

NODPA NEWS

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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NOVEMBER 2004

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 4

WWW.NODPA.COM

Organic Industry News

Organic Dairy Farmers Speak Out at NODPA Field Days in Vermont

By Sarah Flack and Nat Bacon

The Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance's (NODPA's) Fourth Annual Summer Field Days Event was held in Vermont this year. It was attended by over 80 people for the producers dinner and meeting, and over 90 for the Field Day. The Field Day began with a field trip to Butterworks Farm, followed by an evening meeting for producers at Applecheek Farm.

Producer Meeting Friday Evening

The Producer meeting drew farmers from all over the country and Canada as well as representatives from the growing number of companies buying organic milk (Horizon, Organic Valley, Hood...)

Discussions on the state of the organic dairy industry was facilitated by Kathie Arnold, Co-Editor of the NODPA News and dairy producer in Truxton, NY. There are some new processors looking for milk and the demand for organic milk has grown by 20% each year (for the past 4 years) nationwide, plus, there is a growing number of farms investing in their own on-farm processing.

Thoughts and concerns discussed were:

- * Need to clarify what animal health products are acceptable (brand name included) according to the

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NODPA Formulates A Pasture Policy

By Kathie Arnold

Developing an access to pasture standard was the number one priority identified by organic producers attending this summer's NODPA Annual Producer Meeting on August 8th. The NODPA Board, State Representatives, staff, and I held a two hour teleconference in September to discuss the formulation of a quantitative, measurable and enforceable pasture standard that could be applicable to all certified organic dairy operations nationwide. The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) Livestock Committee Pasture Recommendation was used as a basis for developing the pasture policy as well as input from CROPP Pasture Task Force committee members. Through numerous phone calls, a slew of emails back and forth, and a second conference call, the current NODPA Pasture Policy was formulated.

NODPA welcomes feedback from organic producers on this Pasture Policy. Its intent is to provide a minimum base pasture requirement for dairy animals to assure consumers that their expectation of organic milk from pastured cows is being fulfilled and to prevent confinement / dry-lot organic animal factories from being certified when they are not meeting the Federal Rule's access to pasture requirement for organic ruminants.

Below are highlights from the NOSB Livestock Committee Pasture Recommen-

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(Continued from *Organic Dairy Farmers Speak Out At NODPA Field Days page 1*)

National Organic Program (NOP).

- * Large organic dairies influencing consumer concerns; how to stop dry-lot organic dairying.
- * Questionable USDA guidance within the NOP and wondering how much say the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) will have in shaping things.
- * Increased need for technical assistance and mentoring as more farmers are transitioning to organic dairy; for the farmers, vets and resource individuals.
- * Maintaining a viable pay price.

Tony Azevedo, an organic dairy producer from California led a discussion on the importance of maintaining the pasture standard on organic farms. Discussion of this led to an overall look at NODPA, and what the organization's priorities should be as it moves forward (see *NODPA Formulates a Pasture Policy* on page 1 of this issue). Producers in attendance listed the most important issues for NODPA to address in the order of importance: 1) Pasture Access Standard, 2) General NOP Standards, 3) Viable Pay Price, 4) Consumer confidence, 5) Consumer Education, 6) Creating a National NODPA, 7) Maintaining Organic Identity (not losing control to big companies), 8) Networking with farmers, 9) Supporting NODPA, 10) Educating farmers.

NODPA announced a new *organic milk check-off* as a way to both increase NODPA's funding, and to give producers a way to directly support the organization (see *Check-Off* article on page 9). In the next year, NODPA, which is now a program of NOFA VT, will become a *legally separate* organization, adding new staff, and continuing the important work of giving organic dairy farmers a collective voice.

Field Day on Saturday

Saturday's Field Day event at Applecheek farm included a workshop lead by Jerry Brunetti, who spoke on animal health. In the afternoon, Heather Darby led a hands-on soil workshop and Tyler Webb spoke on Pasture management. Both days included local organic food, and meals were catered by Jason Clark of Applecheek farm. There were many donations of food and raffle items as well as sponsors of this event,



Photo By Lisa McCrory

which is one of NODPA's annual fundraisers.

Special thanks to field day sponsors and supporters including the John Merck Fund, Organic Valley/CROPP, Risk Management Agency, Green Mountain Feeds, Horizon Organic, Stonyfield Farm, Inc, Agri-Dynamics (Jerry Brunetti), Applecheek Farm and the whole Clark family, B-A-Blessing Farm (John & Tammy Stoltzfus), Butterworks Farm (Jack & Anne Lazor), MOFGA, NOFA-VT, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association (AHVMA), Brookfield Agricultural Services, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), UVM Extension Service, Weston A Price Foundation, Lakeview Organic Grain, and Yankee Farm Credit. Thank you also to those who donated items for the raffle or food: Acres USA Inc., Annie's Naturals, Brookfield Agricultural Services, Crystal Creek, IMPRO Product, Applecheek farm, Butterworks farm, Washington Homeopathic Products, Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Horizon Organic, Red Hen Bakery, Organic Valley/CROPP, Stonyfield, and Heart & Soil.

Calf Raffle at the NODPA Field Days

A calf was donated by John and Tammy Stoltzfus of Whitesville, NY as the grand prize from a number of items raffled off at the NODPA Field Days. 'Official' winner of the calf was Daniel Beard from Iowa who, due to distance, decided to give the calf to Don Faulkner of S. Royalton, VT. Don, however, felt like the calf should go to a young dairy farmer who could show this calf and promote it as the 'NODPA Calf' at shows. Clinton Gardiner, son of Jim and Nancy Gardiner, was ready to take the challenge and is the proud recipient of NODPA'S 2004 calf raffle.



L-R John Stoltzfus, Clinton Gardiner, Daniel Beard, and Don Faulkner. Photo By Beth Holtzman