

NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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Our son Peter and our dog Ginger.

Rob N Vale Farms: A Hillside Tradition Oscar & Betty Robinson & Family, South Otselic, NY

by Sonja Heyck-Merlin

“I attended Cornell and was in Army ROTC. After graduation, I went on active duty, stationed at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana,” recalled Betty Robinson. “I received a call from the Superintendent of Otselic Valley Central School. He asked if I was interested in teaching agriculture at his school after I was done with active duty.”

“Three days after I got off active duty, I visited the school and they gave me the job. I’ve been teaching since 1980. One of the students I was teaching was working for Oscar. We took a field trip to watch them classify his Brown Swiss cattle and that was the first time I met Oscar.”

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Resilient Farming for a Changing Climate

By Mary-Howell & Klaas Martens

By late July this summer, the pastures were crispy brown, large acreages of corn in New York’s Finger Lakes were knee-high and tasseling without an ear in sight. We had not seen measurable rain since the beginning of May and very little moisture accumulation for over 12 months. National Weather was kind enough to rate our area as D-3, or Extreme Drought, but we already knew that. We have farmed in dry weather before, but nothing prepared us for this summer.

2016 was the year that saw major flooding along the Gulf Coast, North Carolina and upper Midwest, and severe droughts in

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Message from the NODPA President

The approach of Groundhog Day triggers a few things to happen on our farm. First, it is the time every year when we assess our forage inventory. In these northern areas, the first of February is considered the halfway mark of the feeding season. So we count the round bales, assess the small squares in the hay mow, and eyeball the high-moisture corn in the bag.

Second, we look at the stack of things we had planned to do “when we will have all that time” during the winter, and gasp as we realize that most are still in the pile. The great books we intended to get to, the knitting and sewing projects, the engine that was torn apart, the tractor that needs paint.

And third, we realize that it’s time for our annual organic certification renewal. I have to admit to a love/hate relation-

ship with my certifier. I certainly champion their mission to maintain integrity in organic standards, but I quietly wish that the paperwork would not be so burdensome. Every year, they ask what they could do to streamline forms, to minimize the paperwork. And I honestly don’t have any good suggestions. How can they determine if we are doing our job of producing quality, organic food for our consumers if they don’t get all this information? I suppose that it is much like mucking out calf pens – just one of those unpleasant jobs that you just get through.

But going back to the beginning, if a forage inventory is your way of celebrating Groundhog Day, remember that the drought hit many producers pretty hard, and good feed is scarce this year. So if you find yourself with extra feed to sell, let your organic neighbors know or post it on ODairy:

ODAIRY@LISTSERVE.NODPA.COM

Liz Bawden, NODPA President

Hammond, NY | Phone: 315-324-6926

Board Members & Representatives

PENNSYLVANIA

Arden Landis, State Rep
1850 Bowmansville Rd.
Mohnton, PA 19540-9427
c2graze@dejazzd.com
Phone: 717-484-0038

Roman Stoltzfoos, State Rep
Spring Wood Organic Farm
1143 Gap Rd, Kinzers, PA, 17535
romans@epix.net
Phone: 610-593-2415

VIRGINIA

Rodney Martin, State Rep
Bridge View Dairy
2773 Fadley Road
bridgewater, VA 22812-2711
rodney@lancasterag.com
Cell: 540-705-7834

NEW YORK

Kirk Arnold, NODPA Vice President
3175 State Route 13
Truxton, NY 13158-3107
kickaha21@gmail.com
P: 607-842-6631
Fax: 607-842-6557

Liz Bawden, President, Newsletter Contributor, Associate Editor
119 Factory Rd., Hammond, NY 13646
bawden@cit-tele.com
Phone: 315-324-6926

Siobhan Griffin, State Rep
2518 Co. Hwy 35, Schnevus, NY 12155
raindance@baka.com
Phone: 607-286-9362

Ryan Murray, Board Member
6000 Chenango Solon Pond Rd.
Truxton NY 13158
rcmdairy@gmail.com

Robert Moore, State Rep
Moore Farms, 2083 Moore Hill Rd.
Nichols, NY 13812
Phone: 607-699-7968
cowpoke2@verizon.net

Bill Stine, State Rep
45540 Stine Road
Redwood, NY 13679-3160
Phone: (315) 482-2017
tstine2007@yahoo.com

John Stoltzfoos, State Rep
1553 Hesselton Gully Rd.
Whitesville, NY 14897
jstribbe@yahoo.com
Phone: 607-356-3272

George Wright, Treasurer
821 Pyrites-Russell Rd.
Hermon, NY 14897
wrightdairy@yahoo.com
Phone: 315-347-4604

VERMONT

Craig Russell, Board Member
Brotherly Farm LLC, 570 Lavender Road
Brookfield, VT 05036
brotherlyfarm@yahoo.com.
Phone: 802- 272-7726
http://www.brotherlyfarm.com

Joop Madison, State Rep
2806 Smith Street, Shoreham, VT 05770
Cell: 802-349-6262
email: jojoselixir@yahoo.com

Brian Wilson, State Rep
Morningside Farm, 101 Hemenway Hill Rd, Shoreham, VT 05770
Cell phone: 802-377-1786,
email: bpwilson@shoreham.net

Bonnie and Tom Boutin, State Rep
1184 Cross Road,
Newport Ctr, VT 05857
Phone: 802-334-2081
bonnieboutin@yahoo.com

CONNECTICUT

Rick Segalla, Board Member
96 Allyndale Rd.
Canaan, CT 06018
mocow@earthlink.net
Phone: 860-824-0241

MASSACHUSETTS
Morvan Allen, Board Member
Maple Shade Farm Inc.
229 Hewins St, Sheffield, MA 01257
morvenallen@live.com
Phone: 413-229-6018

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Cindy-Lou Amey, State Rep
Indian Stream Farm
81 Tabor Road, Pittsburg, NH 03592
Phone: (603) 538-7734
cindylouamey@gmail.com

MAINE

Steven Russell, Board Member
RR2 Box 5660, Winslow, ME 04901
jwinrussel@roadrunner.com
Phone: 207-872-6533

Steve Morrison, Secretary
Policy Committee Chair
159 Atkinson Rd, Charleston, ME 04422
smorrison@midmaine.com
Phone: 207-285-7085 Fax: 207-285-0128

Aaron Bell, State Rep
Tide Mill Organic Farm
91 Tide Mill Road, Edmunds, Maine 04628
Phone: 207-733-2551
eatlocal@tidemillorganicfarm.com
www.tidemillorganicfarm.com

AT LARGE NODPA BOARD MEMBERS

Ed Zimba, MODPA Board Member
Zimba Dairy, 7995 Mushroom Rd
DeFord, MI 48729
zimbadairy@tband.net
Phone & Fax: 989-872-2680

Darlene Coehoorn, MODPA President, Newsletter Contributor
Viewpoint Acres Farm
N5878 Hwy C, Rosendale, WI 54874
ddviewpoint@yahoo.com
Phone: 920-921-5541

Bruce Drinkman, MODPA Treasurer
3253 150th Ave. Glenwood City, WI 54013
bdrinkman@hotmail.com
Phone: 715-265-4631

Andrew Dykstra, WODPA President
ASDYKSTRA@aol.com

Henry Perkins, Past President,
Box 156 Bog Rd., Albion, ME 04910
Phone: 207-437-9279
bullridge@uninet.net

Kathie Arnold, Policy Committee
3175 NYS Rt. 13, Truxton, NY 13158
kathiearnold@gmail.com
Phone: 607-842-6631
Fax: 607-842-6557

NODPA STAFF

Ed Maltby, Executive Director
30 Keets Rd, Deerfield, MA 01342
ednodpa@comcast.net
Phone: 413-772-0444 Fax: 866-554-9483

Nora Owens, Editor & Event Coordinator
30 Keets Rd, Deerfield, MA 01342
noraowens@comcast.net
Phone: 413-772-0444
Fax: 866-554-9483

Webmaster / Newsletter Layout
Chris Hill, Chris Hill Media
368 West Duval St., Phila., PA 19144
Phone: 215-843-5704
chris@chrishillmedia.com

NODPA Contributing Writer
Sonja Heyck-Merlin
Clovercrest Farm, 159 Atkinson Road
Charleston, ME 04422
207-285-7085, sjheyckme@gmail.com

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From the NODPA Desk: January 2017

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

I would like to thank everyone who has sent money in response to our appeal, plus all of our advertisers who continue to support the work of NODPA through our print and multimedia advertisements. This year we failed to qualify for a Farm Aid grant that has been used in the past to assist with our advocacy work and ensuring that the farmer voice in Washington DC is at least heard. In the uncertainty of the upcoming administration, where the USDA Secretary is the last of the Cabinet picks to be named and there is even more of a need to educate Congress on the needs of organic producers, NODPA's voice at the table is even more important. So please keep sending the money; we are probably the most efficient organization on use of resources, and our priorities are very clear and easy to understand – the welfare of organic dairy producers and their families.

There is no new news about Group Danone's acquisition of White Wave but a great deal of interest from investment analysts in how the organic market works. We do understand that the Department of Justice (DOJ) has met with lawyers from both parties and that the DOJ is seeking more information from organic processing and distribution specialist. With no public process, there can only be gossip and speculation about what the DOJ is looking at, but divestment of the Stonyfield yogurt and milk brand is definitely on the table as a possible mitigation of the monopsony market position.

There appears to be no 'end of administration' push for the Animal Welfare Final Rule to be published, nor the Origin of Livestock, Aquaculture Proposed Rule and the Import Certificates necessary to try to slow down non-compliant grain imports. The Organic Checkoff is still in 'Agency Review' with the current Secretary of Agriculture noting that there is significant opposition within industry to it. NOP has done nothing about hydroponics, not even a moratorium to stem the explosion of product on the market. The NOSB meeting came and went with a great deal of excellent discussion, some wonderful analysis and many good intentions about the future. The biggest problem is that the present is very scary for many organic producers and ranchers. Their only protection for their future is a strong USDA label that is unique in the marketplace for its practices and enforcement. Twelve years of waiting for something as important as an Origin of Livestock regulation is a very dangerous precedent for the sustainability of small to mid-size

organic operations when we look at import problems and hydroponics.

We tried to publish an article on the topic of 'Forecasting for the Future: A discussion with the Leaders in the Northeast Organic Milk Market' but had only a couple of responses. Many of those invited to answer were cautioned about their responses because of the various acquisition and mergers in the organic dairy industry currently in progress. Below are the questions that we asked:

- Surplus or not in the Northeast for Organic Milk?
- Is demand strong for farmgate milk in the Northeast/New England, and what expectations are there for 2017-2018?
- With White Wave being acquired by Danone, CROPP forming a joint venture with Dean, and General Mills working directly with CROPP to transition a dedicated supply, what is next for organic milk buyers?
- What is the future for imports and exports of organic dairy products? And, how will this impact pay price?
- Where will Grass Milk settle in the market?
- Was 2016 financially a good year and how will 2017 compare?
- What is a sustainable pay price for the Northeast/New England?
- What is the capacity for processing organic milk in the Northeast? Is it profitable for processors so that they will expand their capacity for organic processing?
- Is it a viable option to calculate pay price based on costs of production plus a return on investment and a family wage equivalent to a management status? How price sensitive is consumer and manufacturer demand for organic milk and by products?

The limited number of responses to these questions highlights the current lack of real time communication and information flow among all sectors of the organic milk market. Accessing real time information is critical for organic dairy farm families because it allows for better decision making and planning for the future. Passing along old news or almost outdated information won't help farmers do their jobs. It's more important than ever that we support the flow of information through timely, direct communication from processors and via forums such as Odairy, and to participate in discussions that encourage all sectors of the organic dairy industry to work together to share critical, real time information that helps the industry thrive. ♦

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Highlights of the NOSB Meeting

Compiled by Ed Maltby from reports by National Organic Coalition and the Accredited Certifiers Association

The USDA National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) met for its Fall Meeting Nov 16 -18th, 2016 in St. Louis, MO.

The Agenda was packed full with many presentations including the: NOP Update, National List Materials Update, National Organic Program Peer Review Report and NOP Response, and the State of Organic Seed Report. The above reports can be found on the NOSB Website page at: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/event/nosb-fall-2016-meeting-st-louis-mo>

Highlights of the NOP Update included:

- Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices Final Rule is in Inter-agency review at Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA), Office of Management and Budget (OMB)
- Organic Aquaculture Proposed Rule is in Inter-agency review at Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA)
- Origin of Livestock is under development, but not for 2016
- The following Proposed Rules are completed and awaiting space in the Regulatory Process: Apiculture, Pet Food & Import Certificates
- Classification of Materials Final Guidance and Materials for Use in Crop Production (recently published)
- The following Draft Guidance Documents are in process: Grower Groups, Calculation of Ingredients (recently published), Import Requirements, Materials Used in Livestock Production

The November NOSB Meeting was the last meeting for the following Board Members.

- Harold Austin, Handler Representative
- Carmela Beck, Producer Representative
- Tracy Favre, Environmentalist Representative
- Jean Richardson, Consumer Representative
- Zea Sonnabend, Scientist Representative

The following officers were elected for the 2017 Board:

Tom Chapman, Chair; Ashley Swaffar, Vice-Chair; Jesse Buie, Secretary.

Miles McEvoy, NOP Deputy Administrator, announced that the following new NOSB Members would begin work in January 2017:

- Ms. Joelle Mosso, Fresno, CA :
Product Line Manager at Olam International
Master's in Food Science & Microbiology

Organic Handler seat

- Ms. Sue Baird, Bunceton, Missouri:
Executive Director of the Missouri Organic Association, dba Mid-America Organic Association, inspector, reviewer, and consultant
Consumer Interest seat

- Dr. Asa Bradman, Berkeley, CA :
School of Public Health, University of CA Berkeley, Associate Director of the Center for Environmental Research and Children's Health
Environmental Protection and Resource Conservation Seat

- Dr. David Mortensen, State College, PA:
Professor of Weed and Applied Plant Ecology at PSU
PhD in crop science and soil
Scientist seat

- Mr. Steve Ela, Hotchkiss, Colorado: Silver Spruce Partners, dba Ela Family Farm
Master's in soil science
Organic Farmer seat

Ela Family Farm is a fourth generation organic fruit farm located on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains outside of Hotchkiss, Colorado. The ninety-nine acre organic fruit farm is dedicated to growing peaches, apples, pears and cherries. All their products are certified organic and are only made from fruit grown on the family farm. They don't add any sugar or other flavorings to their apple sauces, fruit butters, and cider. For their jams, they use a reduced sugar recipe. Fruit gift packs are shipped throughout the country, sold directly at farmers markets on the Front Range, and sold wholesale to specialty food stores and gourmet restaurants throughout Colorado.

Livestock Committee

Ivermectin (CAS # 70288-86-7) was removed from the National List as an emergency treatment so can no longer be used by organic livestock producers. Producers can still use Moxidectin and Fenbendazole when synthetic parasiticides are the only answer to broad infestation. What is still lacking is a definition for a 'livestock emergency' which is interpreted very differently by many certifiers, especially when we are looking at goats and sheep. For dairy cows there should be no reason for synthetic parasiticides use and the only exception may be for young breeding stock that are grazing infected pastures.

NODPA has suggested the following definition of livestock emergency in its comments to NOSB and USDA.

Definition of livestock emergency:

An urgent, non-routine situation in which the organic system plan's preventive measures and veterinary biologics are proven,

Substance	National List Section	Proposed By	Seconded by	Result
Motion to remove Ivermectin	205.603	Jean Richardson	Harriet Behar	Removed from National List
Motion to classify Aluminum sulfate as synthetic Classified in Crops		Ashley Swaffar	Harriet Behar	NA
Motion to add aluminum sulfate	205.603	Ashley Swaffar	Jean Richardson	Not added to National List
Motion to classify sodium bisulfate as synthetic		Ashley Swaffar	Harriet Behar	Passed
Motion to add sodium bisulfate	205.603	Ashley Swaffar	Tracy Favre	Not added to National List
Motion to classify acid-activated bentonite as synthetic		Ashley Swaffar	Tracy Favre	Passed
Motion to add acid-activated bentonite - as petitioned	2053603	Ashley Swaffar	Tracy Favre	Not added to the National List

by laboratory analysis and visual inspection, to be inadequate to prevent illness or to alleviate pain and suffering, a producer must administer the emergency treatment (§205.238(c)(7)). Organic certification will be retained provided, that, such treatments are allowed under § 205.603 and the organic system plan is changed to prevent a similar livestock emergency in individual animals or the whole herd/flock in future years as required under §205.238(a).

Livestock Committee votes

The National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances identifies the synthetic substances that may be used and the nonsynthetic (natural) substances that may not be used in organic crop and livestock production.

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Resilient Farming for a Changing Climate

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California, the Southeast and the Northeast. By the beginning of winter, wild fires were raging in the mountains of Tennessee, and a National Weather map showed that very few parts of this country could be considered 'normal'. Extreme weather events and conditions are now the new normal, and as farmers, our challenge is increasingly to learn how to adapt, be more resilient, and be as agile as possible in our response.

Some experts define 'risk management' as just another insurance policy and hassle, but we prefer to see risk management as a response plan, a systematic and strategic approach of planning ahead to prepare for the unexpected.

Fortunately, most of the factors that make farms more resilient are the same factors that make farms more productive, more independent, and ultimately more sustainable. We always have the tendency of farming with last year's variables, but regardless of what 2017 brings, these resilience principles will help minimize our risk and increase our ability to adapt.

1 SOIL HEALTH – Pick up any farm magazine these days and you will see articles on soil health. Many labs and universities are developing soil health tools to assess the chemical, physical and biological conditions in a soil sample for a 'soil health' score. It seems that everyone is an expert on soil health, or at least, they have figured out how to use this catchy term to sell something!

But, in a nation where 'health care' means 'disease care' with precious little legitimate 'health promotion', the same is true with soil. The promotion of soil health is not in the myriad of products you can buy. It is in the things you do, the health-promoting practices you use, always holding this core truth in mind: while soil chemical, physical and biological characteristics are all important, but the greatest of these, and the most responsive, is biological.

Tend the microbial life in your soil carefully and mindfully. Give them (1) nutrient-rich food from cover crops, compost and crop residue (2) a safe clean home with good water infiltration, little erosion and ample soil air through improved drainage, reduced tillage and judicious application of nutrients, and above all, (3) don't kill them with pesticides!

There will come a day when our descendants shake their heads in astonishment that American agriculture thought it wise to douse the soil with highly toxic poisons where we grow food. Pesticides are fairly indiscriminate in what they kill, even herbicides are known to be toxic to bacteria and fungi, as is nitrate fertilizer. A rule of thumb: if you wouldn't pour it on your children (with the possible exception of manure!), then it probably should not be poured on your soil microbes.

New research out of the University of New Hampshire shows that the soil microbial population is the primary source of stable soil organic matter. In the past, some scientists and biotech/chemical industry apologists have claimed that the best way to increase soil



The Martens Family



WEED CONTROL IN DROUGHTS

- **Cultivate - cultivate - cultivate!**
- **Weeds are easy to desiccate but hard to suffocate**
- **Aggressive cultivation does not hurt crops**
- **Weeders are very effective**
- **Weeds have big roots but small tops**
- **Take advantage of the opportunity to cultivate crops before they really need it**

organic matter was by slowing down the decomposition of plants. However, decomposing plant material turns rapidly into carbon dioxide and is lost from the soil. A healthy, diversified microbial population is necessary to produce chemically complex, persistent soil organic matter that forms stable aggregates, open pores, and is able to resist erosion and structural breakdown.

Overnight on May 14, 2014, unexpectedly heavy rains swelled streams, pouring down the hills and into our little town. Debris on stream banks washed into culverts, the blockage causing major flooding. Many fields had just been plowed, so with little to hold soil in place, mud washed freely into the streams, into basements, stores, and into the lake. The amount of topsoil lost that one night was phenomenal, but equally important was the catastrophic property damage. It is a remarkably unpopular but undeniably true fact that the slimy flood-mud in Mary's office-supply store basement came from somewhere, most likely from Joe's field. If Joe chooses to farm in a way that puts Mary's property at risk, is that not a worthy topic of 'common good' conversation? Farmers never like to be told how to operate their farms, but if they choose an approach that does not resist erosion and runoff, why should they not be held liable for property damage downstream?

A healthy soil is filled with a balanced and active diversity of healthy microbes and cycling organic matter that will hold more water in dry years, promote better drainage in wet years, hold soil in place resisting erosion, prevent rampant root disease, with strong particle aggregation to resist compaction, promote good water infiltration, sequester carbon from the air, and provide nutrients to sustain good healthy crops under a variety of climatic conditions. Seriously, what's not to like about that?

2. CROP DIVERSITY – Crop diversity has so many benefits. Diversity spreads out risk of weather and pest damage, and distributes seasonal labor demands. It improves financial security by avoiding putting 'all our eggs in one basket' that might develop a leak. A good rotation promotes nutrient cycling, suppresses weed growth and pest populations, reduces erosion, increases soil water-holding capacity and reduces compaction. A good rotation uses our land wisely for the full 12 months each year, rather than focusing all production and activity in a mere 5 months. A good rotation improves agility to adapt to the unexpected, planting and harvesting nearly every

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

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month of the year, selling crops into varied markets while enriching our soil, keeping it stable and in place, safely covered during the winter and productive during the summer. A good crop rotation improves both the quality of our soil and the quality of our lives.

One great thing about being an organic farmer is that we have good strong markets for many crops, increasing our options. An example of a possible diverse crop repertoire for the Northeast is this:

Spring-Planted Crops

- row crops - corn, soybeans, field peas, dry beans, sunflower, flax, lentil
- small grains - oats, wheat, triticale, barley, spring spelt, einkorn
- annual forage/cover crop - pea/oat, sorghum-sudan, pea/triticale
- cover crop - clover, yellow mustard

- vegetables – processing, fresh-market

Summer-Planted Crops

- buckwheat, millet, sorghum-sudangrass, sorghum
- forage radish, forage peas, cowpea, turnips with oats

Fall-Planted Crops

- small grains - wheat, barley, triticale, rye, spelt, einkorn, emmer
- cover crops/forage - peas/oats, Austrian winter peas/triticale

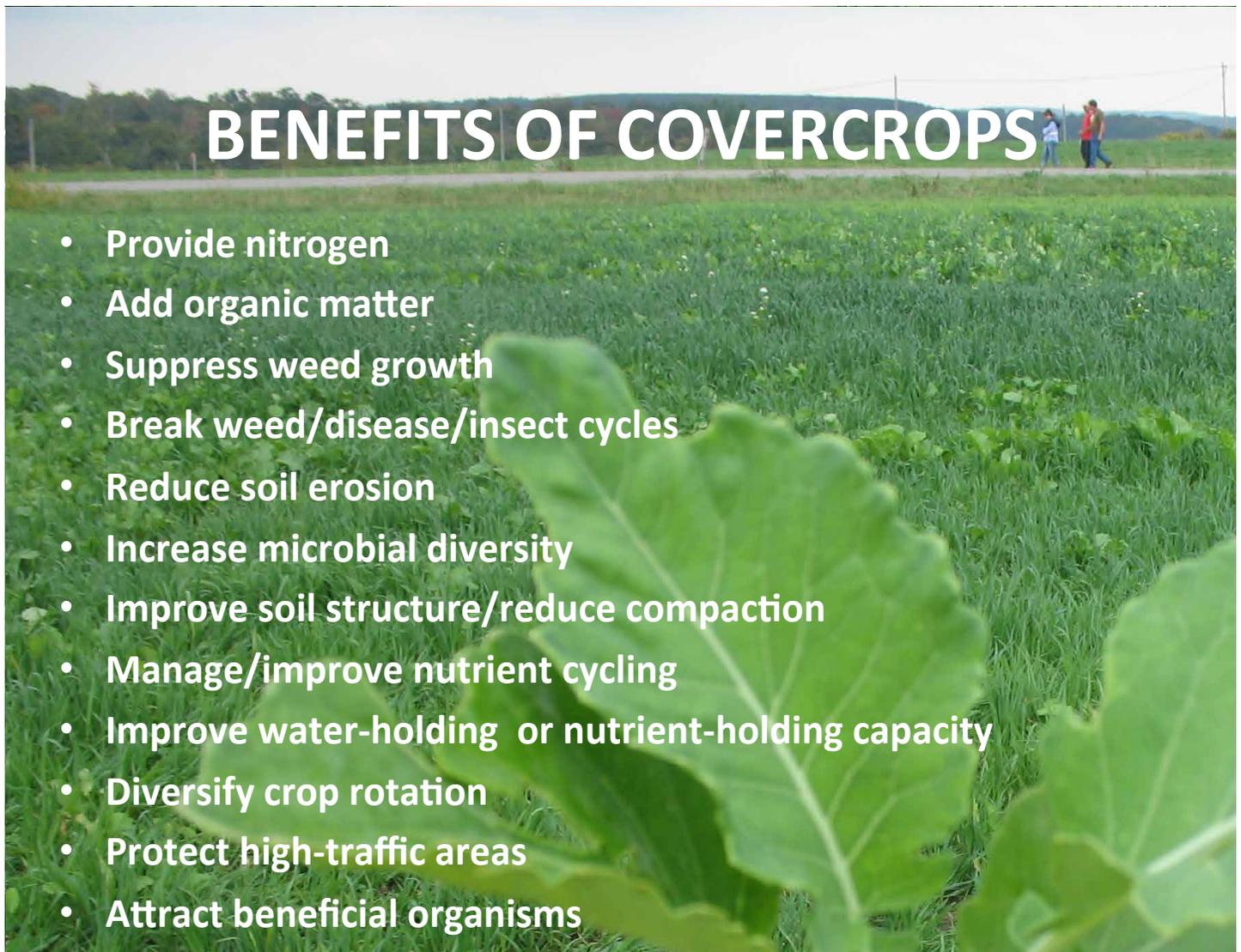
Perennial Crops

(spring, summer, or frost seeded)

- Alfalfa, timothy, clovers, other pasture grasses/legumes

As the drought settled in this summer, we became very aware that forage for our cows and the three dairy farms that we cooperate with would be extremely short. Second-cutting hay was not growing and with so little pasture, we had already started

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BENEFITS OF COVERCROPS

- Provide nitrogen
- Add organic matter
- Suppress weed growth
- Break weed/disease/insect cycles
- Reduce soil erosion
- Increase microbial diversity
- Improve soil structure/reduce compaction
- Manage/improve nutrient cycling
- Improve water-holding or nutrient-holding capacity
- Diversify crop rotation
- Protect high-traffic areas
- Attract beneficial organisms

“We love it in the maternity pen!”

— Alan Mesman



MESMAN FARMS, MT. VERNON, WASHINGTON
Alan (Anita), Ben (Chelsy) and Samantha Mesman
Robotic Organic Dairy, 110 cows, SCC 150,000



“We have been using Udder Comfort™ for 8 years and just love it in our maternity pen!” says 4th generation dairyman Alan Mesman, pictured above with wife Anita during the 2016 WODPA Conference. Alan and his son Ben and daughter Samantha operate Mesman Farms, a 110-cow robotic organic dairy near Mt. Vernon, Washington.

“As an original user, we did one of the first DHI comparisons 8 years ago, coating udders of high-count cows. We were surprised when our SCCs fell by 40,000. We then transitioned to using Udder Comfort routinely after calving to manage udder edema and milk quality.”

With robotic milking in place 3 years, the Mesmans continue to make sure fresh cows get Udder Comfort.

“We use it in the maternity pen for 4 milkings to remove edema and soothe irritation, especially on the new heifers. I like seeing positive change in working with the cows and watching the progress of our Holstein/Jersey herd. Udder Comfort plays a big part, helping fresh cows reach their potential.”

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

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to feed our 'winter feed'. It was late July, there still was time to do something, but with virtually no moisture in the ground, do what? After considering our choices, we started planting BMR sorghum-sudangrass, BMR millet, and BMR sudangrass. These are warm season 'C-4' grasses that are very efficient with moisture and are able to grow during hot dry weather.

By early October, the BMR sorghum-sudangrass fields were over 6 ft tall, lush, filled with juicy sugar, in prime condition to chop and stuff into a silage bag. By early November, the red clover underseeding that we had frost-seeded into our small grains had grown enough to chop. As the BMR crops came off, we planted winter triticale and Austrian winter peas that will provide top-quality forage next spring, about the time when supplies run short, and give us opportunity to double-crop the fields to soybeans or dry beans.

A neighbor looked at his hay supplies and came up with a different approach. After harvesting wheat, he planted tillage radish, forage turnip and cowpeas. Usually considered cover-crop species, these also can make for good grazing or greenchop with the benefits of soil loosening, nutrient sequestration, and nitrogen

fixation.

Had we relied only on the traditional perennial cool-season hay species that are typical of upstate New York, we would be like many dairy farmers this year, with barns that are distressingly empty, already purchasing expensive hay with most of the winter yet to come. But instead, by quickly switching to crops better suited to the hot dry conditions, we and our neighbors have ended up with enough forage.

3 PRACTICING 'CULTURAL DEFENSE'. This is a rather intriguing thought-process, a system of planning ahead to be better prepared for the unknown. This is not exactly new, but perhaps it needs to be taken to a higher level of intention and engagement.

Winter is a good time to map out scenarios and strategies, such as 'how should I plan to control weeds in row crops in a drought?', "how will I control weeds when it rains?", "what must I change if it rains all the time?". Rather than being reactive, now is a good time to be proactive, actively planning decision-tree strategies, acquiring versatile equipment, and being prepared for different possible variables.

In a drought, weeds are very easy to desiccate but hard to bury or suffocate. Aggressive cultivation generally won't hurt deeper-

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Wrapped baleage.

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

When Correcting Your Soil Costs Too Much!

By Neal Kinsey

What good is a soil test if it costs too much to follow the advice given?

More often than not, this is a major complaint concerning fertilizer requirements, even from those who believe they should follow the recommended advice as closely as possible.

The first step to correctly answer this question is to determine what the grower has in mind to accomplish. Without understanding what is actually wanted from a soil test, it is possible that the best approach for that specific situation is not what the one making the recommendations has in mind.

Most soil samples are taken in a hurry, sent in a hurry and results are expected “in a hurry” as well. Consequently, very valuable information that could be most helpful for recommending the best program to the farmer or grower may not have even been provided.

As an example, Kinsey Agricultural Services provides a soil worksheet to be filled out as completely as possible by all of those who send samples for analysis and recommendations. The requested information is important to understand and needed to make the best recommendations and to minimize delays in getting the results back in the shortest possible time. When the proper information is not supplied it often results in added delays in order to determine what to do.

On that worksheet, in the lower left hand corner is a box listing four types of recommendations that can be requested. Excellent, Building, Maintenance and Minimum are shown there with a note that the program to be used for attaining an excellent soil will be used if no box is checked. Some just do not take the time to consider this as important and fail to check the appropriate box. But many actually feel that Excellent is the program they want to follow, and it truly would be best provided enough funds are available to cover the cost. But most only want the excellent program until they see how expensive that is to accomplish. Then they have a program that is needed for providing the best results from that soil for growing high yields and excellent quality, but it costs so much some just throw up their hands and say the program is too expensive.

When you get the best, it will generally cost more. This is especially true where crops have been grown over and over again without adequately replacing all of those nutrients that have been removed. When growing crops for years on the same land without replacing what is taken out year by year, it will usually cost quite a bit extra to try and put it back as soon as possible. How



Neal Kinsey
 Kinsey Agricultural Services
 297 COUNTY HWY 357
 Charleston, MO 63834
 PHONE: 573-683-3880
 FAX: 573-683-6227
 E-MAIL: neal@kinseyag.com
 WEBSITE: www.kinseyag.com

many years has it been, if ever, since needed sulfur and micronutrients have been adequately applied on soils that are still shown to be sorely deficient? We see soils that have received manure or compost or small amounts of various trace elements in purchased fertilizers for years that still fall into that category.

However, when funds are limited, does that mean there is no other approach that can still be utilized based on the soil test? The needs are still there, but under the circumstances, which ones

should provide the greatest advantage for producing the best crop? Most growers want an excellent soil. But playing catch-up on what has been taken and not replaced for years can add significantly to the cost. That's when most start thinking more in terms of a minimum program of fertility. Yet the minimum program should only be considered when you have absolutely no other choice, and even then, keeping in mind that it is only a very temporary solution. That is because when actually using such a program, you are removing nutrients that are presently adequate for producing the crop without replacing them. Depending on whether those levels are good or barely adequate could make a big difference in the condition of the next crop that needs to be grown there.

There is still an additional choice that can be made when it costs too much to apply everything to build the soil toward achieving its top potential in the shortest period of time – which is what the “excellent” fertility program is intended to accomplish. If growers cannot do that, then spend the available budget where it will make the most difference for the crop to be grown.

Most fertilizer programs are designed with no real regard for what nutrient levels are in the soil. Whether levels are good or bad, or for those who do not even know what those levels would need to be, farmers and growers are led to believe the best approach to fertilizer use is to feed the plants. And that feeding program is too often based on what amount of fertilizer it requires to grow that yield, regardless of what the soil test shows to be there. When this is the case, soils that are in excellent shape get the same recommended fertilizer program as those that are in poor shape. As a result, how many farmers have been led to believe that they only need one fertilizer program to grow each crop on the entire farm? In such cases, who really needs a good soil test anyway? Just put on what it takes to grow the expected proven yield and hope things get better, or maybe at least stay the same.

The Albrecht system of soil fertility is designed to feed the soil

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Resilient Farming

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planted crops, but it is tempting to slow down on cultivating when you don't see weeds. Many of our neighbors did that this summer figuring it was too dry for weeds to grow, and then were unpleasantly surprised when rain started in September and the weeds came on strong.

In wet years, weeds have big tops with small roots. It is important to set weeders and cultivators to bury, rather than to pull weeds to the soil surface, since they are not likely to dry. Use brief breaks in the weather to get over as many fields as possible, not trying to painstakingly get every weed. When it rains all the time, don't be tempted to plant later than optimal. Sometimes that pays off, but often it is a waste of time and seed.

More yield is lost at harvest and in storage than most farmers realize. Be sure harvest equipment and storage facilities are repaired, functional, clean and accessible before you need them. Have access to a good moisture tester and know how to use it.

Harvest grain at physiological maturity rather than waiting for it to dry in the field. Several years ago, we invested in tracks for the combine, allowing us to continue harvest even in mud and snow. Especially if fields are weedy or wet, be prepared to clean and dry grain quickly, a good rotary cleaner can often save a weedy crop of grain if used promptly after harvest. Regularly monitor grain in bins and wagons for deterioration, insects, and heating, and be prepared to act quickly if problems are detected.

Sometimes conditions force creativity. After such a dry summer, October was so wet that it was impossible to get the usual dry-bean harvest equipment through the fields. Fearing we'd lose a surprisingly beautiful crop of pinto and kidney beans, we brainstormed with one employee who had worked for a vegetable processor. He suggested we try a snap-bean harvester that strips the pods off the plants. Wagon loads of pods and leaves came back to the barnyard and were threshed through the bean combine – but the mission was accomplished and the beans saved! Unexpectedly, we found that the cows totally love eating the dry pods, bean plants and stray beans! What looked like impending disaster turned into successful bean harvest after all, along with a very large pile of additional feed for our cows. I think we can call this serendipity this year, but in the future, we will know this is a viable option.

SOIL HEALTH MANAGEMENT

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- (6) promote good water infiltration,
- (7) sequester carbon from the air
- (8) provide nutrients to sustain good healthy crops under a variety of climatic conditions.

4. ADAPTING NEW TECHNOLOGY. The world of agricultural equipment is changing fast right now, with new options for GPS guidance, new tools for weed control, and new computer monitoring to improve precision. It can get expensive since much of it is developed in Europe, so we must carefully examine options to determine what will actually pay back the investment on our farms.

Improving seed placement, reducing tillage and fine-tuning weed control have been priorities for us. Klaas and our son, Peter, have spent much time evaluating European planters, drills, and the myriad of creative tools recently invented to remove weeds. Some machines are truly surreal in their approach and others not appropriate to our farm, but we have upgraded to several newer-style cultivators and weeders. We have also incorporated GPS and other computer positioning, and we feel we now can achieve better weed control with fewer field passes, less soil disruption, less fuel, and less time.

Purchased energy remains a major obstacle to sustainability on all farms, both organic and conventional. With increasing horsepower tractors, massive bin fans, grain dryers, baleage wrappers, refrigeration and more, a typical farm consumes an enormous amount of fossil fuel-based energy.

About 5 years ago, we started installing solar panels on the roof of one barn. This has progressed to cover two more barns, now

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Resilient Farming

continued from page 13

at over 60 kw and still growing. With plummeting cost of solar panels and inverters, installing solar power is increasingly cost effective. We have replaced nearly all the stationary electricity used on the farm with solar, including lighting, bin fans, shop tools, and the spelt dehuller. We traded several pickup trucks for an electric Smart Car and a Nissan Leaf because very rarely do we actually need the capacity of a pickup truck to go between fields or run for parts. House water is heated with solar panels on the garage, and we are actively pursuing an electric soybean roaster to eliminate that major consumer of propane. An electric chainsaw is used to cut the wood that heats the house.

This shift is only partly because we philosophically seek to 'reduce our carbon footprint', though that is certainly something we care about. The bigger reason is that we see that purchased petroleum-based energy makes us increasingly vulnerable to national and international politics, to a dwindling supply and rising prices, too dependent on forces outside our control.

It is much better to take control of our energy generation and consumption now, using the sunlight that arrives on our farm each day, with intention, intelligence and planning, rather than to be forced into less desirable changes later.

After we had been farming organically for a few years, we started thinking it was time to write the definitive book on organic field crop production. But, we were raising a family, farming and starting a feed mill, so the book took back burner only for it to then become very apparent that we will never write the definitive book, as our understanding, our challenges, our decisions and our confidence change with each year. We will never stop learning nor will we ever stop improving our practices, especially as erratic weather patterns throw unexpected curve balls.

Our greatest challenge now is to create a resilient farming system that is agile and elastic enough to roll with those curve balls, allow for mid-stream changes, and to emerge productive and smiling, no matter what the weather brings.

The Martens can be reached at Lakeview Organic Grain, Penn Yan, NY, 315-531-1038 or by email, mh@lakevieworganicgrain.com

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

When Correcting Your Soil Costs Too Much

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and let the soil feed the plant. If the level of a nutrient in the soil is sufficient to grow the crop then skip that one and go on to the ones that are more limiting as that will make more difference in terms of improving yields. This involves a program of prioritizing needed crop nutrients. Whatever is determined as priority #1 is supplied first, then #2 and then #3, until the budget is used up. Using such a program enables the grower to put the money that is available where it will make the most difference.

Furthermore, materials that actually build the available levels of a needed nutrients in the soil should be applied to crops (regarded as “soil feeders”) instead of plant feeders. Plant feeders are types of fertilizer that must be picked up by the plants quickly, otherwise they will be tied up and remain in a form that is no longer useable and thus will not build in the soil and will not show up on a soil test as available for the next crop. As the soil feeder types of fertilizer, plus effective soil amendments are used to build sufficient nutrient levels in the soil, then they are no longer the most needed and can be placed further down the list concerning where to spend the allotted budget for that crop or field.

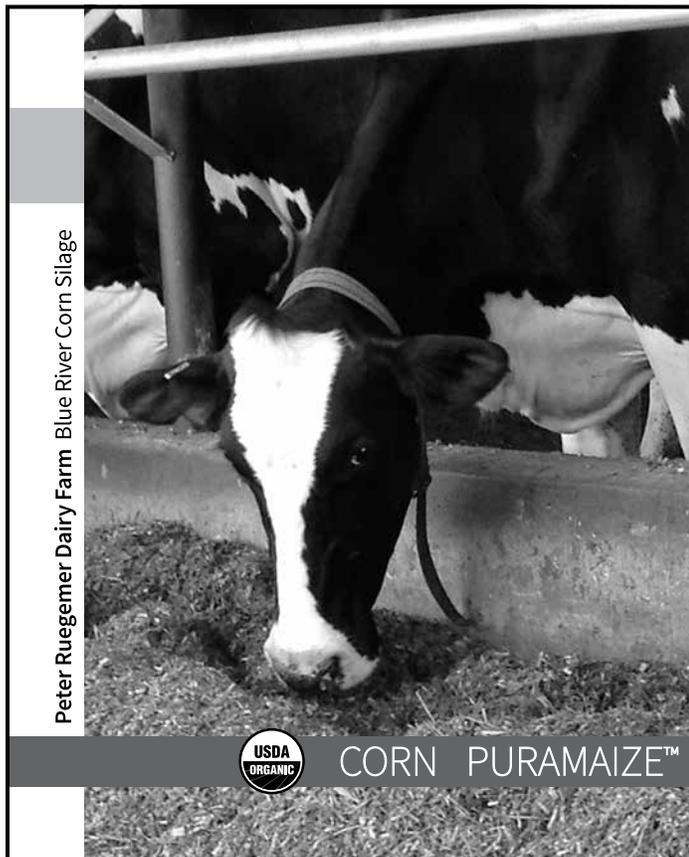
Prioritizing fertility needs in a crop can be quite different for

grass, vs, legume, vs. mixed grass/legume pastures, vs. oats, vs. corn silage. But is such a thing really even possible, or just another ploy to get farmers to use this service rather than some other one? Start small. Split a field and use the current program on half and then use the testing for the prioritized nutrient program on the other half. Determine to carry through with the test for three years on good soils. It takes even less time on poorer soils. But check to see whether the extra testing and expense is worth the difference before making full use of the program.

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Neal Kinsey, from Charleston, Missouri, USA, owns and operates Kinsey Agricultural Services, Inc., a company which specializes in soil fertility management. The program is based on the system of providing soil nutrients to correctly treat the soil and the plants that grow there, using soil chemistry to correct the soil’s physical structure to build the “house” which enables the biology to flourish. Our business includes working with most major food and fiber crops throughout the world. Consulting includes soils received for analysis and recommendations from every state in the United States and from over 75 countries, principally from the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Great Britain, Germany, Austria and France. Detailed soil audits will determine specific fertilization programs based on each individual soil and its fertility requirements.

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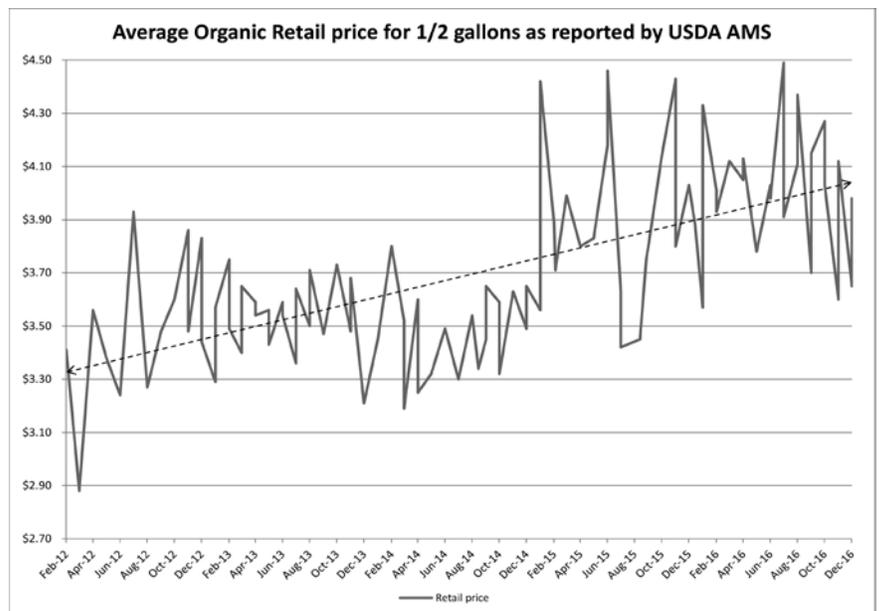
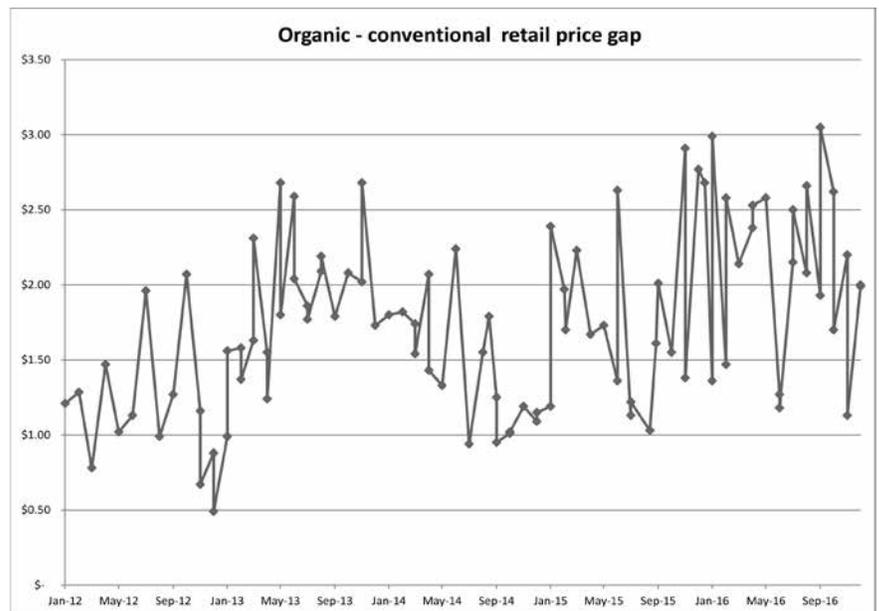
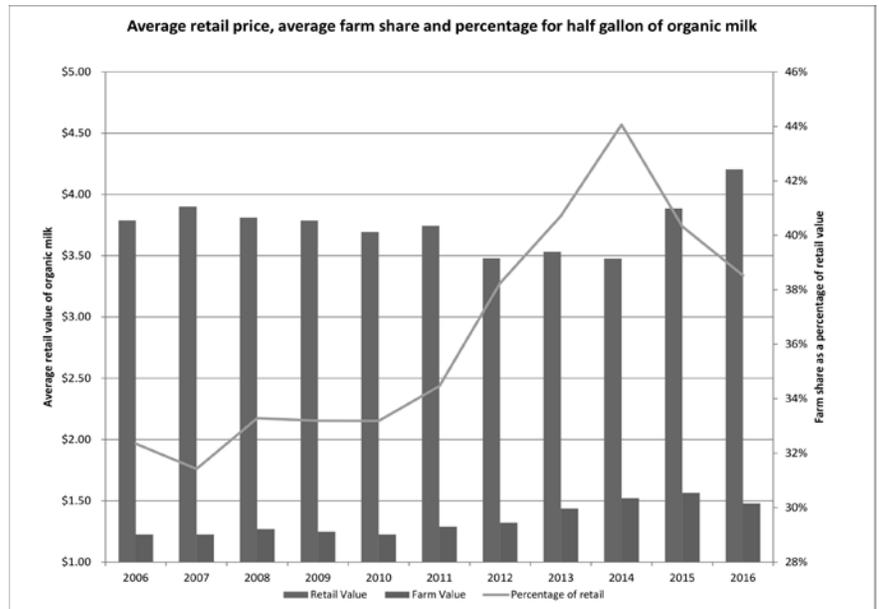
ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Organic Milk Pay, Retail and Feed Prices for January 2017

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

Sales of organic fluid milk increased by four percent a year through October 2015-October 2016, compared to the same period in 2014-2015. This is compared to zero growth in sales for the same period 2013-2014 compared to 2014-2015. The average retail price for organic half gallons in 2016 was \$3.96 compared to \$3.90 in 2015. Pay price to organic dairy producers fell by an average of \$2 per hundred pounds in 2016. The major milk buyers are not taking on new producers; have asked existing producer suppliers to limit growth in production; and there are farms in the process of transitioning to organic that do not have an organic buyer. Organic milk is being sold into the conventional market at rock bottom prices while conventional milk in the Northeast is being dumped as capacity to balance supply was overwhelmed. We are now suffering the consequences of a surplus supply situation despite historically high sales of organic fluid milk, plus the rapid increase of grassmilk sales. To have a surplus despite an increase of four percent in fluid retail sales, mostly in whole milk, we can assume that production must have increased by six or seven percent. This increase came from higher yield, by feeding cheaper purchased feed, or an increase in the number of organic dairy cows through continuous transition from conventional status (still possible without the Origin of Livestock Final Rule) or transitioning of farms.

Why wasn't this surplus absorbed by the milk-hungry organic manufacturers? We do not have independent volume data for organic milk sold into manufacturing but manufacturers need a consistent supply to justify launching new product lines so can't respond quickly to an availability of more supply. There is also the availability of organically certified processing capacity which is limited because of the oversupply in the conventional milk market. This lack of availability of organic process-



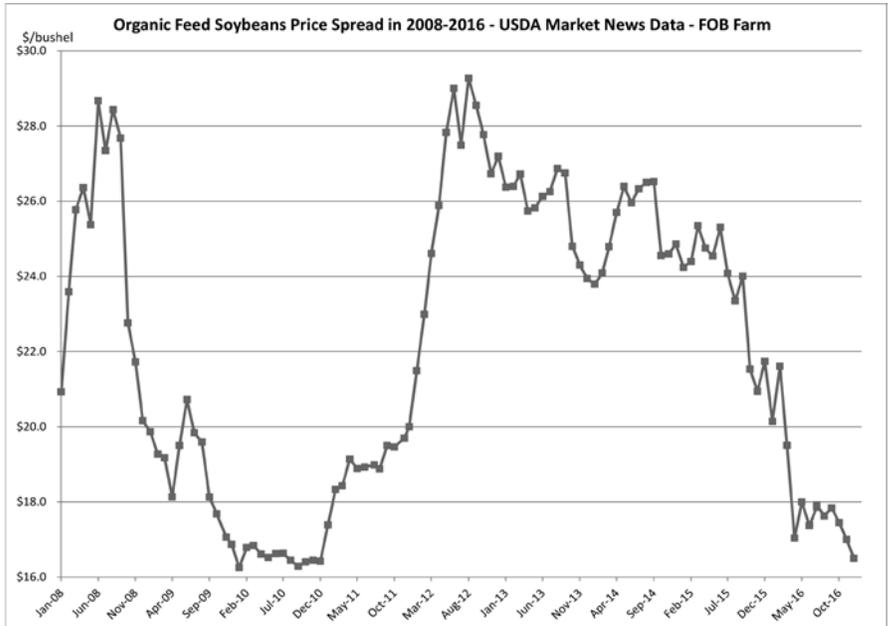
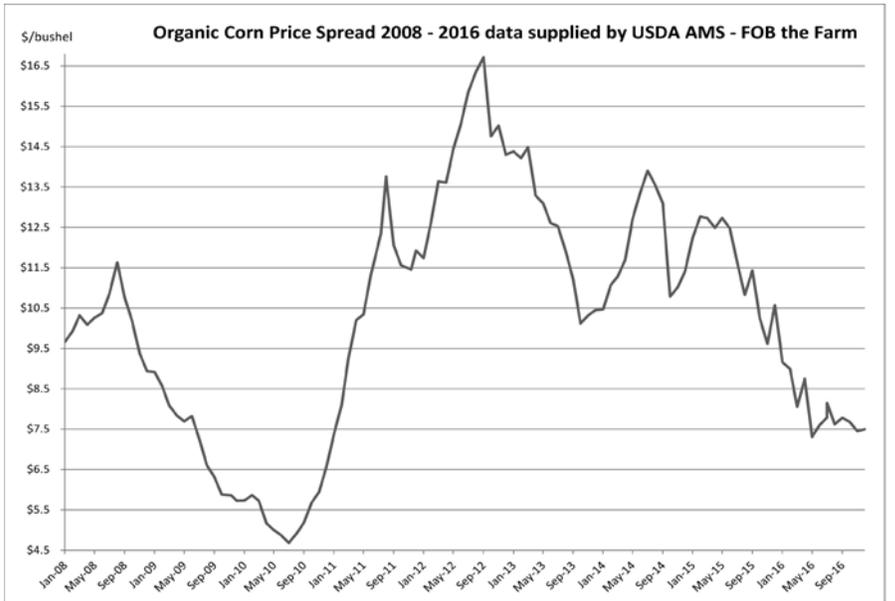
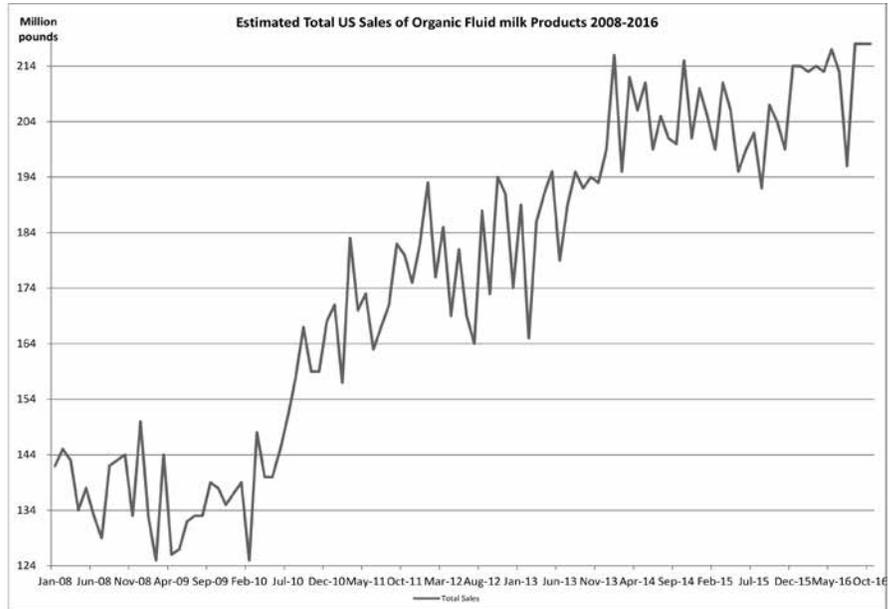
ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

ing is one reason CROPP recently announced two major capital projects: the purchase of a creamery in McMinnville, Oregon, and the construction of a cheese-cutting facility in Cashton, Wisconsin. Another alternative reason why manufacturers haven't taken advantage of this surplus might be that they were already committed to purchasing cheaper imports to ensure a steady supply of dairy ingredients.

CROPP's recent multi-year agreement with General Mills to build the organic milk supply, by supporting the transition of 20 mostly Amish farmers from conventional to organic production, highlights the manufacturers' need to have a dedicated, multi-year supply as they expand their portfolio of organic brands.

CROPP has also adopted another approach to solving the challenges of processing and distribution by collaborating with Dean Foods to create a 50/50 joint venture which is called Organic Valley Fresh. They will share the management of their combined High Temperature Short Time (HTST) organic business targeting this shorter shelf life product that is seen as fresher, more local and better tasting product. This pasteurization method is favored for "Grass Milk" brands and is also preferred by some private label customers, for example, Whole Foods' 360 brand. The joint venture will bring an infrastructure that has the possibility to open new markets and increase the sales of the Organic Valley brand. Dean Foods will utilize its network of refrigerated, direct-to-store distribution points in stores across the country which delivers products to more than 140,000 locations to lower the cost of sales and distribution, plus increase the availability of the Organic Valley brand. Sales teams from both companies will sell CROPP's organic HTST milk products. Dean will replace its Horizon milk volume with Organic Valley volume. Also, Dean has spare capacity in its HTST processing plants that can be utilized by the joint venture. It's difficult to see how the proposed CROPP/Dean joint venture will increase Organic Valley product sales dramatically although it is possibly a good

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Pay & Feed Prices

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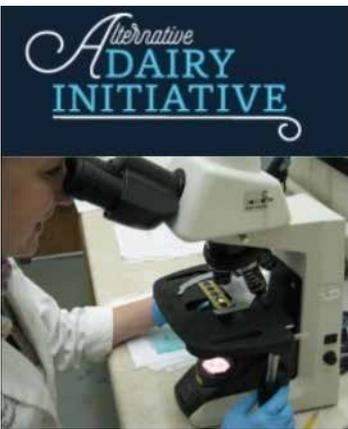
defense against the Group Danone expansion into the US organic market. The CROPP/Dean joint venture, which will be launched in the Fall of 2017, will not have any impact on the current surplus and is questionable as to whether it will increase the volume of sales in the long term. The success of this joint venture will rely on increasing the sales of the Organic Valley brand of products in a highly competitive retail dairy case that is increasingly full of non-bovine/vegetable milks (soy, almond, etc.). Horizon continues to occupy their long-term position as the brand leader in the retail sales of fluid organic product with over 25% of the market, followed by private label /store brand as a close second.

The proposed acquisition of WhiteWave by Danone will increase the competitiveness of the Horizon brand and WhiteWave's vegetable milk brands. Group Danone leadership sees the expansion of sales of vegetable milks as an important factor in the WhiteWave acquisition which is growing at 13% per year as opposed to the 4% growth in organic milk.

Space in a dairy case has always been highly competitive and product

availability and regular servicing of accounts is only one requirement. Most retailers require lower prices, higher margins and constant promotional offers. HTST milk cannot be centrally warehoused and does have the logistical problem of regular out of date returns which retailers do not like. Hopefully, we have moved on from the "good old days" of paying buyers cash for shelf space or to block your competition. Brand loyalty in the case of Horizon is not easy to overcome and moving consumers from store brand to Organic Valley brand would be on price and a distinct marketing campaign about the benefits of supporting the branded product.

Given the history of Dean (formerly called Dean Foods) and their business practices towards producers, it is more likely that producers' pay price will suffer in order for the Organic Valley Fresh to compete on price with private label and Horizon product in order to increase their share in the retail milk case. Dean has a responsibility to its shareholders to make the joint venture successful based on payment for their services. CROPP has its obligations to the joint venture plus their responsibility to their nearly 1,000 employees and the profitability of the whole cooperative to factor into increasing the margins available from sales, channeled through the joint venture. Pay price is the one area that CROPP controls, and history shows that this is the first area that is sacrificed when costs need to be lowered.



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The acquisition of WhiteWave will make Danone the largest buyer of organic milk in the US according to Errol Schweizer, a former Whole Foods executive who is now an industry adviser. With so much consolidation in the organic market, CROPP will be unable to match the leverage and access to capital that these corporations have. The joint venture with Dean will be a useful tool to increase distribution but without an influx of capital to promote the Organic Valley product line, and to match Danone's expansion, it is difficult to assess what effect the new venture will have on sales.

The fear is that the next headline will be a CROPP merger with another cooperative to become only a wholesaler of organic milk while selling their brand to Dean Food, General Mills, Unilever (Ben and Jerry's) or any of the other companies wanting to break into the market. This would not be a great change in emphasis for CROPP and would tie in well with its store brand/private label business which takes a large percentage of its current supply and their mission to expand the number of acres in organic production. BUT, we are also living in a time of great opportunity and change. CROPP could adopt a more aggressive position with Organic Valley Fresh. If Danone is required to sell off their subsidiary, Stonyfield Yogurt and retail milk brands, to satisfy the Justice Department approval of their acquisition of WhiteWave, Organic Valley Fresh or some similar CROPP joint venture would be ideally positioned to purchase the

brand. This would expand their retail presence and their product mix while securing a market for their producers, particularly those in New England and the Northeast.

Feed corn is still trading at \$7 per bushel, about \$2 lower than December 2015, and soybeans are priced at \$17 per bushel as compared with \$20 in December 2015. The last time the prices were this low was in January 2011. Organic hay costs are within the same range as last year, with hay being offered at \$50 per round bale or \$150-200 a ton FOB with a good supply. Cheap foreign feed still dominates the market and undercuts domestic producers. ♦

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

The American Grassfed Association Grassfed Dairy Standard to be launched February 8th 2017

by *Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director*

The American Grassfed Association's (AGA) Board of Directors has given final approval to the new AGA Grassfed Dairy Standard. More than a year in development, the standard is the result of the work of a diverse group of stakeholders, including representatives from AGA, Organic Valley, Maple Hill Creamery, Traders Point Farm Organics, Trickling Springs Creamery, Cabriejo Creamery, Pennsylvania Certified Organic and NOFA New York. Independent dairy consultants Dr. Meg Cattell, Dr. Arden Nelson and Dr. Silvia Abel-Caine contributed their expertise.

While AGA has offered a Grassfed meat certification program in the United States since 2009, the rapid growth of the Grassfed dairy market and lack of government oversight on labeling claims has highlighted the need for a dairy-specific standard.

The working group collaborated using a three-pronged approach to create the science-based, marketing claim:

- To ensure the healthy and humane treatment of dairy animals.
- To meet consumer expectations about grassfed dairy products.
- To be economically feasible for small and medium-size dairy farmers.

The working group is currently developing a timeline and procedure for implementation of the new standard, with an anticipated roll-out at AGA's annual producer conference February 8-9, 2017 at the Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture in Pocantico Hills, NY.

CROPP has played a leading role in developing these standards, hiring Mark Lipson, former USDA organic policy advisor and current research associate at the Center for Agroecology & Sustainable Food Systems, University of California, Santa Cruz, as a consultant to move the process forward.

CROPP has also recently expanded its pool of organic and Grassfed producers. They announced in December that they have created a new route with twelve 100 percent Grassfed dairies in the Mid-Atlantic to increase production of its Organic Valley Grassmilk branded milk products. The production expansion makes CROPP the largest producer of organic, 100 percent grass-fed dairy in the country.

The twelve new Organic Valley Grassmilk dairy farmers are located in Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania and are connected with the existing milk route between the states from Myerstown, PA., to Dayton, Va. With Organic Valley's regional model, milk is produced, bottled and distributed right in the region where it is farmed to ensure fewer miles from farm to table and to support local economies. It is thought that CROPP's recently formed joint venture with Dean will take full advantage of the Dean's under-utilized HTST processing plants to increase the local packaging of the Grassfed milk brand across the country, especially in the East, where there is both supply and expanding consumer demand.

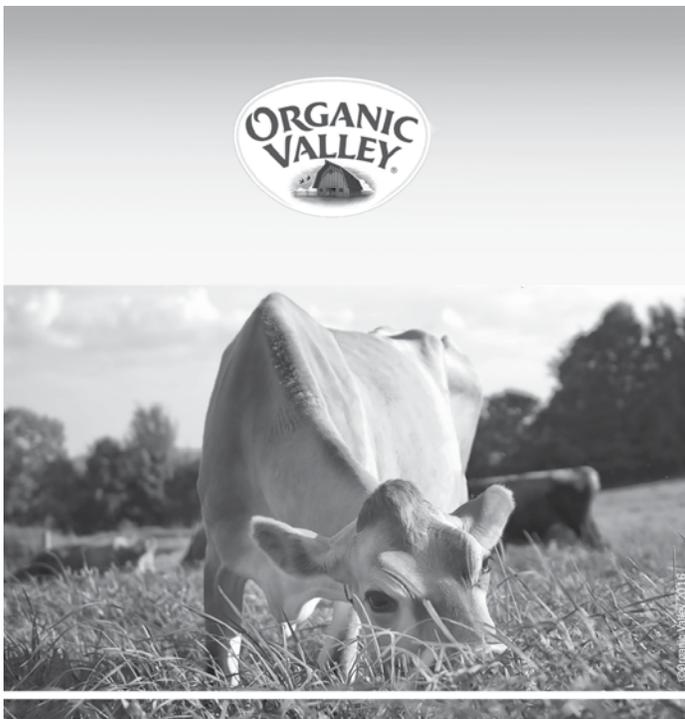
In 2016 CROPP created a new Northeast Grassmilk route leading from New York to Pennsylvania. With the recent additions, the farmer-owned cooperative now has a total of 121 Grassmilk dairies across the country, in California, Wisconsin, Ohio, Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Maryland. More Grassmilk dairy farmers are expected to join the CROPP cooperative in 2017 to support additional growth and new product development.

The new standard is similar to organic certification in that it addresses a wide variety of practices but without the rigorous inspection, certification process and enforcement that organically certified has. In fact, in some cases the door is wide open for abuse; for example animals can be identified by batch rather than individually and re-admittance to the program can be interpreted too broadly, "The producer files

a request for a reprieve from conditions specified in 1, 2, and 3 if terminated Grassfed certification is due to extenuating circumstances.” The attempt to directly address sustainability by requiring a “written pasture management and grazing plan that supports biological diversity, natural resources, and soil fertility,” is clearly a step in the right direction but is too vague to be consistently applied by the multiple different auditors.

Producers do not have to be certified organic in order to receive the AGA Grassfed dairy certification. George Siemon is quoted in a Civil Eats article that “it’s a natural progression for an organic dairy farmer” and that almost all Grassfed dairy farms that have joined CROPP’s network were operating as organic dairy farms before. As we have learned from organic certification, when a label is not widely used, then integrity can be maintained. Grassfed is breaking out of the niche market and is challenging organically certified in some East coast markets. There has been a move to encourage the Federal government to use these standards to upgrade their existing protocols but there is little hope that it will happen because regulation would have to include both USDA and FDA. To quote

George Siemon again; “We all know that that’s a very slow and difficult process. We’d like to think this [standard] goes a long way to build integrity in the meantime.” NOFA New York and PCO include the Grassfed claim with organic certification, which is the ideal combination, but many other proponents of the program do not require that. George Siemon is again quoted as relying on retailers to maintain the integrity of the new program, “Grassfed dairy is an innovative item at this time, and retailers ... have a stake in not letting it be ruined by false claims.” AGA’s communications director Marilyn Noble is quoted in the same Civil Eats article; “We’ve got big players in the organic dairy area who are promoting this,” Noble said. “So when consumers start seeing that certification, it’s going to have a lot more impact because it’s on recognized products.” Unfortunately, retailers and brand owners have an economic stake in ensuring a consistent supply at a profitable price that gives them a good margin. Looking to retailers and brand owners to police the standard is definitely ignoring the realities of commerce, and in the interim will undermine the demand for organically certified dairy. ♦



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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Butterworks Dairy: A Farmer's Thoughts on 100% Grass-Fed Dairying

By Jack Lazor, originally posted July 19, 2016 on www.butterworksfarm.com

Some Background on Grass-Fed Dairying, its Health Benefits and Why Butterworks Dairy is even more Creamy and Nutritious than Ever!

One hundred per cent grass fed dairy products (aka "grass milk") are a relatively recent arrival to the dairy industry. The health benefits of 100% grass fed dairy have long been espoused by The Weston A. Price Foundation and others. When cows live on a diet from which grain has been eliminated, the omega 3 fatty acid profile increases in their milk. Grass fed dairy and beef have become popular because of the presence of conjugated linoleic and linolenic acids (CLA's) in butterfat and meat. Higher CLA's reduce one's risk of cancer and other diseases. CLA's are naturally occurring trans saturated fats mostly found in grass-fed meat and milk. When cows on pasture eat grass and other green plants, their gut flora convert Polyunsaturated fatty acids into CLA's. In milk, there's also another source: an enzyme in cow's mammary glands convert vaccenic acid (another type of fatty acid) into CLA.



At Butterworks Farm we have long been interested in no grain dairy farming. For the past forty years we have been grain growers as well as hay

producers. Cereals (oats, wheat and barley) and row crops like corn and soy have fit neatly into our crop rotation with grasses and legumes. The straw byproduct of the grain is just as important to us for bedding our animals as the grain has been for feeding them. We ground the grain into a dairy ration and fed our cows grains

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from our own farm as opposed to buying it from the “mill”. Over the years, as our soil health and fertility has increased, we have improved the quality of our forages (grass and legumes) to the point where we were able to reduce the amount of grain fed to our cows to 4 ½ pounds per cow at each milking. Standard fare on most high production dairy farms is one pound of grain for every three pounds of milk produced. Our ratio was closer to 1:5.

Early in 2016, we began to conclude that if the quality of our forages was so superior, we could stop feeding grain to our cows without suffering adverse consequences. In early April, we began reducing the amount of grain we fed at each milking. By the end of the month, we were down to less than three pounds per day per cow. On May 1st, we went cold turkey and joined the ranks of 100% grass fed dairy. This was an ideal time to make the transition because the cows had just left their winter quarters and started grazing virgin pasture. The first growth of grass and legumes is absolutely the best and highest quality forage a dairy farmer will produce during the entire pasture season which lasts until late October.

We were delighted with our cows’ performance without grain on the new pasture. For the first two weeks, milk production held at 45 pounds per cow. A dairy cow needs to eat 2-3% of her body weight each day to give milk, maintain her body condition and to reproduce. Dairy nutritionists refer to this phenomenon as dry matter intake. The value of feeds is determined on how much actual dry weight is being consumed by the cow. For instance, if a cow consumes 100 pounds of lush pasture that is 85% moisture, she is only consuming 15 pounds of dry matter. Different breeds of cow have different dry matter intake requirements. Jerseys are smaller than Holsteins and consume less feed. Our Jerseys need somewhere between 36 and 40 pounds of dry matter a day and it now all comes from forages in the form of pasture and hay.

The basic premise of 100% grass fed dairy is that the dry matter from grain has to be replaced with hay and pasture. This is no small task when one considers that nine pounds of grain at 13% moisture is close to eight pounds of dry matter. Consider replacing that eight pounds with forages that have moisture levels of 80 to 90%. It takes close to 100 actual pounds more of hay or pasture to replace the nine pounds of grain that is no longer being fed!

First and foremost, we have had to increase the size of our grazing paddocks that the cows are given fresh every twelve hours. We have begun feeding stored forages (baleage) in the cow stable during milking time. Cows must have ample feed in front of them at all times whether they are out on grass or tied in a stall to be milked. Until relatively recently, we never realized how much we had been getting out of that nine pounds of grain per day per cow. All in all, we now know that it will take about 20% more land per cow to be 100% grass fed. Long time hay fields will no longer be mowed and will be grazed instead. Land that grew a rotation of corn, soy and cereals will now support lush, diverse hay crops.

A serious nutrition concern is the relationship between protein and energy in our cows’ diet. Protein represents the “grow feeds” and energy represents the “go feeds”. Cows need both in an equal balance. Unfortunately, it is much easier to achieve sustained high protein levels in farm produced forages than it is to consistently produce forage crops that are off the charts in energy. A lot of energy came from the grain that cows once consumed at every milking.

Our transition to 100% grass fed is well worth it. Despite the fact that we will need more land and sharpened management skills to do this, we are very happy to promote more grass and less grain (and subsequently less tillage) on the land that we steward. More grass means more fibrous root systems in the soil. Less grain means less tillage and better soil health. Less tillage means less burning of fossil fuels and less disturbance to the delicate balance of microorganisms in our soils.

Our primary goal in farming is to take more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and through photosynthesis, lock it up in the Earth’s crust as humus and organic matter. Higher carbon levels in the soil are the number one weapon that we as humans have to reduce and eliminate the effects of a changing climate. We are excited to be trying something challenging and new. Our farming practices were already focused on mineralization and soil health which has built a vibrant farm organism. Our switch to 100% grass fed dairying is taking us to new levels. It is incredibly hard work, but so much fun and what we are learning we want to share with others in the process. ♦

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

FYI: Useful Information for Organic Dairy Farmers

Census of Agriculture Coming

The USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is preparing to conduct the 2017 Census of Agriculture - the leading source of facts and figures about American agriculture. Conducted every five years, the census provides a detailed picture of U.S. farms and ranches and the people who operate them. It is the only source of uniform, comprehensive agricultural data for every U.S. state and county. If you have never received a Census of Agriculture or a survey questionnaire from NASS, please give NASS your contact information at <https://www.agcounts.usda.gov/cgi-bin/counts/>. Note that an operation that sold or normally would have sold \$1,000 or more of agricultural products in a year is considered a farm by the Census of Agriculture definition.

Producers - Legal Contract Survey

The Drake University Agricultural Law Center is collecting data on farmer experiences with production contracts—legal agreements under which they care for poultry or livestock owned by another party or grow a crop under a contract. This survey is be-

ing conducted on behalf of the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. Results will be used to prepare a new guide to help farmers better understand and utilize production contracts.

The data we are collecting is important to provide new resources to farmers on production contracts. We hope you will consider completing this survey. It should take no less than 10 minutes to complete. Responses will remain anonymous and no contact information will be collected from respondents. The link to the survey can be found here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XG8W927> If you have questions, please contact the Drake University Agricultural Law Center, Drake University Agricultural Law Center - 515-271-4956

drakeaglaw@gmail.com

Organic Certification Cost Share

The USDA announced that it is moving the organic certification cost share program from the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to the Farm Service Agency (FSA) to provide easier access to the program. FSA has over 2,100 offices across the country where applicants can apply and get more information about the program. Organic certification cost share will be available through all county FSA offices as well as the State Department of Agriculture, if a state opts to continue to offer the cost-share program. The program will be available March 20, 2017 in FSA offices. The cost share program reimburses 75 percent of a farmer's certification



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costs each year up to a maximum of \$750 per certification scope.

Survey of Financial ‘Well-being’ of Organic Dairy Producers

For the first time, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will include a focus on organic dairy production in its annual survey of the financial well-being of American farm families.

The agency’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) will start sending representatives to dairy farms nationwide in January 2017 as part of the final data collection phase of its 2016 Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS).

This year, the survey places additional focus on corn, and conventional and organic dairy sectors. The last time ARMS focused on the dairy sector was in 2010 and focused only on the conventional dairy sector.

ARMS, a joint effort between NASS and USDA’s Economic Research Service (ERS), is an annual program that gathers in-depth information on production practices, costs, and financial well-being of American farm families. ARMS targets select commodities on a rotational basis.

All dairy farmers selected to participate in the 2016 ARMS will be notified by a mailed postcard. After that, trained enumerators/ interviewers will make appointments and visit the participating farms to gather the information through personal interviews. The visits will begin in late January and will continue through early April 2017.

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

NOSB Meeting Highlights

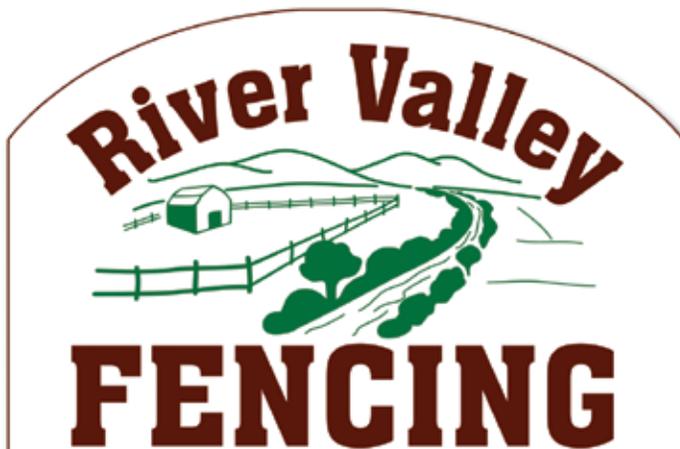
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§ 205.603 is the section that defines synthetic substances allowed for use in organic livestock production with restrictions as specified.

Hydroponics

The arguments go on about whether the NOP will prohibit hydroponics in organic certification despite the massive protest from producers across the country that it should be banned. In their discussions about a vote by the NOSB on the issue, NOSB members got bogged down in the technicalities of the NOSB process and the subsequent regulatory requirements of what NOP have called a significant rulemaking that would go to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Common sense failed to assert itself and the issue was returned to the crops subcommittee. Once again, as with pasture, organic poultry and tree fruit, the NOP is allowing its certifiers to interpret OFPA to suit their own preference and industry pressure while blaming the inadequacies of the Federal regulatory system for tying their hands. Hydroponic imports are decimating the produce market for soil based organic producers.

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Organic Industry News

Major farm groups to Trump: Adopt GIPSA rules

By Alan Guebert. © 2017 ag comm. Reprinted with express consent of author.

For almost a month now, we've watched what DTN Ag Policy Editor Chris Clayton calls "the visceral political fight" over three changes to livestock marketing rules proposed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration, or GIPSA.

"Visceral" is a fitting word to describe Big Meat's reaction to the December 14 rules announcement. Meatpackers and their contracting partners at the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC), the National Chicken Council (NCC), and the National Cattleman's Beef Association (NCBA) hate the proposed rules and made their view plain that day.

The NPPC, however, went even further. It called the proposed rules an "apparent attack on rural America for its role in helping elect Donald Trump president."

Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack labeled that hair-on-fire analysis as "absolutely absurd."

The Secretary was too kind; NPPC's reaction was 100 percent baloney. It, like its contract-enforcing packer pals, of course knew the proposed

rules originated in the pre-Trump 2008 Farm Bill. Big Meat's political allies in Congress, however, effectively bottled up the changes after Republicans retook the House in 2010.

That ended in 2016 when Congress approved USDA's funding without the previous years' GIPSA handcuffs. Free to follow the law -- the bipartisan 2008 Farm Bill law -- USDA did its duty: It released the long-in-waiting rules December 14. Big Meat went to DEFCON 1 an instant thereafter.

In perfect contrast to the packer-captured meat groups, however, the nation's two largest general farm groups, the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) and the National Farmers Union (NFU), offered vigorous endorsements for all three GIPSA proposals.

AFBF's president, Zippy Duvall, a Georgia poultry farmer, noted the rules, if finalized, will "better protect individual farmers from discriminatory treatment" in the market, provide "greater transparency," "... hold companies accountable and give farmers a voice."

NFU's president, Roger Johnson, agreed and added that ag's ultimate customers, consumers, are also winners under the new rules. "Both producers and consumers benefit when the markets are competitive and the practices and process are transparent," he offered.

But that's precisely what the Big Boys hate about the rules: All provide more sunshine to livestock and poultry markets that now are dominated by in-the-dark, contract production.

For example, GIPSA's interim rule would allow farmers and ranchers to "only prove they were treated unfairly by a company to win a legal

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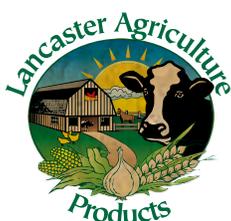
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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

NOSB Meeting Highlights

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Because several members of the Board with strong views on the issue are leaving the Board, the NOSB voted on and passed the following statement:

Statement by the NOSB on Bioponics (including hydroponics, aeroponics or aquaponics)

The NOSB respects the efforts of the former NOSB that led to their 2010 recommendation on terrestrial plants in greenhouses

The NOSB recognizes that the foundation of organic agriculture is based upon a systems approach to producing food in the natural environment, which respects the complex dynamic interaction between soil, water, air, sunlight, plants and animals needed to produce a thriving agro-ecosystem.

At the heart of the organic philosophy is the belief that our responsibilities of good stewardship go beyond production of healthy foods and include protection of natural resources, biodiversity and the ecosystem services upon which we all depend.

We encourage future NOSB to consider this wider perspective as the board undertakes the challenges of assessing and defining

innovations in agriculture that may or may not be compatible in a system of organic production.

In the case of the hydroponic/bioponic/aquaponic issue, the majority of the current members of the NOSB prefer to prohibit hydroponic systems that have an entirely water-based substrate. Although that was the original intent of the proposal before us today, the current proposal, as structured, does not achieve this objective. While the NOSB does not believe that the liquid substrate systems should be sold under the USDA organic label, these growers deserve the chance to promote their very commendable qualities and objectives in their own right.

Thanks to our NODPA members for their ongoing support of our mission.

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION: FEATURED FARM

Rob N Vale Farms: A Hillside Tradition Oscar & Betty Robinson & Family, South Otselic, NY

continued from page 1

Oscar Robinson was in his mid-20's when Betty made that first trip to the farm. He is the 3rd generation to farm their South Otselic hillside farm known as Rob N Vale Farms. It is located about 40 miles southeast of Syracuse in Chenango County. Oscar's grandparents bought the farm in 1928 and his parents purchased the farm in 1951 after they were married.

"I graduated from high school in 1973," said Oscar. "My father was sick between my junior and senior years of high school and I have basically run the farm ever since then." At the time of Oscar and Betty's marriage, the farm was 180 acres, located on the east side of County Road 13. In 2013, they were able to purchase Oscar's uncle's farm, located on the west side of the road.

The purchase expanded the Robinson's holdings to almost 600 acres, giving them enough land resources for their children to return to the farm. This foresight was wise because two of their three children now live and farm full-time at Rob N Vale.

The farm shipped its first load of organic milk in 1996 and was

one of the original 23 members of Butternut Farms Organic Co-op. "At the time, we controlled most of the milk in the Northeast," Oscar explained. "We cut a deal with the Organic Cow of Vermont. They bought our milk and a lot of it went into Stonyfield at the time." For Oscar and Betty, the transition to organic was easy; antibiotics were rarely used, the cows were already on pasture, and they had a proactive philosophy towards cow health even before going organic.

When Horizon purchased the Organic Cow of Vermont, Butternut Farms began processing a portion of their fluid milk into cheese. When the cheese venture folded, the Robinson's contracted with Upstate Niagara. In 2001, they switched processors and began shipping to Horizon.

In 2016, the Robinson's switched processors again and now ship to Maple Hill Creamery. Maple Hill branded products are produced with grass-milk but the company also procures organic milk for Byrne Dairy. "I can't complain," Oscar said about his current pay price of \$40/cwt. "Organic grain prices have softened from a year ago, and this has helped with cash flow."



Our family picture. In the back (L-R): Oscar, Betty, Peter. Front (L-R): Elise, Sarah.



Our 2 oldest cows in the herd right now. On the left is Adidas who just turned 13 this fall and Anna is on the right who is 21.

The family has 220 acres of hay ground (40 of it rented), and 200 acres of pasture, for their 210-head herd. About 100 of these are milk cows and dry cows. The remainder is young stock. In 1968, the farm introduced Brown Swiss and this has become the dominant breed. They also have some Holsteins and Holstein/Brown Swiss crosses. Most of the milk cows are bred artificially with Brown Swiss semen, but some of the Holsteins are bred back with Holstein semen. The heifers are grouped and bred while out on pasture by Brown Swiss bulls raised on the farm.

The Brown Swiss breed derives from the Alpine Braunvieh. The breed has the second-highest annual milk yield after the Holstein Friesian breed. Milk of the Brown Swiss is unique, having longer-chain fatty acids than other popular dairy breeds, and smaller fat globules in the cream. This difference means that cream rises much more slowly in milk from Brown Swiss cows.

Betty, who also serves as her school's Future Farmers of America advisor said, "I think it's cool that Oscar got his first Brown Swiss for an FFA project and built up the herd from there." Oscar appreciates the higher components of the Brown Swiss and observes that they have greater longevity and a more pronounced character than the Holstein breed. The rolling herd average is 16,900 pounds with butterfat at 3.7 and protein at 3.2. Average somatic cell count is 250,000.

With genetics extending back to the grassy slopes of the Swiss Alps, Brown Swiss perform well on a high forage ration. The Robinson herd grazes 70% DMI from pasture supplemented with a 12-14% grain ration fed in their stanchion barn at milking time. One pound of grain is fed per 3.5 pounds of milk produced. The grain ration remains steady throughout the year.

Grazing cows was part of Oscar's childhood. Although they

switched to a more intensive approach beginning in 1992, generations of cows have been raised on grass. In the current system, new paddocks are provided every morning, but night paddocks are larger- lasting 4-6 nights. There are 5 ponds which gravity feed water to the pastures. They try to get all their pastures clipped each year with a 15-foot batwing bush hog.

High-tensile perimeter fencing and pasture access laneways have been cost-shared by NRCS. The many conservation practices and improvements completed by the Robinsons resulted in being awarded the Chenango County Conservation Farm of the Year in both 1993 and 2003. Fencing, however, is still a work in progress. Last year they installed 3 ½ miles of perimeter fence and they hope to finish this year.

"It's not made for corn or crops," said Oscar about the hill side farm. Betty added, "You're either going up or down. You get down to the bottom of the hill and there's the creek. Then you turn around and go back up the hill." Instead of struggling to crop the land, the Robinsons continue to do what generations before them have – produce high quality pasture and stored grass. Oscar said, "We don't even own a set of plows. We're playing with a little frost seeding but I haven't had much need to interfere with the grasses and clovers on our pastures and hay ground."

Because their original barn was so close to the road and as Betty put it, "the milk truck was literally in the road during pick-up," the couple began milking in Oscar's uncle's barn in 2009. This allowed them to move their winter dry cow program into their old barn. They assumed ownership of the barn when they purchased the property in 2013.

The barn is 42'x344'. The structure is basically two barns connect
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Interior of the calf barn.

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ed by a roofed over middle section. One side contains stanchions for larger heifers and extra milk cows along with three group pens that the older heifers rotate through as they grow. The milking barn has stanchions for 60 cows. The overflow cows must be swapped between barns at each milking. Both sides have separate barn chains which move manure to the spreader waiting in the center area. A winter barn yard extends behind the center area.

Substantial improvements have been made to the barn since the purchase including a new pipeline, bulk tank, milk house equipment, stall dividers, and water bowls. Electrical wiring and ventilation have also been updated.

An equipment building was recently renovated for the smaller calves. Oscar explained, "We poured a concrete floor, removed some of the metal siding and replaced it with curtains, and installed two large fans to help remove moisture." The calves, individually raised and then moved into groups at weaning time, are thriving and Betty added, "It's a whole lot nicer than the barn the calves were in when we got married. Back then we didn't even have running water in our calf barn."

When his uncle built the barn they now milk in, "He was still stacking square bales in the mangers, so he made them very wide," Oscar said. The wide feed mangers allow the family to use Rissler round bale feeders to feed up the 7 or 8 bales of balage that their cows consume daily during the winter months. They also use a Rissler in the dry cow barn.

Now in his sixth decade on his home farm, Oscar said that one

of the biggest differences in forage has been the switch from dry square bales to balage. "We get harvesting done earlier and it is higher quality," he said. The past three years he has been spreading a fertilizer mix (50# added daily to his spreader) on his hay ground to raise phosphorus levels.

The fertilizer is a blend of Tennessee brown phosphate, bone meal, and sulphate of potash. Protein levels of their balage often hit the 18-20% protein mark and they average about 1600 individually wrapped bales a year. Oscar reports that they have seen an increase in both hay quantity and milk production since adding the fertilizer to their fertility program.

Milking 80-90 cows requires swapping 20-30 cows during each milking. While some people may question the efficiencies of continuing to milk in a stanchion barn, Betty provided a strong defense for the tradition of stanchion barns for small dairies:

"I graduated from Cornell and I know they push 'bigger is better,' but that is not my interpretation of farming. I don't like milking in a parlor and I have been in enough free-stall barns to know that I don't want one."

She continued, "When I was growing up we milked with the old-fashioned Surge milkers that hung off the cow with a belt. Milk was poured into a dumping station. My father-in-law was the first farmer on this road to put in a pipeline. When I met Oscar, I thought I'd died and gone to heaven with a pipeline."

Oscar concurred with Betty that he prefers a stanchion barn. He said, "The kids don't seem interested in a parlor. Robots are defi-

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nately out of the question.” He also acknowledged that he tells the kids when they take over they can do anything they want, but he added, “I can’t really see a parlor going in on this farm.”

As another nod to tradition, the hill side farm doesn’t have any permanent manure storage. “I don’t know if anyone else would believe it, but so far I feel I’m better off spreading daily,” Oscar said. “A lot of me says yes, a lot of me says no,” he responded when asked if he would like a manure pit or permanent stacking site.

He went on, “I’ve got a lot of ground and the problem with hill ground is when you’ve got to spread manure, you can’t always get on it. You have to manage spreading based on the soil conditions throughout the year. Unfortunately, this means some of our land gets more manure than other pieces during the winter so that we don’t have nutrient run-off. Also, when spring comes I don’t have enough time to do everything else and spread manure.”

Through the pipeline the milk continues to flow; through the spreader the daily manure flies as the farm makes its transition from the 3rd to 4th generation. Sarah returned to the farm after graduating from Cobleskill SUNY, and Peter has been back for a year after attending college. “That’s the \$64,000 question right now,” replied Oscar on the details of the succession plan that will shift the management and ownership of the farm to Sarah and Peter.

“It’s one of the questions that we really have to hammer out in the next year or so. It’s difficult to find enough time to sit down

Pictures, clockwise from top:

- *The calf barn at night.*
- *Some of our cows enjoying the pasture this Spring.*
- *Oscar fixing fence.*

and work on the details,” Oscar continued. “Some of it depends on how much labor we can find to help with chores as I begin to phase myself out. I still do a lot of chores and milking, and I keep warning them that I am looking to slow down.” The farm has grown in cow numbers since Oscar and Betty purchased the additional farm, and Oscar acknowledged that down-sizing is one option the family has considered.

While the specifics of the generational transfer have yet to be defined, the future of this family farm is bright. With two of their children back on the farm, Rob N Vale Farms seems well-positioned to take advantage of their secure land base, surplus of quality cows, and improvements that Betty and Oscar have made. None of this, however, matters without the love and commitment that the Robinson family has proven for its cows, land, and history.

“We have a piece of paper,” Betty explained about the worn piece of paper stuck on their fridge. “It says ‘some people say you can’t make a living farming and we tell them doing anything else isn’t really living at all.’” ♦

NET UPDATE

Recent ODairy Discussions

By Liz Bawden, Organic Dairy Farmer, NODPA President

A producer was frustrated by a string of calves born to first calf heifers that did not want to suck from a bottle. He tube fed colostrum, and still they had no interest in sucking, despite otherwise good health. He asked the group for suggestions. One farmer wrote that he usually makes sure they get enough colostrum by tube (2 or 3 feedings), then waits for hunger to set in. On rare occasions, a calf may require an enema if the meconium has not moved. One suggestion was to coat the calf's mouth with a spoonful or two of warm honey, then wait 5 to 10 minutes before offering a bottle. It is thought that it may "wake up" a slow calf. Another producer pointed out that a calf may refuse to take a bottle if it has already sucked on its dam shortly after birth, and suggested that it may take a bottle if next to its mother.

One farmer was considering installing used highway guard rails as a neck rail on a fence line feeder. The best height for the rail will vary with the breed of cow and age of the stock, but one farmer offered these measurements from his fence line feeder: "We have 30-31" from the concrete level on the cow side to the top of the bottom bump guard rail or plank with 19" opening to the bottom of the top guard rail/plank and the concrete on the feed side is 8" higher than cow side. Calves will jump through this 19" opening." Another farmer cautioned to be careful which way you install the guard rail as sores can develop on the cow's necks.

Owners of a purchased feed operation were considering going grassfed with their established herd of Jersey cows, and the farmer asked about income over feed costs. Some great advice about moving to grassfed from one authority: "Some farms do better not moving immediately to 100% forage and have to take some time to increase plant density and quality in the pastures, and also improve forage digestibility before the herd can be fully supported with only forages.... The quantity of forage that they will eat is much higher than most realize, which translates into needing a lot more tons of forage per cow per year and needing more acres per cow of both pasture and land for stored forage.... The alternative is buying forages, but I am only a fan of purchased forages...if there is a stable, steady supply of highly digestible forages. I've seen more than a few farms really struggle on purchased forages of variable quality without the grain... I am in favor of soil testing and budgeting as needed to buy off-farm nutrients to keep forage productivity and quality on target." Another producer offered their experience in

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Website & E-Newsletter Advertising

NODPA is pleased to provide additional advertising opportunities for our organic dairy supporters and resource individuals through our Website and our monthly E-Newsletter.

Website Advertising

Three banner ads are located at the top of the home page and at least 10 other pages on NODPA's website. NODPA.com receives over 2500 visits each month navigating to an average of 3 pages per visit.

Ad Design: Display-ready ads should be 275 pixels wide by 100 pixels tall. Your ad can link to a page on your website.

Cost: Display-ready ads are \$150 per month.

E-Newsletter Advertising

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

Ad Design: Display-ready ads should be 300 pixels wide by 125 pixels tall. Your ad can link to a page on your website.

Cost: Display-ready ads are \$125 per month.

Discounted rates for commitments of 6 months or more.

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

Email: noraowens@comcast.net

Phone: 413-772-0444

Go to the following web page for more information:

www.nodpa.com/web_ads.shtml

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

ODAIRY UPDATE

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calculating feed costs – their figures have determined that the average feed costs for both grass-fed and grain-fed organic production in their area to be \$17/cwt. Lactating cows from grain-fed herds (assuming 1200 lbs. average body weight milking at 15,000 lbs.) consume about 6 tons of dry matter forage plus two tons of concentrates per year. With an all-forage diet, the quality of the forage pretty much sets the milk production level. Lactating cows from a grass-fed herd (at the same body weight, milking at 9,000 lbs.) will eat about 7 tons of DM forage per year. Cost of forage was \$220/ton on DM basis.

At 2 years old, a heifer's horns have grown back to 2 to 3 inch stubs. One recommended procedure was to have the vet give a lidocaine line block (with a xylazine sedative if needed) and remove them. Others suggested banding the horn with an XL castration band – clip the hair around the base of the horn, and soak the band in hot water to make it more pliable, then place it as close to the base of the horn as possible. It will fall off in a couple weeks. A vet suggested that if banded, the cow should have a tetanus vaccination.

A farmer asked the group for suggestions to treat a cow carrying a mummified calf. Depending on the size of the mummy, it may pass spontaneously, pass with the help of herbals and homeopathics, pass with the use of Lutalyse (which would mean shipping the cow), or it may need to be surgically removed. Most felt that the odds of the cow returning to normal reproductive health were very slim. It was suggested that Caulophyllum tincture should work (dose suggested was 15-20cc, or 10cc 3 to 4 times a day) and homeopathic Secale 1C worked a few times for one vet. Another farmer outlined her successful treatment of a heifer with a “rat-sized” mummy: she gave 10cc Caulophyllum tincture once/day in the vulva for a couple of days. A few days later, she alternated Apis Mel 30c and Sepia 30c for 3 days; then gave Nature's Cycle (Dr. Paul's) 5cc once/day for 2 weeks. She let the cow rest a week, then started the cycle over again. It took 3 cycles of treatment, but the cow has been bred, and is now checked safe in calf. ♦

WEBINARS

2017 Dairy Outlook Webinar

Fri, Jan 20, 2017 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM EST

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/300761888904354561>

After two years of slim margins, Northeast dairy farmers are hoping for some relief. What will 2017 bring? Join Farm Credit East and our guest speakers for our annual dairy outlook webinar. Dr. Mark Stephenson, University of Wisconsin-Madison, will present an outlook for dairy markets in the coming year. He will cover both global and domestic dairy markets and present his forecast for the coming year. Karl Czymmek, Cornell PRO-Dairy, will give a brief review of current and upcoming environmental issues and regulations. Jodi Smith, from Upstate Niagara Cooperative, will also be joining the conversation, giving us a Northeast market perspective. Bill Zweigbaum and Brian Monckton of Farm Credit East will comment and field questions from our audience.

Managing your Ag Labor Workforce

Friday, January 20, 2017 at 11:00am to 12:00pm → more dates through February 8, 2017.

https://events.cornell.edu/event/managing_ag_labor_workforce

It seems navigating the ever-changing world of labor regulations is getting harder all the time. With new rules coming out all the time, what are some common labor law ‘traps’ to avoid? Join Attorney Chris Schulte of the Law Firm CJ Lake, LLC, as he discusses some current issues in managing an agricultural workforce. What the new hot topics are, and how to “stay out of trouble!” Whether you employ 2 or 200, this is a webinar you won't want to miss.

Holistic Financial Planning (Bf 203) Building Farm Profit Into the Picture

January 19 – February 23, 2017 with webinars each Thursday evening from 6:30-8:00pm Eastern time.

If you've been struggling to make your farm operation profitable without driving yourself into the ground, this financial planning course is for you. Ultimately, it will help you with the delicate balancing act that all farmers must succeed in: balancing healthy profits with healthy land and a healthy farm family and personal life.

You will learn how to make financial decisions toward farm & family values and goals, and how to build profit into your plans up front, rather than hoping there is something left once expenses are subtracted from income. If you have been struggling with the financial statements in your business plan, this is a great course to help you focus in on these and get clear on your numbers. Instructors are Phil Metzger, former conservationist with the National Resource Conservation Service for over 30 years, and has been an instructor and Certified Educator of Holistic Management for 13 years, and Erica Frenay, Beginning Farmer Online Course Manager for the Cornell Small Farms Program. She has been a Certified Educator of Holistic Management for 12 years, and manages her own growing farm operation, Shelterbelt Farm. For more information, visit their website: <http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/online-courses/all-courses/holistic-financial-planning-bf-203/>

Organic Milk Sought

CROPP Cooperative/Organic Valley

CROPP Cooperative/Organic Valley is the nation's largest farmer-owned organic cooperative. With members throughout New England, the Northeast and Southeast, we offer a stable, competitive organic milk pay price to members. We are forecasting solid growth in these regions and welcome the opportunity to talk with producers about joining our Cooperative.

We offer veterinary support, quality services, organic food, the Organic Trader buy/sell newsletter and inclusive communications from a farmer-owned cooperative with over 25 years of organic farming and marketing experience. Our Feed Department sources organic feed purchases for our member operations. Please contact our Regional Managers or Farmer Relations for further details.

- In New England, contact John Cleary at (612) 803-9087 or john.cleary@organicvalley.coop or Steve Getz at 207-465-6927 or steve.getz@organicvalley.coop.
- In New York, Contact Anne Phillips at (607)-222-3265 or Anne.phillips@organicvalley.coop
- In the Southeast, contact Gerry Cohn at (919) 605-5619 or gerry.cohn@organicvalley.coop.
- Central to Western PA, contact Peter Miller, Division Pool Manager, peter.miller@organicvalley.coop; cell 612-801-3506.
- In Southeast Pennsylvania and Maryland, contact Terry Ingram at (717) 413-3765 or terry.ingram@organicvalley.coop.

Farmer Relations is available from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Eastern Monday through Friday at (888) 809-9297 or farmerhotline@organicvalley.coop and online at www.farmers.coop.

Upstate Niagara

Upstate Niagara is a member owned dairy cooperative dedicated to high quality dairy products. We are currently seeking new organic member milk. Upstate Niagara offers a highly competitive organic pay program with additional premiums for milk quality and volume. For producers interested in transitioning to organic production, we also have programs to assist you in the transition process.

If you are interested in becoming a member, please contact Mike Davis at 1-800-724-MILK, ext 6441. www.upstateniagara.com

Natural by Nature

Looking for an organic milk market? Natural Dairy Products Corporation (NDP) was founded in 1995 as a family owned

and operated organization producing organic dairy products under the Natural By Nature brand name. Natural By Nature organic dairy products are produced with great care and distributed nationwide.

We are actively seeking organic, grass-based dairy producers in the southeastern PA, northern MD and DE areas. NDP pays all hauling and lab costs, and we are currently offering a signing bonus, so this is the time to call! We'd be happy to answer your questions ... please call 302-455-1261 x221 for more information.

Maple Hill Creamery

Seeking 100% Grass Dairy Farmers! Maple Hill Creamery, located in Stuyvesant, NY is a small manufacturer of 100% grass-fed organic yogurt. We are growing rapidly and are looking for more 100% grass-fed farms in the NY state area to join us.

We offer:

- Six month winter premium
- Grass fed premium paid OVER organic milk price
- Grass fed dairy technical assistance / mineral program
- Organic transition payments possible

Requirements:

- No grain, no corn silage
- Just pasture, dry hay and baleage
- Certified Organic

Please CALL US with questions! Phone: 518-758-7777

Dairy Marketing Services Organic

More milk is needed by Northeast organic customers! Dairy Marketing Services can help you facilitate the transition from conventional to organic production. Count on DMS Organic specialists for organics, transition stabilizers, pasture requirements, pasture supplies and more. Call David Eyster at DMS: 1-888-589-6455, ext. 5409 for more information today!

Stonyfield Farm, Inc.

Stonyfield Farm, Inc is looking for producers to support their comprehensive line of organic yogurt and diversified portfolio of organic dairy products. We offer a stable price platform with competitive premiums for components, quality and volume. In addition, we offer a comprehensive technical assistance program designed with producers to help them achieve their unique business goals. We are actively seeking producers looking to grow their business today and for the future.

To be listed, free, in future Organic Milk Sought columns, contact Nora Owens at 413-772--0444, noraowens@comcast.net.

Classified Ads

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

ANIMALS

Border Collie for sale. Sam is a 4 year old cow dog prospect but will work sheep. He has sides, stop, recall, short gather and start of drive. Will grip. Experienced handler. Good natured, travels well, has natural wide flanks. I had initially purchased Sam to work on sheep, but he is MUCH more comfortable on cattle. He is currently in training in Blacksburg, VA. Grandson of Steve McCall's Katch (2002 USBCHA reserve national nursery champion) and great-grandson of Dwight Parker's Spook (2005 USBCHA reserve national nursery champion.) Sam has a very sweet and calm personality, and would make a great family and chore dog for a grazing dairy. Please contact me at info@kbarkfarm.com or 814-441-7809 for more information, including pictures and video.

Cows for sale: my brother had a very short hay crop this year and wants to sell 20 NOFA NY certified organic dairy cows and up to 10 bred heifers. He has consistently gotten quality premiums for his milk. He milks all Holsteins. He is not online and does not use a computer. Anybody who is interested can contact me and I will connect him. Also, we have 3 nice large well fed heifers with good grass milk genetics due late this winter and two more that are due in spring for sale. Call Klaas Martens, cell phone: 315-694-1263, email: kandmhfarm@lakevieworganicgrain.com
Location: Penn Yan, NY

EMPLOYMENT

NOFA-NY Certified Organic, LLC in Binghamton NY is Hiring

Be a part of a growing non-profit company, USDA-accredited organic certification agency, whose primary purpose is to provide high integrity organic certification to over 900 organic farmers and processors throughout New York State and surrounding areas.

We are hiring for full-time (40 hours/week) position(s) working out of our Binghamton, NY office that includes healthcare, dental and 403(b) as well as generous paid holidays/vacation time.

We offer a friendly work environment, challenging work, open communication, and commitment to a job well-done. For information regarding our organization, please visit www.nofany.org. Positions will take approximately one year to master so serious applicants only.

The ideal candidate will have a college degree in a related area, or equivalent by training or experience, and knowledge of organic farming and certification. We require excellent communication skills, verbal and written; strong computer skills; and the ability to do detail-oriented work in a fast paced environment. Training will be provided.

Crop & Livestock Certification Coordinator

Salary: \$30K to \$35K/year depending on experience

Primary responsibilities include the intake and flow of certification applications for completeness and monitor progress through each stage of certification. Workflow requires someone self-motivated with ability to multitask and prioritize. Candidate must be able to respond decisively, accurately, confidently, and courteously to client inquiries demonstrating an understanding and knowledge of the National Organic Standards. Act as the point of contact for our applicants.

Certification Coordinator Assistant

Salary: \$25K - \$29K depending on experience

Primary responsibilities include providing administrative support to

Adopt GIPSA Rules

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remedy," explained Chuck Abbott for the Food and Environmental Reporting Network December 15.

It would replace today's standard that requires the producer to provide proof "that harm has been done to the entire market" before any individual is granted relief. That's like a high school quarterback singlehandedly beating the Dallas Cowboys in the Super Bowl. It will never happen unless the field is leveled.

Which is what all three GIPSA rules do, says Iowa's GOP Sen. Charles Grassley. The rules "enjoy bipartisan support in Congress [and] I'm glad [USDA acted] to help level the playing field..."

But that political support will be quickly tested because a Trump-led USDA can kill the interim rule and two proposed rules by simply withdrawing them without fanfare or even a tweet.

Right now, however, that choice will carry a heavy political cost. The packer-backed meat groups claim Trump is their rule-killing, free market champion so he must, and will, withdraw the GIPSA rules.

AFBF, NFU, and other groups like the Organization for Competitive Markets see it differently. They point to "working" rural Americans --and, in particular, farmers and ranchers -- as Trump's core political supporters. He wouldn't betray them for Big Meat right out of the box, would he?

Politics aside, there's a better reason to keep GIPSA's proposed Farmer Fair Practices Rules: It's the right thing to do for farmers, ranchers, and all Americans who believe in fair play and open, transparent markets.

the Certification Coordinators to ensure the timely intake and flow of certification applications through the entire certification process. Key duties include assisting with phones, emails, letter writing, data input, and deadline management.

Interested and qualified candidates are invited to email a resume and letter of interest to: Lori@nofany.org.

NOFA-NY is an equal opportunity employer and encourages applicants from diverse backgrounds to apply.

FORAGES, BEDDING & GRAINS

For Sale: Certified Organic Oats. Bulk, tote bags, and 50lb bags available. Excellent test weights. Asking \$5.00/bu. Name: Logan McLaughlin (McLaughlin Farms)

Email: logan.l.mclaughlin@gmail.com

Phone: 207.227.7458 | Location: Maine

For Sale: 'Transitioning-to-organic' baleage. I know this is a certified organic forum, but for what it is worth, we have some 'transitioning-to-organic' baleage (combination of oats, alfalfa & orchard grass). We're asking \$200/ton DHE (Dry Hay Equivalent) at the farm. If you need it trucked, we can arrange that too. We'll load the truck for free. Forage test will be available. Just give me, Edwin Shank, a call at 717-729-9730 or email me at edwin@thefamilycow.com Email does work best for me. But if you do call and don't get me, please leave a voice mail.

Location: Chambersburg, PA

Calendar

January 20 & 21, 2017

**The 21st Annual Vermont Grazing and Livestock Conference:
Grazing Annual Forages, Lake Morey Inn, Fairlee, VT**

Join more than 350 farmers and agricultural resource providers from six Northeast states at this perennial winter conference for a cross section of the region's livestock production. Friday will feature two day-long pre-conference sessions on grazing planning tools and building farm businesses. Saturday includes 21 workshops plus keynote, lunch discussions, tradeshow and much more, as well as a kids' conference for ages 6-12. The weekend highlights local, grass-fed and organic foods, great company from over six states, and plenty of new ideas to take home and ruminate on as you plan for 2017. More details about the conference as well as registration are available at www.uvm.edu/pasture, and the up-to-the-minute full conference schedule is available here. Contact conference coordinator Jenn Colby at jcolby@uvm.edu, (802) 656-5459 with any questions.

January 20-22, 2017

NOFA NY Winter Conference, Long Live the Farmer: Diversity and Biodiversity

The Saratoga Hilton, 534 Broadway, Saratoga Springs, New York, 12866

For the first time this year, the event also encompasses first-ever Northeast Organic Seed Conference, entitled "Owning Our Own Seed". With this dynamic group of seed professionals, the three-day Winter Conference expands its breadth and depth, hosting 100+ workshops in 17 special interest tracks. Tying the two conferences together is the eminent CR Lawn, keynote speaker and founder of Fedco Seeds, a hybrid consumer/worker farm and garden products cooperative. Conference highlights include a seed swap, a special joint presentation by award-winning chef Dan Barber of Blue Hill at Stone Barns and Cornell vegetable breeder Michael Mazourek on the practicalities and possibilities of chef-breeder collaboration, special half-day workshop intensives, and a full-day hands-on-farm horse-powered demonstration, book signings, films, and social activities. Online registration is open at www.nofany.org/conference, or by calling the NOFA-NY office (585) 271-1979.

January 25-28, 2017

Ecological Farming Association's 37th EcoFarm Conference, Pacific Grove, California

Prime networking and educational hub for farmers, ranchers, distributors, retailers, activists, researchers and educators - featuring over 70 workshops, plus keynote speakers, discussion groups, an exhibitor marketplace, seed swap, live entertainment, mixers and delicious organic meals. www.eco-farm.org/conference

Saturday, January 28th, 2017

Winter Green-Up

Century House, Latham (Albany County), NY

This year Winter Green-Up is a one-day event to make it easier for participants to budget for both Winter Green-Up and the upcoming 9th Annual National Grassfed Exchange Tour and Conference, being held in the Albany area in September, 2017. Speakers include Doug Carmichael, Director at Lake City Research Station in Lake City, MI on how they graze their animals at the research center and how they enhance their winter gains to finish animals at 18 months. Also Dr. Rachel Gilker, editor of OnPasture on compaction in your pasture and Blaine Hizfield of Seven Sons Farm in Roanoke, IN on their farm's marketing program, among others. Please contact Tove Ford at Cornell Cooperative Extension, (518) 765-3518 or tff24@cornell.edu, Tom Gallagher at tig3@cornell.edu or Morgan Hartman at morgan@blackqueenangus for more information. Cost is \$75, and room are being held for Friday and Saturday night at the Century House for \$114/night - call (518) 785-0931 to reserve and mention the Winter Green-Up conference. Registration is available at https://reg.cce.cornell.edu/WGU2017_201.

January 31, 2017 @ 8:00 am - 5:00 pm EST

Landscape Heroes: Carbon, Water, and Biodiversity: Small Steps - Big Impacts

UMass, Amherst, MA

Carbon expert and author, rancher and activist, Courtney White

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Advertise With Us!

**NODPA News is Published Bi-Monthly
January, March, May, July, September & November**

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

2017 Ad rates and sizes listed below.

**Deadline for advertising in the
March, 2017 issue is February 15, 2017.**

Full Page Ad (7.5" W x 10.25" H) = \$630

1/2 Page Ad (7.5" W x 4.5" H) = \$320

1/4 Page Ad (3.5" W x 4.75" H) = \$176

1/8 Page Ad/Business Card:

(3.5" W x 2.25" H) = \$95

Commit to a full year of print advertising and get 10 percent discount: Full: \$567, Half: \$288, Quarter: \$159, Eighth: \$85.

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

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

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

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance Producer Milk Check Assignment Form

I, _____ (please print name on your milk check)
request that _____ (name of company that sends your milk check)

deduct the sum of :

_____ \$0.02 per hundredweight to support the work of NODPA

_____ \$0.05 per hundredweight to support the work of NODPA (the amount that has been deducted in the past for national milk marketing but can now be returned to you as an organic producer if you have applied for the exemption.)

_____ \$0.07 per hundredweight (the \$.05 marketing check-off plus \$0.02)

as an assignment from my milk check starting the first day of _____, 201____. The total sum will be paid monthly to NODPA. This agreement may be ended at any time by the producer by sending a written request to their milk handler/buyer with a copy to NODPA.

Milk handlers please send payments to:

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (NODPA), Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director, 30 Keets Rd, Deerfield, MA 01342

Producer signature: _____ Date: _____

Producer number/ member no: _____ E-mail: _____

Number of milking cows: _____ Tel #: _____

Certifying Agency: _____

Farm Address: (please print) _____

Producers—please send this form AND YOUR EXEMPT FORM to NODPA, Attn Ed Maltby, Executive Director, 30 Keets Rd, Deerfield, MA 01342, so we can track who has signed up and forward this form to the milk handler. **If you need assistance in applying for the exemption, check here _____.** Thank you.

Subscribe to the NODPA News and support NODPA!

By becoming a subscriber you will receive 6 copies of the NODPA News and help support the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance. NODPA depends on your contributions and donations. If you enjoy the bi-monthly NODPA News; subscribe to the Odairy Listserv (http://nodpa.com/list_serv.shtml); visit our web page (www.nodpa.com) or benefit from farmer representation with the NOP and processors that NODPA provides, please show your support by making a generous contribution to our efforts.

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

_____ \$40 to cover an annual subscription to NODPA news

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

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

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

_____ \$100 to become a supporter of NODPA

_____ \$1,000+ to become a Benefactor

_____ \$150 to become a Business Member

Name: _____

Farm Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Date: _____

Are you a certified organic dairy producer? YES NO

Number of milking cows _____

Milk buyer _____

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

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

Credit card: Master Card Visa Card #: _____

Name on Card: _____ Expiration Date: __ __ 201__ Security Code on Card: _____

Calendar

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will be joining us this winter from New Mexico for an exciting conference on practical steps one can take to make big impacts to restore soil carbon and be a part of the climate solution.

The Carbon Conference will take place at UMass Amherst campus and will feature a wide variety of land care practitioners including land managers, farmers, researchers, and conservationists. They will speak about what is possible for soil carbon and landscape restoration. Special Offer: NOFA Members can use this code for a \$20 discount. \$59 - \$79 For more information see more at: <http://www.ecolandscaping.org/event/carbon-onference/#sthash.k0Bj0PiO.dpuf>

February 1-4th, 2017

PASA's 26th Annual Farming for the Future Conference, The Penn Stater Hotel and Conference Center, State College, PA

Our annual Farming for the Future Conference is PASA's signature event and our main vehicle for community building. Widely regarded as the best of its kind in the East, this event brings together an audience of over 2,000 farmers, processors, consumers, students, environmentalists and business and community leaders annually. Join us at The Penn Stater Conference Center & Hotel in State College, PA. For more information and the full conference schedule, visit <http://conference.pasafarming.org/>

February 14, and March 13, 2017

New York Certified Organic Winter Meetings, Jordan Hall, Geneva Experimental Station - 614 W. North Street, Geneva NY

New York Certified Organic (NYCO) has set the dates for its winter 2017 meetings, bringing grain and dairy farmers together with

guest speakers on the organic crops and dairy production. There is no cost or need to register to attend the NYCO meetings; participants are asked to bring a dish to pass at the potluck lunch. Round table discussions after lunch provide farmers the opportunity to ask questions and hear from the combined experience of the group. These sessions help advance organic production in New York and have been helpful to new and transitioning farmers as well as long-time organic producers. For more information, contact Fay Benson, 607-391-2699, afb3@cornell.edu.

- Tuesday, February 14th - 10:00 am – 2:00 pm - Jordan Hall, Geneva Experimental Station - 614 W. North Street, Geneva – This meeting will be devoted to the opportunity to diversify your farm with poultry. Our speakers will review the Bio-Security, Nutritional, Housing and Marketing for operations with 2000-8000 birds. There is no cost or need to register to attend the meetings, which start promptly at 10:00am. Participants are asked to bring a dish to pass at the potluck lunch. The New York Crop Insurance Education Team and Cornell Cooperative Extension provide support for these meetings. There will be a brief description of how Crop Insurance can benefit organic farmers at each of the meetings.

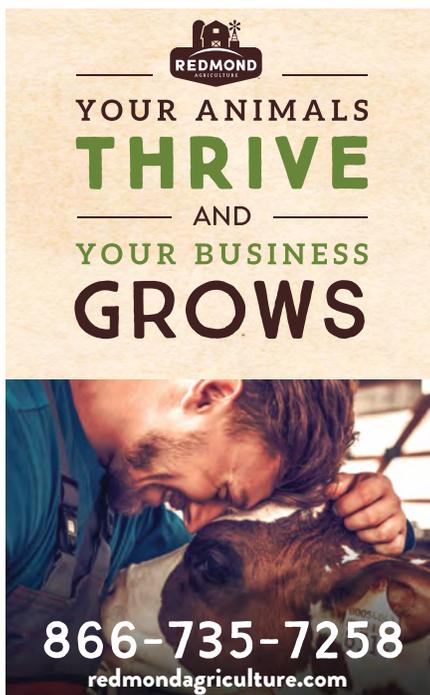
- Monday, March 13th, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm - Jordan Hall, Geneva Experimental Station - 614 W. North Street, Geneva. This meeting will have speakers on Nutrient Balancing, Crop Production and Alternative Forage Production. Speakers will include: Quirine Ketterings and Karl Czymmek with Cornell's Nutrient Management Spear Program – they will go over the use of Mass Nutrient Budgets to track imported and exported nutrients on a farm. Heather Darby with the University of Vermont – she will share some of the organic field trials she has done through her work at UVM. A Farmer Panel discussing forage production on their farms.

February 23-25, 2017

The 28th Annual MOSES Conference, The La Crosse Center, 300 Harborview Plaza., La Crosse, Wisconsin

The MOSES Conference is the largest event in the U.S. about organic

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1-888-589-6455 | www.dairymarketingservices.com/organicmilk.html

DMS 
Dairy Marketing Services
Organic

Dairy Marketing Services provides access to secure organic milk markets through relationships with major organic milk handlers. We offer a competitive premium package and can assist farms with making their transitions.

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From the MODPA Treasurer

As I write this it seems to be a time of new beginnings. We are beginning a new year, have a new President, have a new winter to contend with and it is also the beginning of a new season for conferences. The conference calendar is full of events to suit most any taste or size wanted. I find the grazing conferences to always be useful.

While no two farms are identical it is always helpful to hear what is or isn't working for others. Grazing has become a crucial part of our operations and any way we can improve is going to be good for us in the long haul. The larger, more diverse conferences are also important too, as many times we will be able to keep up on the latest in policy changes. At the very least, it is an opportunity to catch up with old friends and usually make some new ones, too. Please make the time to take these in. Many people put a lot of work into organizing them and it feels good to see so many enjoy them.

As we move in to the new year there continues to be much discussion on many of the policies that will affect all of us. Please take the time this year to get more involved with these efforts. This is time well spent. you will certainly learn a lot and will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have helped others. It still amazes me after all of these years how much impact we can have if we make the time to be involved. MODPA can always use the help and input.

If you are in other areas of the country get in touch with your local ODP. If you don't know where to start feel free to contact me and I will gladly put you in touch with the right people. We, as farmers, need to make sure that we take our responsibilities serious and do what we can to provide good clean food and also get our message out to our consumers. In this age of communication it is important to make sure that, as farmers, we are speaking for ourselves. We can't afford to let others do it for us.

Wishing all a very wonderful New Year and best of upcoming seasons.

Bruce Drinkman
MODPA Treasurer
 3253 150th Avenue
 Glenwood City, WI 54013
 715-781-4856

Become a Member of MODPA!

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Certified Organic Dairy? Yes No # of cows: _____

Transitioning: _____

I wish to support MODPA (check whatever applies):

___ By becoming a state rep or director.

___ By supporting MODPA with a %/cwt check-off.

___ By providing a donation to support the work of MODPA. \$_____ enclosed.

Please send this form to: Bruce Drinkman, MODPA Treasurer, 3253 150th Ave, Glenwood City, WI 54013

About MODPA

The Midwest Organic Dairy Producer Alliance (MODPA) represents organic dairy producers in WI, MN, ND, SD, IA, NE, KS, MO, IL, IN, OH, & MI with the mission "to promote communication and networking for the betterment of all Midwest organic dairy producers and enhance a sustainable farmgate price." To ensure a fair and sustainable farm gate price.

1. Keep family farms viable for future generations.
2. Promote ethical, ecological and humane farming practices.
3. Networking among producers of all organic commodities.
4. Promote public policy, research and education in support of organic ag.

MODPA Board

Wisconsin
 Darlene Coehoorn, President
 Viewpoint Acres Farm
 N5878 Hwy C, Rosendale, WI 54974
 ddviewpoint@yahoo.com
 Phone: 920-921-5541
 Jim Greenberg, Vice-President
 EP 3961 Drake Avenue
 Stratford, WI 54484
 greenbfirms@tznnet.com
 Phone: 715-687-8147

Bruce Drinkman, Treasurer
 3253 150th Avenue
 Glenwood City, WI 54013
 bdrinkman@hotmail.com
 Phone: 715-265-4431

John Kiefer, Director
 S10698 Troy Rd, Sauk City, WI 53583
 taofarmer@direcway.com
 Phone: 608-544-3702

Jim Small, Director
 26548 Locust Ave.
 Wilton, WI 54670
 Tel: 608-435-6700

Iowa
 Andy Schaefers, Director
 25037 Lake Rd
 Garnavillo, IA 52049
 Tel: 563-964-2758

Michigan
 Ed Zimba, Zimba Dairy
 7995 Mushroom Rd
 DeFord, MI 48729
 zimbadairy@tband.net
 Phone: 989-872-2680

Ohio
 Ernest Martin, Director
 1720 Crum Rd
 Shiloh, OH 44878
 Phone and Fax: 419-895-1182

**Northeast Organic Dairy Producers
Alliance (NODPA)**

c/o Ed Maltby
30 Keets Road
Deerfield, MA 01342

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Calendar

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and sustainable farming, offering 65 workshops over 6 sessions, inspiring keynotes, engaging roundtables, and a resource-packed Exhibit Hall with over 170 vendors. Keynote speaker: Mas Masumoto, Certified organic farmer, and author of *Changing Season, A Father, A Daughter, A Family Farm*, will present “Organic Farming: The Next Generation”. For all the details and conference program, visit <https://mosesorganic.org/conference/>

**March 2 and 3, 2017
2017 Northeast Pasture Consortium Annual Conference and Meeting, Clarion Hotel and Conference Center, Hagerstown, MD**

We will be partnering with the Maryland Cattlemen’s Association to combine our Conference with their Maryland Hay & Pasture Conference. The theme of our Conference in 2017 is: “From Pasture

to Table - Grass-Fed Livestock Production of Meat and Milk and Its Preparation - Their Effects on Fatty Acid Composition and Human Health”. Three technical sessions and the Producer Showcase will directly relate to our theme. The three technical sessions each cover a segment of the theme. The Ruminant Fatty Acid Production with Pastured Livestock session covers how to enhance the content of healthful fatty acids in meat and milk produced by live-stock raised on pasture. The Processing Milk and Cooking Meat effects on Fatty Acid Profiles in Consumed Grass-Fed Meat and Milk Products session covers the fate of ruminant fatty acids in processing milk and cooking meat. The third session, Human Health Implications of Consuming Grass-fed Meat and Milk Products, covers the impact of consuming ruminant fatty acids on human health. The Producer Showcase will have two Maryland farms, a beef operation and a dairy operation, that pasture their livestock. The beef farm finishes their feeder cattle on grass. More details will be available in January. Visit their website, <http://onpasture.com/event/2017-northeast-pasture-consortium-annual-conference-and-meeting/> or contact James Cropper at jbcropper@yahoo.com.