses (wholesale) do not qualify as retail establishments." Only operations that qualify as "retail establishments" are eligible for the retailer exemptions.

When it comes to shipping and handling operations, as well as distributors, it's all about the packaging. If the product being "handled" is "enclosed in sealed, tamper-evident packages or containers that are labeled for retail sale prior to being received or acquired by the operations; and remain in the same sealed, tamper-evident packages or containers that are labeled for retail sale and are not otherwise handled while in the control of the operation," the operation may qualify as exempt from certification. Unfortunately, the definition of "sealed, tamper-evidence packages or containers" was not provided within the rule or in the explanatory text.

Finally, customs brokers that do not take ownership or physical possession of organic products are exempt from certification.

While the rule does allow limited exemptions from certification for what are being called "low-risk" operations, the exemption only applies to certification. Handling and recordkeeping requirements remain in place for these operations. Exempt operations must comply with the requirements of § 205.272, which describes handling requirements to prevent commingling and contact with prohibited substances. In addition, they must follow the labeling provisions specified in § 205.310 and maintain records to (1) demonstrate that agricultural products identified as organic were organically produced and handled; and (2) verify quantities received, sold, or produced from such agricultural products.

Transportation Concerns: Many commenters raised transportation concerns. What it comes down to is two-fold—one, the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) stating that "OFPA and the USDA organic regulations do not provide

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authority to regulate the transport of organic agricultural products," and two, "AMS is defining the need for certification based on activities performed, not type of business." Therefore, determining whether or not a rail car company or trucking company or milk truck needs to be certified is not the point; determining whether or not the activity they are performing needs certification is the real question. The devil is in the details indeed.

Specifically, AMS had this to say about milk haulers:

> AMS is defining the need for certification based on activities performed, not type of business, because this will ensure that businesses conducting high-risk activities require certification (and conversely that businesses that conduct low-risk activities remain exempt). A milk hauler would be exempt from certification if they only transport organic milk (e.g., move milk from a dairy to a processor) but do not otherwise handle the milk (e.g., process or package loads of milk). Transport alone does not require certification.

On the February 21, SOE Introduction webinar, Dr. Jenny Tucker stated several times, "Here at the Program, we have a big bias toward being certified." She noted that not being certified may restrict your business from being nimble in the marketplace and being able to shift your focus as needed. She further noted that being certified lowers the work businesses have to do to provide paperwork when a supply-chain audit happens. She encouraged businesses to weigh the business activities in light of the rule, noting, "We want as many entities to be certified as possible across the supply chain to protect farm to market traceability."

Requiring the use of organic import certificates

The new rule requires the use of electronic NOP import certificates for all products being imported into the United States. Import certificates will be generated in the Organic Integrity Database (OID), by the certifier of the exporter to the United States. The OID is the database launched in 2015 by the NOP to provide information on current and former certified organic operations publicly available online.

There are two main points of focus. First, what this means for exporters to the US who live in a country that does not have an equivalency agreement with the US? And second, how exactly does the electronic import certificate work?

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Ask the Vet

Submitted by a NODPA News reader: Tell us more about Staph. Aureus

Dayna Locitzer, DVM

In my last column I wrote briefly about the contagious mastitis causing pathogen Staphylococcus aureus or simply S. aureus. I said that if you wanted to hear more to ask and I would write a whole column… and you did, so here it is! It certainly deserves its own column. It is an insidious bug that can cause milk quality issues and take a long time to recover from if you are not on top of it. S. aureus can cause both clinical and subclinical mastitis. Typically, cows that have it have a chronically elevated somatic cell count with outbreaks of abnormal milk and produce 15% less milk on average. It can also cause gangrene mastitis, which is a catastrophic udder infection where the skin tissue of the whole quarter starts to die and slough off. Though there is nothing that will cure a S. aureus infection, there are a lot of ways to prevent it, and all of those ways promote improved milk quality. So let's get into what exactly it is, how it's spread, and how we can prevent it.

S. aureus is a gram positive facultative anaerobe that is spherical in shape and lives in grape-like clusters. This means that it can live in environments with or without oxygen. It likes to live on a host, like skin or inside a mammary gland. It doesn't survive long just hanging out on a non-living object like our environmental mastitis causing pathogens do. It has a lot of defense mechanisms to keep itself alive and evade its host's immune system. One of these evasion strategies is living in biofilms. This is a strategy bacteria use where they band together and attach to a surface using external compounds, making it hard for them to be washed away or flushed out. S. aureus can also survive inside immune cells,

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avoiding detection by sentinel cells. And, most notably, it can cause microabscesses. These walled-off capsules of puss cause a perpetual inflammatory environment. This leads to chronic high somatic cell count, scar tissue and consequently decreased milk production. This walling off also makes them difficult to penetrate by antibiotics and the cow's own immune system. The infection also goes undetectable in this stage, making it a moving target to diagnose. These microabscesses burst on occasion, leading to clinical mastitis and the characteristic intermittent shedding of S. aureus bacteria. This is why, when a cow has a S. aureus infection, she has one for life.

To understand how to prevent infection, it is important we learn how a cow becomes infected. One big factor is us, the people milking the cows. We have skin, and S. aureus likes to live on skin. It especially likes the cracked, weathered hands of farmers. We can carry it between cows. The best way to prevent this mode of transmission is by wearing gloves.

Cows also transmit it to each other or even to themselves. Cows with chapped teats or teat ends with fronds are especially susceptible to a S. aureus because the bacteria like to colonize damaged skin. S. aureus will overgrow on these damaged teats, and then through its biofilm will march its way to the teat orifice, up the canal, into the mammary gland. Therefore promoting teat end health is key to prevention. This can be accomplished by using a teat dip that doesn't dry out skin but more importantly, making sure vacuum is appropriate.

I am going to take some time to talk about appropriate vacuum levels because this is one of the most vital factors in S. aureus prevention. Improper vacuum will cause short and long term teat end damage. It is important that you discuss the correct vacuum level with your milking system technician. Once that is correct, you must ensure each cow experiences that level of vacuum the entire time the machine is attached. To do this, milk flow must be consistent. Times of low milk flow will make the vacuum disproportionate to the amount of milk being harvested. This can happen at the beginning and end of machine attachment. If you attach the machine before the cow's brain has signaled to the mammary gland for milk let down, the machine will be attached without much milk coming out of the udder. That is why you must allow for about 90 seconds of prep time, meaning it should take no less than 90 seconds from when you first touch her udder to when you attach the machine. It is also important to take the machine off before milk flow peters off, avoiding disproportionate vacuum. And remember, let the vacuum completely stop before removing the machine from the teats. If the vacuum is still on during machine removal, it pulls at teat ends and causes damage.

Improper vacuum also causes backflow. That means whatever is in the claw flows back into the teat canal. That could include fecal material, skin cells, and bacteria. This is how a cow can transmit S. aureus to herself but also to her neighbor cow. Let's say you milk a cow that is shedding S. aureus, and then you milk her neighbor. If you attach the machine before she has let down her milk, she might experience backflow, and the S. aureus from her neighbor will flow up into her mammary gland. And when you hear that incorrigible noise of the inflation sliding off a teat, just know backflow is happening as well as teat damage.

How you manage your calves can also be a risk factor. When a heifer freshens with S. aureus it is potentially due to calves cross suckling either before weaning or after weaning when housed in groups. This is hard to prevent, but there are good strategies that would take another column to fully explain. Another management risk factor is when calves are kept with the milking herd so they can nurse on their dams. When calves are young, they typically stick to nursing only on their

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Pay and Feed Prices March 2023

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

December sales of organic fluid milk, nationally, are disappointing despite significant increased utilization of organic fluid milk in the northeast in 2022 compared to 2021. The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) reported on 2/22/2023 that in December 2022, estimated fluid product sales of organic milk decreased by 9.4% over December 2021, with a minus 2% for the year-to-date December 2022 over 2021. Organic whole milk sales, at 111 million pounds in December 2022, were 4.8% lower than the December 2021, but had an overall growth of 2% in 2022 over 2021. Reduced fat milk sales were 118 million pounds in December 2022, falling 12.3 percent from December 2021, and 5% down in retail sales for 2022 compared to 2021.

Federal Milk Market Order 1, in New England, reports utilization of types of organic milk by pool plants. During December 2022, fluid organic whole milk utilization totaled 16.67 million pounds, up from 14.66 million pounds the previous year. The utilization of fluid organic reduced fat milk, 17.11 million pounds, increased from 16.70 million pounds a year ago. During 2022, organic whole milk utilization increased by 26.66 million pounds, totaling 189.79 million pounds, up from 163.77 million pounds

Product Name	Sales of Organic Fluid Milk		Change from	
	Dec-22	2022 Year to date	Dec-22	Year to date
	Million pounds		Percent	
Organic Whole Milk	111	1346	-4.8%	2%
Flavored Whole milk	1	15	-73.8%	-21.60%
Organic Reduced Fat Milk (2%)	76	946	-10.2%	-3.40%
Organic Low Fat Milk (1%)	24	289	-13.7%	-9.70%
Organic Fat Free Milk Skim	13	165	-13.7%	-8.10%
Organic Flavored Fat-Reduced Milk	5	82	-30.0%	-0.20%
Other Fluid Organic Milk Products	0	2	-14.2%	32.20%
Total Fat Reduced Milk	118	1485	-12.3%	-5%
Total Organic Milk Products	230	**2,846**	**-9.4%**	**-2%**

UTILIZATION OF ORGANIC FLUID MILK PRODUCTS BY POOL PLANTS IN FEDERAL MILK MARKETING ORDER 1 - NORTHEAST
(Million pounds)

	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2023	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2022	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2021	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2020	Increase/Decrease of 2023 over 2022	Increase/Decrease of 2022 over 2021
JANUARY	37.00	29.14	31.32	23.93	26.97%	-7%
FEBRUARY		33.65	31.56	26.69		7%
MARCH		31.56	31.87	27.90		-1%
APRIL		33.23	28.97	29.35		15%
MAY		30.49	29.72	28.25		3%
JUNE		31.53	28.41	26.90		11%
JULY		29.44	25.50	26.70		15%
AUGUST		32.12	27.18	24.70		18%
SEPTEMBER		35.00	30.26	29.70		16%
OCTOBER		34.83	29.47	25.78		18%
NOVEMBER		31.13	31.07	24.47		0.18%
DECEMBER		33.78	31.36	28.13		8%
ANNUAL		385.90	356.68	322.50		8%

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the previous year. The utilization of fluid organic reduced fat milk during 2022 increased by 2.59 million pounds from the previous year, totaling 196.11 million pounds, compared to 193.52 million pounds a year ago. That is a respectful 8% increase from 2021 to 2022 in fluid milk utilization. It says nothing about where the milk originated from. In January 2023, we saw an increase in utilization of organic fluid whole milk by 3.89 million pounds to 17.64 million pounds, and an increase of 3.97 million pounds in the utilization of organic reduced fat milk, to 19.36 million pounds.

Mercaris supplies data on the average pay price for organic milk over the spot price. There was not a significant amount of trading on the Spot Market in October but some in November and December 2022. Processors and buyers report that organic milk is short in the Northeast.

U.S. Organic Dairy Prices (U.S. Dollars per CWT)		
Date	Spot Fluid Milk Price	Fluid Milk Pay Price
Mar-22	$ 33.21	$ 28.54
Apr-22	$ 32.72	$ 29.59
May-22	$ 33.88	$ 28.77
Jun-22	$ 35.88	$ 29.05
Jul-22	$ 35.88	$ 28.37
Aug-22	$ 37.05	$ 29.66
Sep-22	$ 37.05	$ 29.66
Oct-22	$ 36.08	$ 29.66
Nov-22	$ 36.08	$ 29.66
Dec-22	$ 35.15	$ 31.60
Jan-23	$ 34.98	$ 31.60
Data from Mercarus 2/24/2023		

AMS reports organic milk retail prices for selected U.S. cities. The January 2023 in-store retail surveys showed the average retail price increased to $4.81. Pittsburgh, PA had the highest average retail price for January 2023 at $6.49 per half gallon, while many states had the lowest retail price of $3.99 per half gallon. In the northeast, the retail price average in New England and New York is $4.80 per half gallon.

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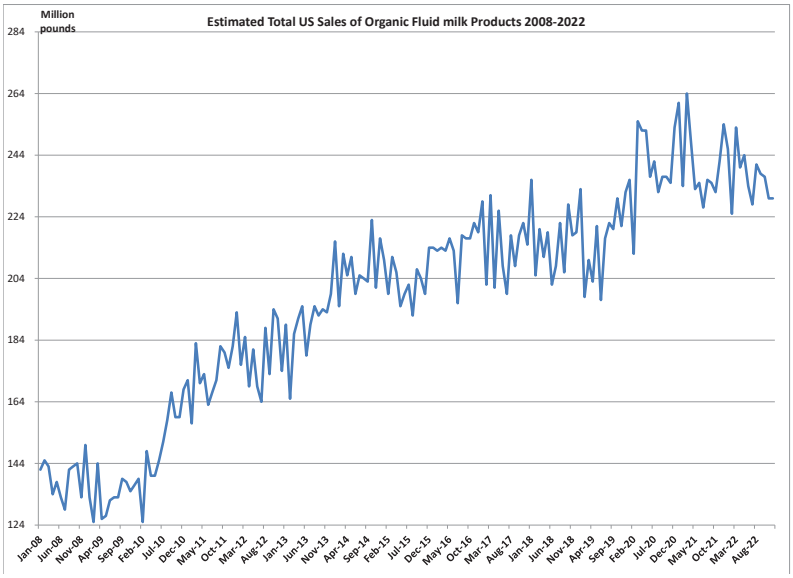

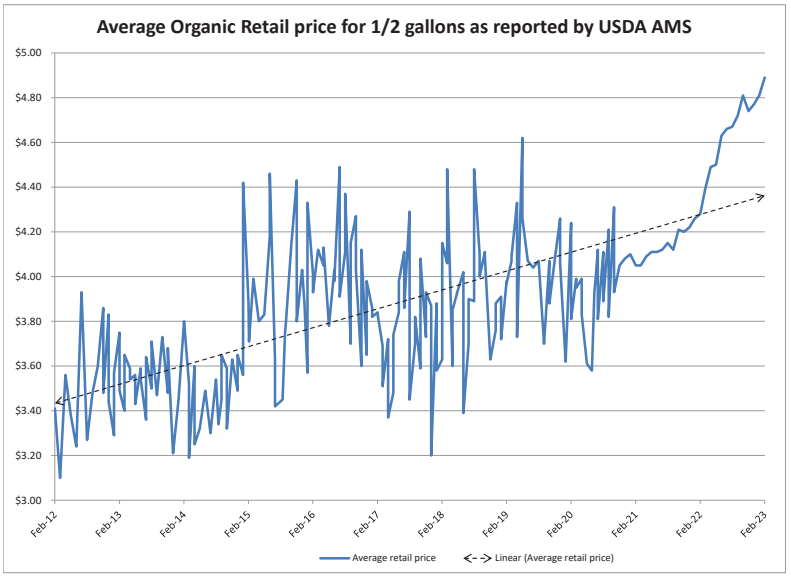

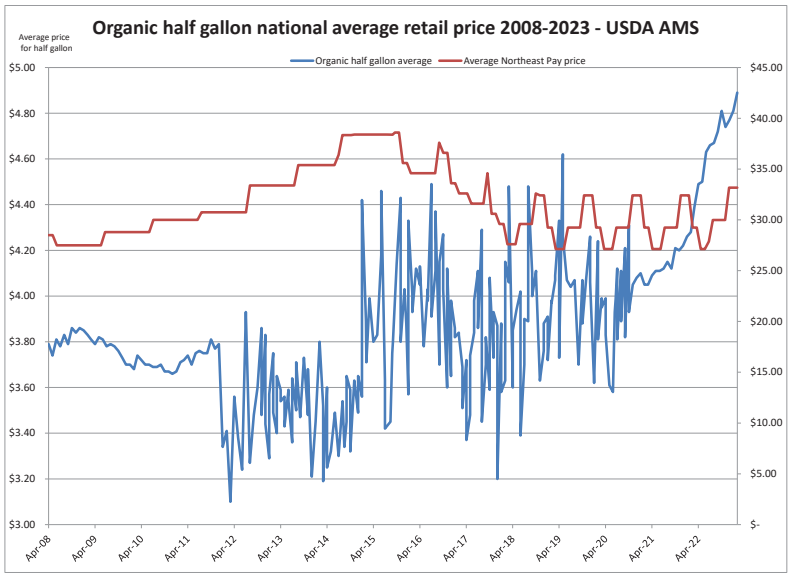

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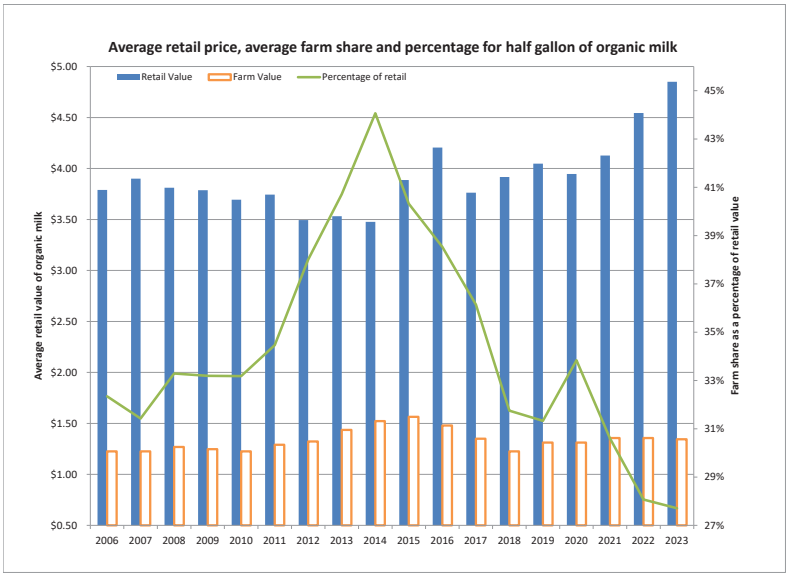

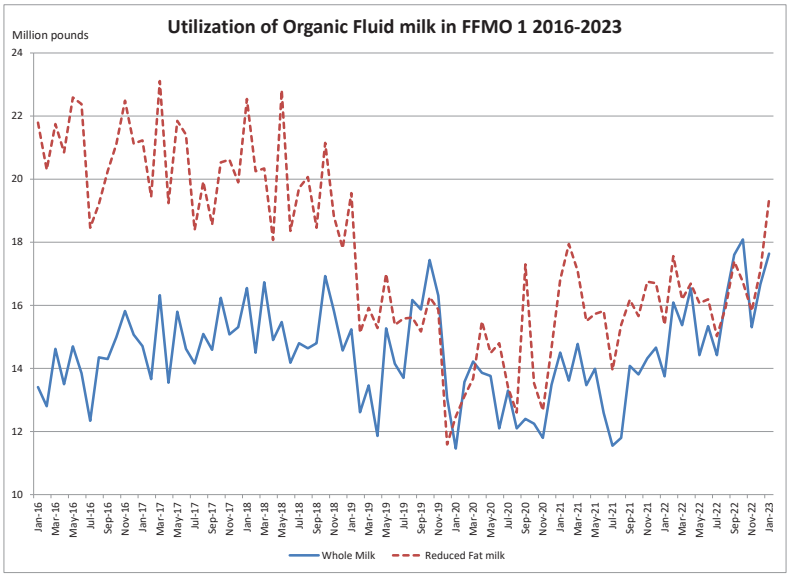

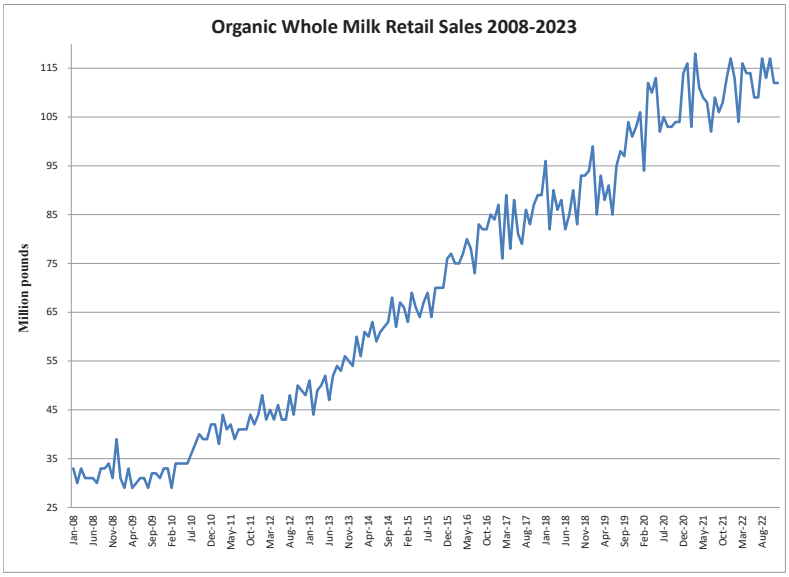

Pay and Feed Prices

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Update on action by USDA to provide Targeted Relief to organic dairy farm families

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) responded to the report language in the Omnibus spending bill in December 2022, requiring USDA to find sources of funding to help organic dairy farmers by announcing plans to distribute funding on Monday, January 23rd. The newly announced Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance Program (ODMAP), which has funding of $100 million, will be administered by USDA's FSA. The program will cover up to 75 percent of projected 2023 marketing costs for eligible organic dairy producers - targeting small and mid-sized operations. The $100 million will probably be paid in dollars per cwt based on anticipated milk production based on FSA's estimated marketing dollars. The payment using Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) funds will go to Congress sometime in March 2023 for approval and a program will be published 'later in 2023'. In separate state initiatives, both Vermont, initiated by NOFA VT, and Maine, proposed by MOFGA, have had proposals before their annual budget committees for targeted relief for organic dairy producers in 2023.

Mercaris reports that U.S. organic soybean imports increased 27% y/y over 2021/22 (Sep-Aug marketing year), following declining organic soybean meal imports and escalating U.S. organic soybean crush. Imports from Africa increased 163% y/y to 29,000 metric ton (MT-1 metric ton = 2,200 pounds of soybeans) with 72% of African-sourced organic soybeans entering the U.S. through Gulf Coast ports (6,000 MT) according to USDA Global Agricultural Trade System (GATS) data. Over 2021/22, the share of imported African organic soybeans entering the U.S. across the Canadian border reached 22%, up from 2% the year prior but there was a decline in imports of Canadian organic soybeans. Over the first four months of 2022/23 marketing year, imports from Africa have accounted for 40% of the organic soybeans Canada has exported to the US. Imports of Canadian organic soybeans declined by 44% y/y to less than 8,000 MT. Organic whole and cracked corn imports nearly doubled over January 2023 reaching 22,000 metric tons with an increase in organic crack corn imports of nearly 18,000 metric tons from Turkey,

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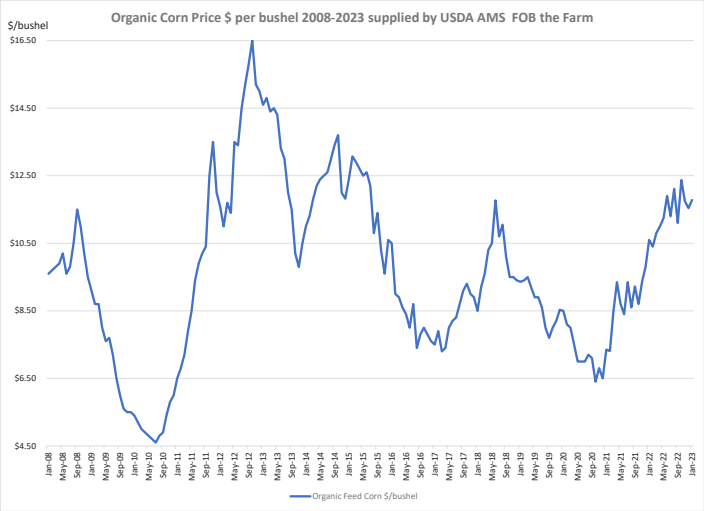

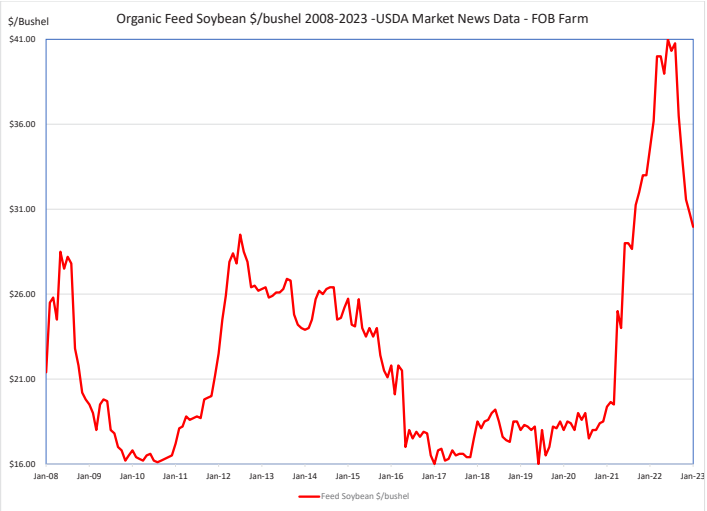

Organic feed corn was $11.02/bushel FOB the farm in February 2023. Despite an increase in January, U.S. organic corn imports remained down 13% compared to the year prior, through the first five months of 2022/23. Organic soybean imports slumped to less than 2,000 MT over January, as organic soybean imports from Argentina were expected to slow seasonally.

Organic feed soybean was trading at $26.15/bushel FOB the farm in February 2023, and organic soybean meal is averaging $1,255 per short ton (ST). Organic soybean meal imports of 82,000 MT year to date matched the previous year with supplies from the Black Sea region exceeding 13,000 MT, and continued imports from Africa which reached 3,000 MT. ◆

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Organically Enhancing Land with Multi-use Crops

By Tamara Scully, NODPA Contributing Writer

Buckwheat and cereal rye are two crops known for their use as a cover crop. But these crops are suited to other uses, too. Although the benefits of cover cropping are numerous, growers can "add value" to these cover by utilizing them in additional ways.

Buckwheat Benefits

The NOFA-NY winter conference session "Better Crops through Buckwheat" featured Klaas Martens of Lakeview Organic Grain and Dr. Thomas Björkman of Cornell AgriTech, along with Kyle Gifford of The Birkett Mills, covering buckwheat from planting to sale. While buckwheat is an ideal cover crop for vegetable growers, its characteristics also make it a ideal crop in many more situations, and dairy farmers in the Northeast may find many reasons to add a buckwheat crop.

Buckwheat is a pseudo-grain. It has fine roots which add tilth to soils, germinates quickly in proper conditions to prevent weed growth, has a root exudate that attacks pathogenic soil organisms, can be grown in low fertility soils, requires little cash outlay to plant and requires virtually no care until harvest.

The Birkett Mills is one ready market in the region, offering farmers a direct contract with a hundredweight price and no yield limits, and the demand for buckwheat for human use is growing. The current contracted price for 2023 is $45.00/cwt, Gifford said, and the mill needs all of the buckwheat it can procure, fueled by consumer demand for this gluten-free, versatile staple food which acts like rice or quinoa.

Organic Multi-tasker

When buckwheat flowers, which it does a few short weeks after planting, pollinators appear, including honeybees. The presence of pollinators is a boon to other crops, and the increased insect diversity can mean less pressure from pests, and more beneficial insects. Buckwheat itself has no pest or disease problems, and requires very little - if any - added fertility, qualities which make it ideal for organic farms.

Buckwheat suppresses weeds due to its rapid germination. In trials, portions of the same field with the same fertility were left fallow after a spring crop, and others were planted to buckwheat in early July. There were no weeds seen in the buckwheat plot, while the fallow ground had numerous perennial weeds by fall.

Buckwheat is recommended as a first crop when idle fields are being brought into production, as a rotation crop for hay or pasture, whenever ground is left bare following early crop harvest, or when land needs to be reclaimed from quackgrass, Dr. Björkman said.

Pioneers used buckwheat after clearing trees from the land, Martens said. Soil tilth is enhanced by buckwheat, due to actions of its fine roots. And if land was depleted, farmers would plant a buckwheat crop to release fertility from the soil and rejuvenate it. Buckwheat is good in fields where phosphorous is lacking, as it can break the bonds between phosphorous and other elements, making phosphorous available for its own use, and making it available in the soil.

"They seem to release more phosphorous than they use," Martens said of buckwheat plants.

Martens has had excellent results utilizing buckwheat in fields where legumes are grown. Legumes are prone to root rot, and

buckwheat has a root exudate which erodes the cell walls of pathogenic soil nematodes and fungi which cause root rot. He's found "a huge difference in the health of the legume crops that follow."

Aside from the benefits to the soil and subsequent crops, buckwheat is also a high-value forage crop. It can be planted and harvested for haylage or baleage at flowering, which occurs in as little as five or six weeks, Dr. Björkman said. When cut at this time, the protein is good and the digestibility is high. This allows those facing forage shortages a chance to plant buckwheat, rather than buying in hay. Buckwheat can also be grazed.

"It really has a high feed value. It's an excellent forage crop," he said.

From Planting to Harvest

While buckwheat is low-care from planting to harvest, those steps must be done correctly to insure a worry-free crop. The seed does well in low fertility soil as long as it is planted in non-compacted soils. Shallow planting, at the rate of 50lbs/acre if drilling seed and 50-70lbs/acre if broadcasting, is ideal. Uniform spacing of no more than 10 inches means the plant will quickly out-compete weeds due to its rapid germination.

Areas in which puddling occur are to be avoided, as the seed won't germinate if it is too wet after planting, including if heavy rains occur. It does not do well when trying to germinate in the intense summer heat either.

"You have to do every one of these steps with a great deal of care to have success," with growing buckwheat, Dr. Björkman said. Buckwheat planted early or late, depending on climate, might lose vigor and have reduced yield. In poor soils, it will require more fertility to produce well. It can do well in low pH if the soil is healthy.

Buckwheat seed is ready for harvest when it is primarily black. At this time, the plant is still green, and may even have some flowers. But if the seed is left longer, it will drop, so a timely harvest is important. It can be direct combined, however a special rotor needs to be used, to prevent tangling. Windrow harvesting by cutting the swath high and allowing it to cure for a week or so allows it to be combined quickly and readily.

Establishing buckwheat is low cost, and the time and labor needed to grow the crop are minimal. It is typically planted in early July and harvested in October, although ideal times are going to be highly dependent on location and desired use of the crop. Early or late planting can allow double cropping or use as a cover crop. If frost occurs, the plant must be harvested within 24- 48 hours or the grain will drop.

Harvesting the seeds for sale, utilizing the plant for forage, or adding buckwheat as a cover crop: the benefits buckwheat provides to the soil make it an appealing rotation crop in a myriad of situations. With few drawbacks, buckwheat offers organic dairy farmers options to enhance their soils, feed their cows and diversify their income stream.

This organic-friendly crop - relatively pest and disease free, requiring little time or inputs to grow - is valued for its ability to enhance soil tilth, reduce soil pathogens and add fertility to soil naturally. It adds economic value through these intrinsic qualities, has value as a dairy forage crop, and can also be sold as a in-demand cash crop as the popularity of buckwheat for human consumption continues to grow.

Developing Rye's Potential

University of Vermont Extension Agronomist Heather Darby is well-versed in growing cereal rye, popularly used as a cover crop. She presented a session, "Capturing Value with Cereal Rye" at the recent NOFA-NY Winter Conference, offering farmers ways to do more with this valuable cover crop.

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Organically Enhancing Land with Multi-use Crops

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"Cover crops in our landscape are really important, but there are other things we can do with rye as well," Darby said. "So many farmers are familiar with rye now. It's the most widely grown grain in our state (Vermont.) What else could we do with that, to maybe add additional value?"

Dairy farmers have been finding real value by using rye as a forage, by mowing it down and harvesting it in the fall, and by having cows graze it in the spring after planting it as a fall cover crop. Darby shared data from Practical Farmers of Iowa which demonstrated the potential of cereal rye cover crops to provide spring forage to dairy herds.

"There are variety differences, especially in regards to yields," she said, with some hybrid varieties are showing large yield gains. "Two and a half tons of feed the first thing in the spring is really helpful to many farmers, and cereal rye is ready before anything else."

Harvesting cereal rye grain for animal feed is a growing trend in the United States. Hybrids are also yielding higher grain yields. Rye is cross-pollinated via the wind, but hybrids on the market are not open pollinated, but have been developed via a specialized breeding system.

Due to its root system, which can grow one meter deep, cereal rye is drought-tolerant and it requires 20 to 30 percent less water than does wheat. It is hardy, with more frost tolerance than wheat, too. Rye germinates at 33 to 41 degrees Fahrenheit, and grows quickly in the fall, typically forming tillers, which provide about half of its yield.

It does require at least 40 days of freezing temperatures for vernalization, so is best suited to northern regions, and matures in 295 days. Spring-planted cereal rye won't produce grain, as the seeds can't vernalize, but it can be valuable as a forage crop.

Fusarium head blight is an issue, as is ergot, whether grown for human or livestock use. Fusarium fungi can produce mycotoxins which impact immune, gastrointestinal and reproductive systems. Ergot is a fungal structure produced by Claviceps fungi, which overwinters, and it grows out of the grain where the seed should be. These are highly toxic to livestock and humans, causing gangrene and other serious concerns. Ergot germinates and re-infects the grain, and growers need to clean this out before the grain can be utilized for livestock feed or food production. There is a growing market demand for locally-grown rye grain.

This winter annual is valued as a rotation crop in corn-soybean systems, establishing well in cold temperatures following the fall corn harvest, and preventing erosion, enhancing soil health and allowing a hay or grain crop to be harvested prior to planting soybeans in spring. Rye requires less inputs and expense than corn, and may be an alternative to corn for some farmers.

"Rye doesn't use as much water. It doesn't use as much fertilizer," as corn does, Darby said.

With environmental benefits, feed benefits, a growing market as a food crop, cereal rye - like buckwheat - is evolving from a cover crop into a multi-use crop which can add value to the farm in many ways. Dairy farmers can harvest these crops for forage, graze them, or harvest for grain depending on need, allowing flexibility while gaining ecosystem and economic benefits. ◆

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Ask the Vet

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Submitted by a NODPA News reader: Tell us more about Staph. Aureus

mother, but when they get older, they become indiscriminate nursers. This means that if you have S. aureus in your herd, a calf could suckle on a cow shedding S. Aureus, then with her mouth full of bacteria, go ahead and nurse on a cow that is not infected, thereby transmitting the disease. If keeping calves on mothers or nurse cows is part of your heifer raising program, consider keeping a separate nurse herd to keep the calves away from the milkers.

So you have S. aureus in your herd, now what? There are many good strategies to help keep it under control. If you have the ability, milk the S. aureus cows last and don't touch non-infected udders after you have prepped the infected ones. If you milk in a parlor and do not control the order of cows, you can sanitize machines with a sanitizing solution after milking a S. aureus cow. Consult with your chemical supplier for an appropriate solution. Make sure to change inflation liners according to the label directions or at least twice a year. If you are using a sanitizing solution in between cows you should consider changing liners more frequently because they develop cracks, which can harbor the bacteria. Just like bare hands and cracked inflations harboring bacteria, towels can too. It is critical to use a separate towel for each cow. Additionally, I think it is valuable to screen fresh cows. This means sending in a culture of the post-colostrum milk. Sometimes you will get a false positive from a cow shedding what's been sitting in her teat cistern for the dry period. When you get a S. aureus positive culture from screening, culture at least two more times two weeks apart, and if those are both negative you can consider her not infected. And unfortunately, since this infection will not cure, I would recommend putting that cow on the cull list.

S. aureus can be an overwhelming problem, but ignoring it will not help and will only make it worse. Your first step is to find out if it's in your herd. A simple bulk tank culture will detect it. Then look into the listed risk factors above to see where you can improve your systems. Keep on top of it, and be vigilant. You will benefit from better milk quality and more milk if you do. ◆

Do you have a question for Dr. Locitzer, or an area you'd like her to focus on in future issue? Please send them to the NODPA News editor, noraowens@comcast.net who will share them with her.

SAVE THE DATE

for the 23rd Annual NODPA Field Days

September 28 & 29, 2023

Location: The exact location hasn't been identified but it will be near Allensville/Reedsville in central Pennsylvania

We've just started to plan the program but we are excited to announce that Alvin Peachey will be joining us. Alvin Peachey is an Amish organic dairy farmer from central Pennsylvania. Over the course of more than a decade, Alvin has grown his operation to 90 100% grass-fed cows on 92 acres, implementing regenerative practices that flip the script of the status quo for dairy farmers. Alvin will share his experiences and offer a tour of his farm.

Lots more information will be on the NODPA website (www.nodpa.com) in the coming weeks, and the May NODPA News issue will be full of details.

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Working With Mother Nature... Heifer Maturity Matters

By Dan Leiterman, Crystal Creek Natural, LLC.
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Photo: © iStock

Not every seemingly good idea spawned with good intentions by dedicated professionals turns out to be an effective, practical solution. The case in point discussed here; What is the proper age for a dairy heifer to freshen at? Research presented at the 4-State Nutrition Conference this year, and reviewed in this article, shows that the industry's efforts to freshen dairy heifers at 22 months of age vs. 24 months of age is detrimental to the lifetime productivity of the cow and to the farmer's profitability.

As with any idea, it is critical to ask questions about whether or not it aligns with key fundamental dairy principles, i.e. biological, physical, and chemical effects of pushing Mother Nature and its resulting economic impact on the herd

Perceived Incentives/Reasons for Breeding Dairy Heifers Earlier

On the surface, there were a number of reasons cited that seemed logical at the time to pursue a strategy of breeding dairy heifers at an earlier age. Some of these key reasons were to begin milk production earlier, to reduce heifer inventory and to reduce heifer feed and production costs. This study showed that if the cull rate in a herd was 30%, 35% or 40% the heifer inventory needed to be approximately 15% higher for freshening heifers at 24 months of age vs. 21 months of age. The issue of maintaining herd size with an aggressive heifer breeding program however is a band-aid to a much larger underlying problem on many dairy herds of 'poor herd maturity'. Breeding heifers before they are biologically mature enough to be bred reduces their milk production for life, reduces longevity in the herd and

consequently their lifetime productivity and profitability for the producer. When utilizing this strategy, the die is cast for life and there is little that can be done to change this, despite aggressive nutritional strategies.

Age and Bodyweight at Calving Impacts Production and Maturity

1. Age at Freshening Impacts Milk Production:

   a. 1st lactation: Calving age of 24 months vs. 21 months showed a production of 21,100 lb. vs. 20,300 lb. respectively in 1st lactation.

   b. 2nd lactation: The milk production difference between 1st lactation and 2nd lactation Holsteins at 5 weeks of lactation is normally 30 lb. Consequently, if the first lactation is reduced due to lower bodyweight at freshening it will continue to lower milk production into the 2nd lactation.

   c. 3rd lactation: The milk production difference between 2nd and 3rd lactation in Holsteins at 5 weeks of lactation is typically 8 to 10 lb. 3rd lactation is directly linked to 1st lactation production. If 1st lactation production is lower due to early bred and lighter weight heifers, then the 3rd lactation production will also be lower.

   d. Studies also showed that the lower production in the 2nd and 3rd lactation due to reduced production in the 1st lactation, caused by early breeding and light bodyweight heifers, appears to be independent of the level of milk production or milking frequency.

2. Body Weight at Freshening and Post-Calving Impacts Milk Production:

   a. Older heifers freshening with heavier bodyweight have more milk production potential than lighter, earlier bred heifers. Heifers that are 60 lb. heavier at freshening result in producing a 3 to 4 lb. increase for the whole herd average.

   b. Research showed that heifers with 1,211 to 1,320 lb. post-calving bodyweight had 1,200 lb. more milk production potential vs. 1,100 lb. post-calving bodyweight heifers.

Age at Calving Impacts Cow Longevity in the Herd

This study referenced research that showed weight at calving impacts cow survival and disease occurrence. For example, heifers calving with body weights of 1,100 to 1,200 lb. vs. 1,200 – 1,300 lb. had a 6% lower survival rate and significantly higher rates of metritis.

The bottom line message with this research is, "the herd cannot outperform production level set by 1st lactation". Consequently, if heifers freshen before 24 months of age, milk production and herd longevity are significantly reduced and pushing more nutrition will not change this situation. The strategy of freshening heifers at an early age proves to be unwise and in conflict with basic principles of good dairy cow management. Breeding heifers before they are biologically ready limits the production and profitability of not only the heifers, but of the entire herd for life.

Even more importantly, the nutrition and management concepts that focus heavily on rolling herd average and not on lifetime production of a cow is the root cause of much of this misdirected strategy. Optimum milk production comes from cows that mature properly and their production during their 4th, 5th and 6th lactations. Trying to make immature cows perform like mature cows is incompatible with the basic principles of sustainable and profitable dairy production.

Give us a call at Crystal Creek® to put your herd on a sustainable nutrition and management program. We are here to help you reach your business goals. ◆

FEATURED FARM

Daughter-in-law, Eunice, putting out more chocolate milk at market.

COULTER FARMS, HONEY GROVE, PA

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D.C. beltway in Maryland and northern Virginia. They also sell through their website, fulfilling online orders for pickup at the farm or the farmers' markets, and also offer shipping options for most of the farm's product line. Along with the cheeses, yogurt, kefir, butter and pasteurized milk directly from their dairy herd, they also sell their own beef.

Eliminating the middle men has given the family the freedom to capture the premium from their milk. By doing the work themselves they've developed economic viability which balances out milk production, their land base, and the demand for their products. This system allows the family to support multiple generations with income from the dairy. Profits from retail sales pay the bills for the equipment, infrastructure, labor and packaging needed to operate the farm.

The Coulter's three adult sons - Jared, Jason and Jacob, and all of whom are married - are employed full-time by the dairy and take wages from farm, as is Kinley. Adult daughter Jessica works part-time on the farm, as does Rebecca, Kinley's wife. The family's three youngest children are school-aged. Other employees are the four to six part-timers who go to the farmers' markets, and perform the inventory, packing and clean-up those markets require.

Unconventional Milk Math

"Processing is at least the same, or more challenging, then organic dairy milk marketing," Kinley said. "For the first three to five years since the startup of the business, significant labor is being done that isn't getting paid. Now, 12 years into the dairy processing, we are kind of measuring success in the sense that nobody is donating labor anymore. We are paid at market price for labor."

While the dairy is profitable, Kinley emphasized that there is a lot of expense involved in running the processing and retail sides of the operation, in addition to the costs for the dairy farm itself. Feed, equipment, finding and developing well-paying retail markets as well as selling at those markets requires a balancing act. It is all about persistence, determination and matching the supply and the variability of the lactation curve to the demand to the infrastructure to the labor, and finding the equation that works.

It's just not the same formula for success as when selling the bulk milk off-farm, where maximizing production typically means maximizing profits from the milk check. When processing your own milk, the premium hundredweight price of the finished product is entirely captured by the farm.

Although the price per hundredweight is inflated over what organic milk processors are going to pay to purchase the milk and haul it from the farm; the cost of equipment, electricity, time, labor and other incidentals associated with milking the herd and processing the milk have to be accounted for in the final sales price of the dairy products.

The lowest price per hundredweight that the Coulters receive for their value-added dairy products is for those products sold at a bulk discount rate, and is about $140.00/hundredweight. Smaller orders and specialty products sell at $300.00 to $400.00/hundredweight.

The income from sales of the farm's dairy products is high. But so are the operating costs, Kinley said. "For a hundredweight price in the hundreds, and not the forties or fifties, the volume of milk production is not as critical," and producing the most milk isn't the end goal.

FEATURED FARM

Beginning the Dairy

Rebecca grew up on a conventional, confined Holstein dairy farm, and was not seeking to continue dairy farming in her married life. Instead, Kinley and Rebecca started a 100 percent, organic, grass-fed beef business, raising purebred Herefords and selling retail cuts of beef in farmers' markets in the Washington D.C. area, where they were able to maximize the price they could charge for the meat, and where there were a volume of customers seeking local beef. With 14 hour days, and the cost of traveling almost three hours each way several days per week, the farm still was not profitable. With four young children at the time, the family needed to make a living income, and beef alone was not going to accomplish this.

In order to make this business model profitable, the Coulters needed to pivot their farming operation. They decided that the retail markup on organic, grass-fed raw cheeses would enable them to make the farm profitable, despite the costs they would incur to establish a processing facility on the farm, and the time and labor associated with making the cheese.

For the first five years, they purchased the milk from a neighboring farm and successfully grew the cheesemaking business, to the point that they were covering their costs and making a profit at the farmers' markets, and the farm became sustainable. But the milk supply was anything but predictable. The dairy farmer supplying them also sold to a large, organic milk cooperative, and that coop was first in line for the milk.

Clearly, in order to continue to expand their processing success, they were going to have to consider becoming dairy farmers, something Rebecca had little interest in doing, despite knowing quite a lot about dairy cows and the science and art of dairy farming. But Kinley and their three sons, who were all teenagers at that time, wanted to become dairy farmers. "Here we were. My boys and I were kind of gung-ho," Kinley said, so they compromised.

Promising Rebecca that she'd never have to milk a cow, they took the plunge in 2010 and purchased 20 organic Jersey calves. Since

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Daughter-in-law, Katrina, with granddaughter Mataya is visiting the cows.

FEATURED FARM

COULTER FARMS, HONEY GROVE, PA

continued from page 23

that purchase, the herd has been a closed herd. And to this day, Rebecca has held firm in her desire not to milk the cows, so she performs other farm duties and keeps the books, and shares her knowledge of cows as needed.

Growing the Dairy

The farm already had fenced pastures, complete with in-ground water lines, for the beef herd, as well as all of the equipment they needed to graze and maintain the pastures, and make hay or baleage. While starting to milk with a herd of freshening heifers was not the easiest way to begin dairy farming, "it was an avenue for us to get in," Kinley said. "We needed the two years of raising the animals to get ready for processing and to set up our plant," so it worked in their favor.

Coulter Farms consists of about 270 acres of land owned by the family, plus 30 rented acres for hay. The home farm has 100 acres of pasture dedicated to the milking herd, which has now grown to its maximum size of 70 head. This is the first year that they are not keeping all the heifers for replacements. It's also the first year that they are no longer a seasonal herd.

"The farm markets shut down in the winter," so fully seasonal spring calving matched their production needs, and worked for the farm up until now, Kinley said. They've somewhat reluctantly decided that the premium markets they have earned their way into demand winter sales of fluid milk, as they are in operation year-round. The plan now is to have the heifers freshen in September, while the cows will still calve in early March, enabling them to continue to have fresh bottled milk to sell year-round.

The heifers and dry cows graze on their own 53 acres of pasture, located at Jason's nearby farm, which is also used for making hay. Jared's farm has a bank barn with 40 acres of dual use pasture and hay ground. The land is used as needed for grazing, particularly during dry years. Another 75 acres of land for hay also has fencing and water, but due to its remote location is not often used for animal grazing.

The entire herd is winter housed in a bedded pack, two-sided 100 by 100 foot structure on the home farm. The bedded pack is made with old hay, which is "crude but very inexpensive and effective," Kinley said, or occasionally with purchased certified organic corn fodder or straw.

As they don't produce any row crops, and purchasing bedding is expensive, so utilizing some grass for bedding hay is normally the plan. Except in a dry year, they are able to sacrifice some grass for bedding hay. They take a first cutting of hay off of all the pastures, leaving about one-quarter of that hay until the end of July and cutting it after it is about five feet tall. They make round bales, and simply unroll these by hand onto the bedded pack. The bales are very absorbent.

"We farm too many acres and we can hardly get around to all of our acreage in the time to make dairy quality hay, so letting some of it mature for bedding makes sense," Kinley said.

The bedded pack is cleaned out in the spring, and placed in windrows. The manure from the parlor is scrapped with a skid-steer loader and piled until it is mixed with the bedded pack each spring. After the first cutting of hay is taken, the composted

Daughters Meagan and Sabrina are making friends with Miriam the cow

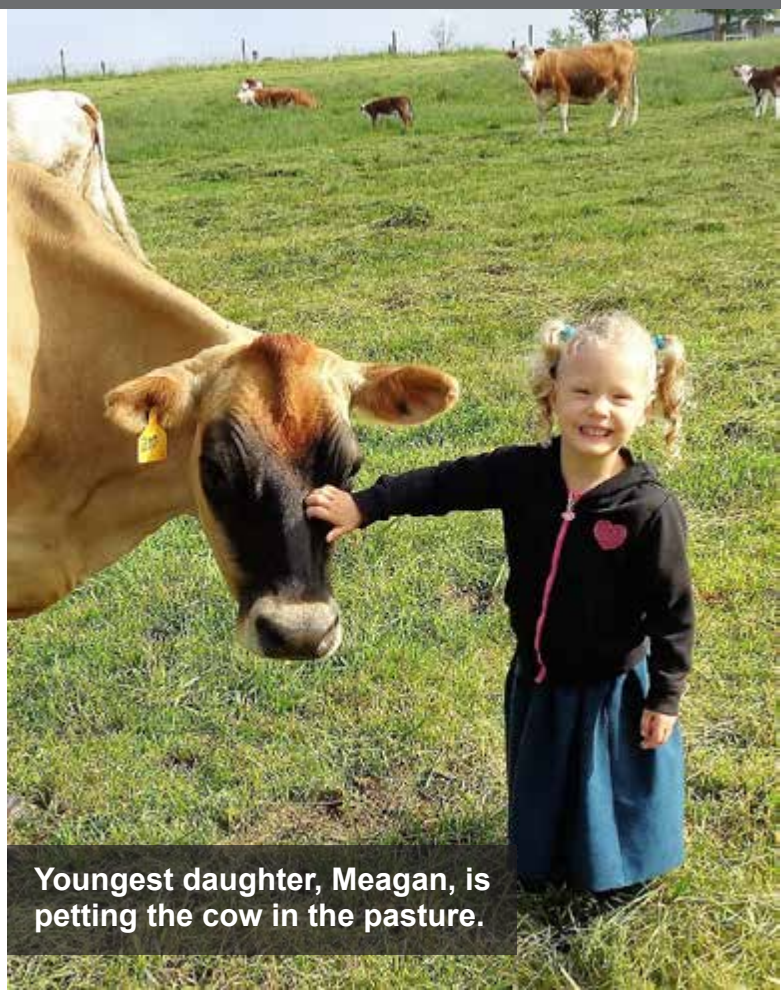
material is spread onto the full 100 acres of pasture at the home farm, providing fertility to all of the fields.

The bedded pack works best with no more than 70 head. The size of the bulk tank, the milk truck they use to haul milk from the bulk tank to the processing room, and the swing 10 parlor all are suited to the 70 head herd size, which is the size at which "everything clicks," Kinley said, and where "our milk is fully committed." The 40 pounds of milk per cow per day isn't going to waste, and they don't need any more, either, as they sell everything they produce. Most importantly, their herd size is optimal for their land base.

"The land base...at the end of the day...that's the one thing that doesn't flex," he said.

Just Forages

The cows here have a very simple diet, no matter the season. In the winter, the milking herd receives free choice baleage, with dry hay in feeders. They do feed minerals, but no other supplements are provided. Year-round, during the once-per-day milking, the cows are tempted with a small amount of organic cane sugar, which is on-hand for the ice cream, yogurt and chocolate milk produced by the dairy. This treat makes them more tolerable of being packed in a bit tightly, ten per side, in the parlor.



Youngest daughter, Meagan, is petting the cow in the pasture.

The cows are fed on an outdoor concrete slab when housed in the bedded pack. They are also given pasture access when the ground is frozen, with hay spread on pasture to feed the herd when possible throughout the non-grazing season.

Jason is the herdsman, and is responsible for grazing and forage management. The milking herd is given fresh breaks daily, and each paddock is grazed for two to three days, depending on season and forage quality and quantity. The heifer and dry cows - located off of the home farm - are divided into two or three groups, which are rotated to new pastures every three to seven days. At times they clip pastures, and have done so in front of and behind the cows. It all depends on the availability of the grass.

Grazing season begins a bit later and ends a bit sooner than can be typical in other local grazing operations, commencing in the beginning of May and typically ending in mid-October, and no later than the first of November. While they could graze into November some seasons, they opt not to stress the pastures with cow grazing, as the deer will graze them severely enough in the fall. The permanent perimeter fencing - with each pasture being ten to fifteen acres - isn't a deterrent to the deer, nor is the temporary 3-wire high tensile fencing dividing pastures into two acre paddocks.

The challenge each fall is to retire the pasture with grass enough to feed those deer without damaging regrowth in spring. While Kinley knows they are losing milk production by not capturing the grass for their cows, they have very high deer pressure, as the pastures are all surrounded by woods. Despite their push to increase the amount of hunting being done on the land, the deer have to be factored into the fall grazing equation.

Spring grazing doesn't begin until the grass is a full, healthy stand, and tall - at least ten inches. While they'd like to extend the season and always hope to get cows on grass by April 15th, the reality is that most of the time it does not happen.

Pastures are primarily orchard grass, although they are seeded about every six years with a 30 species grazing mix, and all are dual use for grazing and hay. Each year, however, only one-half are taken for a first cutting of hay, after which no more grass is taken for feed. They wrap 700 four by five foot bales for baleage, and make roughly 700 dry square bales from that first cutting.

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FEATURED FARM

COULTER FARMS, HONEY GROVE, PA

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The goal is to have 50 percent legumes in the pastures, but they aren't there yet. "We admire people who have a nicer mix of legumes," Kinley said.

Pasture renovation occurs in the fall, after they do a hard graze. They then will feed the herd on frozen ground, rotating the feeders. In the spring, they will plant sorghum or another summer annual, then seed the pasture back to grass in the fall.

Pasture make-up isn't only about forage quantity. A primary goal is to not have any off-flavors in the milk. Previous trials with forage turnips and radish resulted in lush pastures, but the milk smelled like turnips and could not be utilized. And the calves wouldn't drink it, either.

Breeding and Calf Care

All breeding is done with bulls. They use two bulls with the milking herd, and one with the heifers. They select for fertility, milk production, and body condition. They are impressed with the Jersey's ease of calving, and 95 percent of the births are unassisted.

Purebred Jerseys make up the herd at Coulter Farms.

"These are animals that are not just surviving, but which are thriving in our system," Kinley said.

If they have a few heifers that for whatever reason won't fit the bill, they will sell them, primarily to homesteaders seeking a family cow. "Our cows are well-suited to that," Kinley said.

Calves are raised on whole raw milk, basically on a free choice basis. Milk is fed using a 12 nipple milk parlor feeder. Calves are given some dry hay and minerals for the first 90 days. Individual calf pens, located on the bedded pack, are used for the first 30 days. The next 30 days are spent in group pens on the bedded pack, before being turned out on spring pastures. Because they have been a seasonal herd until 2023, this will be the first year with heifers freshening in September, so calves will remain in pens on the bedded pack for 90 days until weaned.

Health

They don't routinely vaccinate calves, or the herd.

Each year, they do tend to lose, on average, one calf for failure to thrive, due to some unknown reason. Their vet suggested they start feeding calves pasteurized, rather than raw, milk, but they are not going to implement that as it is one calf out of 20 born each year, and does not justify the added time and labor, and they are not really sure pasteurization is a solution.

There aren't any serious health concerns in the herd. They don't frequently use a veterinarian, with visits about once per year for non-routine occurrences. They do their own pregnancy bloodwork on the farm. They try to prevent health concerns, rather than treat them, Kinley said.

Udder Comfort is used for mastitis prevention, and they will milk cows with a problem quarter dried off if need be. They have experienced milk fever after almost every fourth lactation, so they routinely provide intravenous calcium or CMPK preventatively now, to decrease the rate of occurrence.

Culling is typically for behavioral problems, or if

FEATURED FARM

mastitis is recurrent. They'll cull if the cow is struggling to be well-mannered in the parlor. Four or five cows are culled each year. Having just reached maximum herd size, they haven't yet determined how they will move forward with culling decisions. Their oldest cows are now about ten years old, having been with the herd since its inception.

"We're not at the point where we have a cow that we've decided was too old yet," Kinley said.

Marketing

When the grass isn't growing, the herd has - up until this year - gone dry. During the winter months, processing stopped, and sales were from what remained in storage. When the herd freshened in the spring, the family began making fresh product.

Their aged cheeses - roughly 80 percent of the farm's cheese production - are made from raw milk, while the fresh cheeses, yogurt, kefir, ice cream and butter are made from pasteurized milk. They bottle whole milk, including chocolate flavored. They use two vat pasteurizers, having a 100-gallon and a 200-gallon model, both of which are fired from wood felled from the woods surrounding their pastures.

It's all about balancing the milk supply with the demand for their various products.

"Cheese holds for months, so it's a tool," for keeping sales going even when milk production is low. But even that has its limits, as "you can only stuff so much cheese in the caves," Kinley said. So they churn butter, their "flex" product, which allows them to concentrate and store excess milk, as it can be keep in the freezer indefinitely.

The processing and marketing involves two-thirds of the manpower of the entire dairy operation. Milking, feeding and field work - evenly divided - make up the other one-third of the labor needs on the farm.

Since starting with organic, grass-fed beef, the Coulters have learned the most directly from other farmers. Graze magazine was a primary source of much of their grazing knowledge. The Lancaster County Grazers group was another. "We learned a tremendous amount from their conferences," Kinley said.

The Coulter's dairy grazing system is a low maintenance one. The family is focused on finding a "way to make it work without a lot of time and money," Kinley said. "Keep it simple." ◆

The Coulter Family can be found at Coulter Farms, 964 Price Road, Hay Grove, PA 17035, and reached at Info@CoulterFarms.net. Their website is: www.coulterfarms.net

Coulter Farms chocolate milk


Coulter Farms cheese cave

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Spring 2023

National Organic Standard Board (NOSB) meeting and National Organic Coalition Pre-NOSB Meeting

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

National Organic Standards Board Meeting Draft Agenda

April 18 & 20 and April 25 - 27, 2023
Crowne Plaza Atlanta Midtown
590 West Peachtree Street NW
Atlanta, Georgia
(Georgia Ballroom East and West)

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) will meet to discuss substances petitioned for addition to or deletion from the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances (National List), substances due to sunset from the National List in 2025, and recommendations on organic policies. The meetings are open to the public, and no registration is required, except to sign up for oral comments.

VIRTUAL

• Public Comment webinars (Tuesday, April 18 & Thursday, April 20, 2023)

In Atlanta, GA and available live via webcast

- Call to Order/Welcoming Remarks/Agenda Overview
- Introductions (NOSB and NOP)
- Secretary's Report
- NOP Update
- NOSB Report
- Subcommittee presentations, discussions, and votes (Order subject to change):
    - o Certification, Accreditation, and Subcommittee
    - o Crops Subcommittee
    - o Handling Subcommittee
    - o Livestock Subcommittee
    - o Materials Subcommittee
    - o Policy Development Subcommittee
- Deferred Proposals/Final Votes
- Work Agenda review
- Other Business/Closing Remarks

Links to the virtual comment webinars will be provided approximately one week before the webinars.

NOC Pre-NOSB Meeting

Monday, April 24, 2023
9:00 AM 5:00 PM
Crowne Plaza Atlanta Midtown, Atlanta, Georgia

Join NOC on Monday, April 24 in Atlanta, GA for the Spring 2023 Pre-NOSB Meeting. This is an in-person event! The Pre-NOSB meeting will take place from 9 am to 5 pm ET at the Crowne Plaza Atlanta Mid-town https://www.cpatlantamidtown.com/ (same location as NOSB meeting).

The meeting will include:

- A DC Organic Policy Update
- Update on National Organic Standards Board Meeting topics
- Discussion about the new USDA Organic Transition Initiative
- Information about the new Strengthening Organic Enforcement Rule

For any questions, please email info@nationalorganiccoalition.org.

How to Participate

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) invites the public to submit written comments and/or provide oral comments at its Spring 2023 business meeting. Written public comments and requests for oral comment speaking slots must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern on April 5, 2023. **Written Comments:** Submit feedback on the NOSB Subcommittee proposals via Regulations.gov. (Docket # AMS-NOP-22-0071).

Oral Comments

Oral comment registration will open in early March when the agenda and proposals are posted.

Questions? Email: Michelle.Arsenault@usda.gov NOSB Advisory Committee Specialist or call 202-997-0115. ◆

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Strengthening Organic Enforcement

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The NOP has been very clear that they will be working with governments of countries that do have an equivalency agreement with the US to allow information on certified operations to be entered into a new section (not yet created) of the OID called GLOBAL. This will allow the certifiers of these operations to provide the import certificates, as required. But what about countries that do not have equivalency agreements? Those exporters are going to need to get certified.

As far as how exactly the electronic import certificates will work, there are a few details that need to be understood before we can begin to take in the full picture. First, certifiers have up to 10 days after the shipment reaches the US port to issue the import certificate. After the certificate is issued out of the OID, the information must be entered into the Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) Automated Commercial Environment (ACE) system. ACE is the system through which the trade community reports imports and exports and the government determines admissibility. While some are asking the question how CBP can determine admissibility 10 days after the shipment reaches the US port, this timeline is set by CBP.

During the introductory webinar for the rule, Dr. Tucker stated that the import certificate provides traceability to the port of entry and provides an auditable record trail. In their comments on the proposed rule, (https://www.nationalorganiccoalition.org/blog/2020/10/6/noc-comments-on-far-reaching-proposed-changes-to-usda-organic-regs?rq=SOE) the National Organic Coalition (NOC) raised serious concerns regarding the 10-day period:

> Allowing importers 10 days to file the electronic certificate after the shipment has reached a U.S. port could mean the difference between preventing fraudulent products from entering the U.S. and having to try to retrieve them once they have entered commerce. Furthermore, if the information in the import certificate is insufficiently verified or up to date, the certificate provides a false sense of confidence in the organic status of the product. These proposed regulations do not sufficiently prevent conventionally produced imports from being fraudulently represented and sold as organic. Fraudulent import certificates could exacerbate challenges if it leads to a false sense of confidence.

Further, certifiers may issue import certificates to cover single shipments, multiple shipments, or a time period (with no limit specified within the final rule). Dr. Tucker provided further details on this, explaining that for a crop produced in a narrow timeframe and exported to the US, a certifier can do a yield analysis and may issue an import certificate that covers the volume that can be credibly produced. She further emphasized that certifiers will be at risk of losing their accreditation if they are found to be issue an import certificate that is not under organic control. Therefore, certifiers will need to focus on evolving their organic control systems to ensure they only generate import certificates for validated organic products.

Although Dr. Tucker provided the example of a crop that is produced within a narrow timeframe, it is important to understand that the new rule does not specify a timeframe. And, while she was quick to point out that certifiers would need to evolve their organic control systems to ensure organic integrity is maintained, the new rule is silent on how the NOP will update and change practices to catch up to the new challenges within the organic supply chain.

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Strengthening Organic Enforcement

continued from page 9

Strengthening recordkeeping and supply chain traceability

The new rule both emphasizes and codifies existing and new recordkeeping requirements, as well as supply chain traceability requirements for both certified operations and certifiers.

Certified operations must maintain records that trace products back to the last certified operation. With this requirement, the mandate for so many intermediaries in the supply chain to seek certification becomes a benefit for supply chain traceability. Operations must also document the monitoring practices used to prevent fraud and verify suppliers and products. While this may sound like more paperwork on top of paperwork, for most family farms, it should not be much more than what should already be happening. Currently, when working with uncertified brokers, producers should already be obtaining certificates for purchased products. In addition, documenting the "monitoring practices used to prevent fraud and verify suppliers and products" may be as simple as developing a standard operating procedure (SOP) that is documented and can be referenced.

The rule requires certified operations to clearly identify products as organic on records and labels. As an independent organic inspector, I can say that this may be one of the easiest changes to make, but one of the hardest for producers to remember. Producer must train themselves to identify their products on invoices, other records, and labels as "organic," rather than assume that people will know the product is organic because there is an organic certificate accompanying the invoice or label.

Finally, the rule codifies that certified organic operations must submit updates to organic system plans (OSPs) during certification renewal. Over the past several years, it has become a more common practice for certifiers to only require OSP updates to those section of the OSP that would have changes from the previous year with the annual update paperwork rather than requiring the entirely new OSP submission.

Certifiers are required to describe the procedures used to identify operations and products at high risk for organic fraud. In addition to certifiers, commenters to the proposed rule called on the NOP to adopt criteria for risk-based accreditation oversight based on the NOSB recommendation (https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/CACSRiskBasedAccreditationOct2018Rec.pdf) on this topic from October 2018, calling for the NOP to share information with other accreditors to flag risky certifiers and operations in the organic supply chain. For example, the NOP should give additional scrutiny to a certifier whose accreditation has been revoked by a nation with which the U.S. has an organic equivalency arrangement and should work closely with other accreditation bodies operating in the region where fraud has been found. This was not included in the final rule. In addition to risk-based analysis, certifiers are required to conduct supply chain traceability audits to verify the compliance and chain-of-custody of high-risk commodities and operations, and share compliance-related information about certified operations with other certifiers.

Certifiers already have a reference for this work from the Accredited Certifiers Association (ACA) Best Practices (https://www.accreditedcertifiers.org/aca-working-groups-frequently-asked-questions). The ACA is a certifier-member organization that lists as its mission, "To ensure consistent implementation of USDA Organic Regulations through collaboration and education of accredited certification Agencies." Through collaborative efforts of working groups, the ACA brings together the knowledgeable body of certification professionals to articulate Best Practices or other communications relevant to organic certification. "ACA Best Practice documents provide recommendations for consistent implementation of the organic regulations. They are not binding for ACA members; however, they offer a framework for consistent interpretation. Adherence to ACA Best Practices is encouraged for all ACA members and accredited certifiers."

Several Best Practices (https://www.accreditedcertifiers.org/https-www-accreditedcertifiers-org-policy-advocacy) have been developed that address the requirements established by the final SOE rule. In November 2019, the ACA produced a best practice document for certifiers titled *ACA Guidance for Risk Assessment and Follow Up*. In April 2018, the best practice document titled *ACA Best Practices for Verifying Traceability in the Supply Chain Revised* was published. And in April 2020, the best practice document for certifiers titled *ACA Best Practices for Cross Agency Investigations* was published.

Finally, the final rule requires certifiers to keep operation data for all certified entities updated in the Organic Integrity Database, including acreage data. While acreage data will not be recorded at the level of crop production, the reporting of

acreage data will allow for mass balance audit exercises to support the verification of specific organic products.

Strengthening oversight of accredited certifiers

The final rule codifies many of the practices that most, but not all, certifiers are already doing, such as:

- The requirement for all certifiers to conduct unannounced inspections of at least 5% of operations annually
- The requirement that inspectors must conduct mass-balance audits and verify product traceability during on-site inspection
- The requirement for all certifiers to conduct full on-site inspections once per calendar year
- The requirement to use inspectors and certification reviewers that meet qualification and training requirements as outlined
- The requirement to implement grower group standards, including the allowance for livestock grower groups

Other regulatory changes worth mentioning

Codifies organic equivalence determination procedures:

USDA organic regulations formerly addressed USDA's authority to make equivalence determinations in general terms under § 205.500(c), but did not describe the criteria, scope, and other parameters to establish, oversee, or terminate such equivalence determinations, which are critical to the enforcement of organic imports. This new § 205.511 does not change current policy or add any new requirements. It codifies existing practices and clarifies the procedures followed when determining organic equivalence, which strengthens oversight and enforcement capacity of organic imports by supporting the government's authority to reassess, continue, and terminate equivalence determinations, as necessary. Without this clear implementation of Federal authority in the USDA organic regulations, the government could face challenges establishing and enforcing terms under current and future equivalence determinations that are critical to ensuring the integrity of imported organic products.

Clarifies mediation and appeals processes and procedures for resolving noncompliance issues:

AMS revised § 205.663 to improve the general readability of this section and to more clearly explain how mediation may be used in noncompliance procedures.

Standardizes certificates of organic operations:

Requires certifying agents to issue standardized certificates of organic operation generated from the USDA's publicly available Organic Integrity Database (OID).

Strengthens oversight of certifier "satellite offices":

To support the consistent application of the organic regulations across all certifying agents, § 205.501(a)(22) requires certifying agents to notify AMS within 90 calendar days of the opening of any office performing certification activities.

Notification of a new office opening must include basic information to support effective oversight of the certification office, including the countries serviced, location and nature of the certification activities, and the qualifications of the personnel that will provide the certification activities. Information on the location of new offices allows AMS to efficiently use personnel and travel resources to schedule on-site audits, and to be precise in any adverse action that may affect only a portion of certifying agent's accreditation, e.g., a certification office or activities in a specific country or region. Information on the types of certification activities being conducted allows AMS to better evaluate the need for additional oversight; for instance, a new office located in a high-risk area with a history of organic fraud may require additional oversight.

Clarifies how to calculate the percentage of organic ingredients in multi-ingredient products:

AMS replaced the parenthetical statements "(excluding water and salt)" with the single statement "Water and salt added as ingredients at formulation are excluded from the calculation." This more clearly states NOP's intent and will result in more consistent calculation of organic content across the industry.

Conclusion

Let's be clear—this new rule is a monster. While the actual regulations account for approximately 10% of the published document, the explanatory text, sometimes referred to as the preamble, is a must read when striving to understand all of the nuances of the rule. Dr. Tucker repeatedly emphasizes the need to read the rule (https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/strengthening-organic-enforcement) when speaking about it, and its good advice.

Christie Badger is an independent organic inspector & consultant, and can be reached at 570.975.9548 or by email: christie.badger@gmail.com ◆

NET UPDATE

Recent ODairy Discussions

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

Methane reduction was a topic for thought last month. Although the research is still contradictory, there is lots of interest in feeding red seaweed to cows to curb methane production. A few producers weighed in on this, pointing out that although seaweed or kelp can be very beneficial for improved animal health, the red seaweed needed for methane reduction simply isn't available on any kind of scale available to farmers. And the price would be prohibitive at this point. Another producer suggested that if we focused on cow longevity, farms would not require as many replacements; and fewer young cattle on farms would mean less methane. Another farmer shared an article that shone a light on manure management as a large methane source: "Larger farms are less likely to graze their cattle, instead relying on purchased feed – the single largest source of greenhouse gases from industrialized agriculture. In addition, factory farms store manure in liquid form which encourages the release of methane – unlike field cattle whose manure decomposes with minimal emissions."

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

An organic inspector asked the group why it is rare to see organic farms milking 3x per day. Several producers gave reasons why this practice isn't chosen often (at least on these farms in the Northeast). On smaller farms, farmer burnout seemed to be the larger issue; the 10 to 20% milk increase isn't enough to pay for extra help, so the family's quality of life deteriorates. On larger farms, it may pay to keep the milking parlor humming with an extra shift of hired workers, but during the grazing season, it is much more difficult to optimize grazing and is more stressful for the cows. According to one vet, it is biologically better for cows to be milked more often; a calf will nurse from a cow 8-12 times per day. Another producer quoted a study that showed a "strong link between over-2X milking with poor condition, early burn-out, infertility, culling and poor longevity". Several farmers suggested that robots may be the best answer as long as pasture requirements can be met.

A producer wanted to simplify his buffet-style mineral feeding. After feeding 15 to 20 separate minerals, he wants to change the system to include different mineral mixes and was looking for suggestions. A nutritionist suggested that for his forages, grass and legume mixed hay and baleage, a 1.5 to 1 would be best, and he offered these tips about magnesium and sulfur: "Look at the magnesium level in the mineral. Considering dry cows and springing heifers you want close to a 10% magnesium level. Magnesium sulfate (Epsom salts) is my choice. Magnesium oxide is quite a bit cheaper. But it doesn't absorb well. Most of the Mag Ox falls out the back end of the cow. Most of our cattle diets are short on sulfur. The sulfate minerals supply some of the sulfur deficiency we see in the diets." Another vet on the list suggested that he offer a 1:1 mix and a 2:1 mix free choice and let the cows sort it out. She also suggested that he offer the magnesium free choice along with phosphorous as late lactation and dry cows have a higher need for that mineral as the calf gets bigger.

A home-scale farmer brought in a dry cow that was showing blood in her urine and was straining and uncomfortable. She was eating well and drinking. Several producers suggested that this may be a urinary tract infection (UTI). As a first course of action, two vets suggested homeopathic Lycopodium 2 to 3 times a day. Most recommended that a rectal exam be performed to rule out problems with bladder, ureters and kidneys. Other suggestions for supportive care included: lots of clean water (can improve intake by offering warm water with a bit of molasses), make sure salt is available, 2 to 3 oz apple cider vinegar, immune system support with probiotics, kelp, garlic tincture or "Get Well" tincture, and very clean bedding. ◆

Calendar

Tuesday, March 14, 12:00 pm until 1:30 pm

TRANSITIONING TO BEEF – KEYS FOR SUCCESS
Online

Part of the CNY Farming Series: Farming in a Changing World. Betsy Hicks from the SCNY Dairy and Field Crops Team and Owner of Maple Acres, an angus beef cow-calf operation in Cortland County, will share with you considerations for transitioning from dairy to beef. During this 1 ½ hr. webinar she will talk about types of beef businesses, what to consider when choosing beef cattle, facility, and infrastructure difference and how to augment your current facilities, what to include in a business plan for beef, and additional resources available to you that can assist in transitioning and/or exploring transition. Register now for this 6-part virtual series hosted by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Cortland, Tioga, and Tompkins Counties and the Harvest New York Climate Resiliency Team. Valued at $80/farm, registration is a 'pay-what-you-can'. Later in the year, a farm tour series that compliments these discussions will be available and the virtual series registrants will receive a discounted price. To Register: Click here- https://mahap.la/xjy9fjvp or contact Barb Neal at ban1@cornell.edu /(607)223-2793.

Wednesday, March 15, 10:00 am until 12:00 pm

IMPROVING PASTURE MANAGEMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION: INTEGRATION OF PASTURE MANAGEMENT AND NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT WEBINAR

The second webinar of the 2023 Tri-State SARE Project Webinar Series will feature Cheryl Cesario from UVM Extension and Rich Meinert from UConn Extension. Webinars are open to service providers and farmers and will be comprised of time for instruction in addition to interactive breakout sessions. Partaking in all webinars is encouraged, but not required. For more information, visit https://livestock.extension.uconn.edu// or contact Rachel Bespuda, Project Director at rachel.bespuda@uconn.edu

Thursday, March 16, 8:30 am to 5:00 pm

WESTERN PA GRAZING CONFERENCE

Trinity Point Church of God, 180 W. Trinity Drive, Clarion, PA

The keynote speaker for the conference is Troy Bishopp, of Deansboro, NY who will share his experiences with over 38 years of grazing on his own farm, as well as his work with farmers through the Madison County SWCD and the Upper Susquehanna Coalition. Troy is also known as "The Grass Whisperer" to many farmers and readers of his numerous popular press articles. Other speakers include Justin Brackenrich from Penn State Extension on grazing summer annuals, Matt Havens from USDA-NRCS on how grazing can improve soil health, Camren Maierie from Penn State Extension on grazing strategies to minimize parasite pressure, and others. For more information contact the Clarion County Conservation District at 814-227-5530 or the Jefferson County Conservation District at 814-849-7463. Registration fee of $45/person includes a continental breakfast and a hot buffet lunch on 3/16 registration due by March 8th. Special evening session on Wednesday, March 15th with Russ Wilson and Troy Bishopp.

Thursday, March 16, 5:00 - 6:30 pm

FARMER CLIMATE FORUMS: GRASSLAND WATER MANAGEMENT-
Online/Free

MOFGA and NOFA-VT invite you to join other farmers from Maine and Vermont for a series of online forums focused on water, including management, systems, and adaptation strategies for making it through times of drought and excess precipitation. Each session will begin with a short 30 minute presentation by a guest speaker. We will then move into a facilitated farmer-to-farmer discussion on the topic.

Join us for a discussion with Dr. Heather Darby on strategies for efficiently managing and using water in pastures and hay fields. Topics covered will include drought-tolerant forages, soil health, examples of pasture irrigation systems and management considerations for dry periods. Her 30 minute presentation will be followed by a facilitated farmer-to-farmer discussion. Come to listen, share your own experiences, ask questions, troubleshoot and be inspired about new systems that may make your own farm more climate resilient! Dr. Heather Darby is an agronomic and soils specialist for the University of Vermont Extension. Her work focuses on research and producer support in sustainable agriculture and promoting environmental stewardship.

REGISTER HERE. https://airtable.com/shriYnjukuatyt4Pl

This event is part two of a three part series. Learn more about the Farmer Climate Forum series here: https://www.mofga.org/farmer-climate-forums/

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Calendar

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Thursday, March 23, 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm

FARMER CLIMATE FORUMS:
WHOLE-FARM WATER MANAGEMENT
Online/Free

MOFGA and NOFA-VT invite you to join other farmers from Maine and Vermont for a series of online forums focused on water, including management, systems, and adaptation strategies for making it through times of drought and excess precipitation. Each session will begin with a short 30 minute presentation by a guest speaker. We will then move into a facilitated farmer-to-farmer discussion on the topic.

Join us for a discussion with Dr. Joshua Faulkner focused on water management throughout your whole farm system. How does topography and soils affect management decisions? How do we utilize natural and manmade features in our farm landscape to effectively manage through times of too much and too little water? After a 30 minute presentation, Joshua will facilitate a farmer-to-farmer discussion on these topics. Come to listen, share your own experiences, ask questions, troubleshoot and be inspired about new systems that may make your own farm more climate resilient! Dr. Joshua Faulkner coordinates the Farming and Climate Change Program in the UVM Extension Center for Sustainable Agriculture. His research and farmer support focuses on soil, water and nutrient-related issues, as well as climate change adaptation.

REGISTER HERE: https://airtable.com/shriYnjukuatyt4Pl

This event is part three of a three part series. Learn more about the Farmer Climate Forum series here: https://www.mofga.org/farmer-climate-forums/

Saturday, March 25, 9:00 am to 3:30 pm

CNY GRAZING CONFERENCE

NYS Grange Building, 100 Grange Place, Cortland (Cortland County)

Are you interested in learning more about adaptive grazing management, innovative farming techniques and what practices other successful grazers are implementing on their farms? Please join us to hear keynote speaker, Russ Wilson and other local grazers at this conference. Russ Wilson, a well know grazier, consultant and YouTube personality operates Wilson Land & Cattle Company in Tionesta, PA. His 220-acre family farm practices multispecies, adaptive grazing management optimizing the co-benefits of grazing cattle, sheep, goats, equine, hogs, and poultry. The farm's low-input style of management incorporates both cool and warm season grasses and cover-crops, providing an extended grazing season while keeping soil covered year-round. Russ will share his experiences with beginning grazing management and how livestock diversification can benefit the farm and grow profitability. Afternoon speakers will cover topics on reclaiming and improving existing pasture and a farmer panel will discuss direct marketing successes and failures. Vendors will be on site as well. Lunch and break snacks will be provided. Please pre-register by March 15, 2023, at: https://reg.cce.cornell.edu/CNYGrazingConference_10509 Early registration conference fee is $25.00, day of event is $30.00. This workshop is sponsored by Cornell University SCNY Regional Team, Cortland County SWCD, PASA and NEDBIC. Agribusiness stakeholders are being sought as vendors. Please contact Fay Benson, Cornell University SCNY Regional Team at 607-391-2669 for vendor information.

Tuesday, March 28, 11:00 am to 1:00 pm

PASTURE IMPROVEMENT AND RENOVATIONS FOR THE GRAZING HERD

CCE Oneida County, 121 Second Street, Oriskany, NY

Join Karen Hoffman, NRCS State Animal Science and Grazing Specialist for a conversation about a variety of methods to improve existing pastures for better productivity and animal performance. Lunch will be provided. RSVP to Marylynn at mrm7@cornell.edu or text (315) 368-8603.

Tuesday, March 28, 12:00 pm until 1:30 pm

SILVOPASTURE FOR CNY AND BEYOND
Online

Part of the CNY Farming Series: Farming in a Changing World. Silvopasture combines trees, forages, and grazing livestock for production, economic, and environmental benefits. Silvopasture has great potential in NYS and is currently being practiced across the state. This webinar will cover silvopasture from the ground up, providing information and resources on the opportunities, considerations, costs, and benefits of this integrated approach to sustainable local food production. Register now for this 6-part virtual series hosted by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Cortland, Tioga, and Tompkins Counties and the Harvest New York Climate Resiliency Team. Valued at $80/farm, registration is a 'pay-what-you-can'. Later in the year, a farm tour series that compliments these discussions will be available and the virtual series registrants will receive a discounted price. To Register, click here: https://ccetompkins.mahaplatform.com/events/ugy8zjhhrl or contact Barb Neal at ban1@cornell.edu /(607)223-2793.

Classified Ads

ANIMALS

FOR SALE: Closed dairy herd in NW Vermont, certified organic since 2005, grass-only since 2012, Jersey & Jersey/Holstein cross dairy cows, some A2A2. Edward has owned & been sole operator of this historic farm for 30 years, and his body says that it is time to retire from milking. Vaccinated with Triangle 10, and for brucellosis & pinkeye. No milk-fever, DA, miscarriage, or feet issues. Awaiting results of pooled milk sample testing for BLV, BVD, Johnes. Over half the herd is currently dry (winter on a Vt grass dairy); they are due to freshen soon. Currently we've identified four A2A2 cows, and are awaiting results from the next batch of tests. Non-A2 cows also in herd, and bred heifers. A2A2 4-qu cows $2500-2000 depending on the cow. Contact Edward Choiniere, jyoust87@vt.edu, 802-370-1051.

Location: Highgate Center, VT

FEED, GRAIN, HAY FOR SALE/WANT TO BUY

FOR SALE: CERTIFIED ORGANIC HAY/BALEAGE for 2023:

- Small square bales: 1st cutting $5 per bale
- Small square bales: 2nd cutting $6 per bale
- Small square bale bedding or mulch hay at $3 per bale
- Large square bales 3' x 3' x 7' 1st cutting grass hay at $75 per bale
- Round bales 4'x5' twine wrapped 1st cutting dry grass hay at $40
- Round bales 4'x4.5' net wrapped 3rd cutting dry grass hay (wrapped) at $50
- Round baleage 4'x4' line wrapped 3rd cutting from 2022 at $35

All hay is stored under cover or wrapped. Forage tests available. We ship throughout the east coast and have multiple delivery quantities or pickup at the farm. Samples available. Marz Farm, 3624 Wilson Creek Rd, Berkshire NY. Call/text Tony Marzolino at 315-378-5180 or see www.marzfarm.com

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

EQUIPMENT

EQUIPMENT WANTED: We are looking to buy a simple crowd gate either used or new for our holding area. We had been planning on buying a Goossen Moo-ver but recently learned they've closed up shop. If anyone has one to sell or knows of something similar, we'd appreciate it. Please contact Ryan Murray, 607-591-3223 at Murraydale Farms.

Location: Truxton NY

FOR SALE: VAT PASTEURIZER Details: 200 gallon Duo Vat Cheese Vat model DV 200, all stainless steel with steam injection hot water heating jacket, includes milk stirring agitator with stainless steel swivel post, stainless steel removable covers, 1.5" outlet, vat outlet strainer, whey screen, curd rake, and a back-up circulating motor. Leak detect valve needs to be machined to smooth out groves, or possibly replaced. Does not include thermometers or chart recorder. Approximate dimensions 78" long x 46" wide x 20" deep. $12,000. Contact Ashlee: info@northcountrycreamery.com, 518-645-2697

Location: Keeseville, NY

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES:

HELP WANTED: Production Person. Larson Farm and Creamery has opening for creamery production person making yogurt, bottled past and raw milk, gelato. 30 cow organic grassfed operation. Contact Rich Larson 802.884.5288

Location: Wells, VT

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (NODPA)
c/o Ed Maltby
30 Keets Road
Deerfield, MA 01342

NON-PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
SPRINGFIELD, MA
PERMIT NO. 1094

From the NODPA Desk:

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paid for their milk, nationally and in the largest organic milk production states;

- *Creation of a safety net program for organic dairy farms, based on organic-specific milk and input cost data.*

The consistency of the message to Congress and USDA is important. Despite Organic's role in every aspect of sustainable and environmental agriculture, there is a lack of knowledge and understanding of the role that organic production plays, and how the organic community needs increased regulation and tight enforcement of clear, consistent, and accountable standards. Most Congressional aides have little knowledge about organic standards and production, but they are looking to be educated. The members of Congress have limited time to absorb the needs of the organic community. They may buy organic products but have little knowledge of the practical needs of those who farm organically. This personal meeting time with aides, and occasionally their "boss" (the universal term for either the Senator or Representative) puts a face on a policy document. When one calls to ask for support or explain a situation, the aides have something to remember and act on. It also gives credibility to the organization.

Watch out for the latest marketing hype –'Climate Smart' products "regenerative by design and farmer focused." Means nothing! Ask your Congressional Representative and Senator to support and cosponsor the Dairy Pride Act that prohibits the practices of misleading consumers by mislabeling of non-dairy products as milk. ◆