

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

January 2019

Volume 19, Issue 1

WWW.NODPA.COM



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FEATURED FARM: WINDMILL MEADOWS FARM, HAGERSTOWN, MD

By Adam Diamond

e're here not to serve ourselves, we are working and serving under God, the farm is in service to our spiritual goals. We are raising our family in a way that brings glory to God." Jacob Horst's Mennonite values guide everything he does on Windmill Meadows Farm in Hagerstown, MD. He is the 4th generation of Horst's to farm this land, and he is setting up the 5th generation to take over

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AFTER DAIRYING: WHAT'S NEXT?

Interviews with Four Farmers Who've Successfully Left Organic Dairy

By Adam Diamond, NODPA Contributing Writer

DAIRY had a series of posts in mid-December concerning a Wisconsin farmer's recent attempted suicide, and Mary-Howell Martens suggested that it would be helpful to hear stories of successful transitions out of organic dairy. This article, in response to Mary-Howell's post, seeks to vividly illustrate successful transitions out of

dairying and in so doing provide a measure of hope in these difficult times. I talked with four farmers—Henry Perkins from Maine, Glenn Wise from Pennsylvania, Bruce Drinkman from Wisconsin, and Faye Benson from New York about their post dairying experiences. I gathered their stories about what prompted them to leave dairy farming,

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Message from NODPA President

he sound in our barn this cold night in January is a comforting one; the soft rustle of contented cows eating their silage and hay after milking. One by one they lay down for the night. And we make that last walk through the barn, just as we have done thousands of times before, checking that all is well.

The cows are oblivious, and maybe some of us farmers are too, that there are changes happening across the countryside that are beyond our control. In December, some farms in New York received letters that they would no longer have a market for their organic milk. These farmers are scrambling to line up another processor who will buy their milk when their contract ends. Some farms have been offered contracts, some are still searching. Small farms and farms in out-of –the- way places fear that they will be dropped off in processors' attempts to streamline long (and expensive) milk routes.

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I shudder to think what it would feel like to stand here in a cold, quiet, empty barn. These are tough times as many farmers and their families are forced to make hard choices. A farmer on the email listserve, ODairy, suggested that all of us talk about the realities of change on dairy farms. She suggested that we do some interviews with dairy farmers who sold their herd and lived a happy fulfilling life afterwards. She felt it was important for anyone having to exit the farm to be able to know that there is "life after cows". So in this issue, we have done just that, and hope we can talk with our farming neighbors and friends to support each other. We know there are always transitions on the farm. Farms transition from one generation to the next, or change due to illness or injury. Farms are sold when there is no next generation, or when financial losses become crippling. And then, sometimes the markets for our products change, and give rise to new opportunities.

From all of us at NODPA, we wish you a healthy, prosperous New Year full of opportunity!

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

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From the NODPA Desk:

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

he stress and despair of organic dairy producers and their families dominates our work and this issue of the NODPA News. There is little doubt that organic dairy producers are feeling the effects of the dramatic cut in pay price and the restrictions in volume that buyers have imposed. The economic burden of managing a surplus in supply and the subsequent increase in organic milk being balanced on a depressed conventional market has fallen on producers and their families. They are 'tightening their belts' until there are no notches left in the belt and any cuts in costs are now coming from family living expenses. Debt payments are suffering as there's only so far that a farm business can trade on its primary asset of land, and loan managers can only allow limited suspension on loan payments or interest-only payments on loans. As cash flow disappears so does producers' ability to cut costs on bulk purchases and utilize cost savings on purchased feed. The reality of the organic dairy market is that milk buyers and processors are now in control of pay price and milk supply, a one sided supply management program. The explosion of a surplus caused by inconsistently applied standards, poor enforcement and lack of accountability means that milk buyers are taking hard-hitting measures that directly affect producers and their families. These measures will bring supply back into balance and restore their profit margins but will leave producers, especially those that lack the ability to utilize economies of scale, with an unsustainable, subsistence-level income. To think that the dynamics of the situation will change is naïve and as producers, we need to adapt to a changed world.

Organic producers in the West have seen a massive reduction in the volume of milk they can market as organic, and many have lost or had their contracts modified with some leaving the organic market completely. In the Northeast, we are now seeing contracts being terminated, with no light at the end of the pay price tunnel. Organic milk from Texas is undermining the Midwest producers, and \$20 spot milk from Ohio is coming into New York to undermine existing organic contracts. The reality is that the Northeast will never supply enough organic milk at the right price to satisfy the retail market demands of the area. The opportunity for small scale, local processing is no longer a viable option except for individual farms marketing their own product.

But, here are some ideas for positive change:

• Publication of the Final Origin of Livestock (OOL) Rule, not targeting abuses of parts of the regulations or trying for a change in the law, and continued pressure on enforcing pasture standards, is the best regulatory way forward. We need to continue to pressure USDA and certifiers to achieve those goals which will give hope for the future. We need to promote the message that organic regulation should be, by definition, standardized and consistent or it undermines the strength of the third party audited claim and the organic seal, which is so important for commodity sales. Certifiers need to recognize their responsibility in causing the inconsistent interpretation of standards across the country which is undermining all of organic. Whether it is the attraction of increased revenue from large operations or trying to serve the perceived needs

of their clients, certifiers' actions are contributing to the crises in organic. As producers and their clients, we need to work with them to ensure that there is one clear, simple standard for transitioning conventional livestock with no exceptions despite any hardship this may cause some new entry producers. The Final Origin of Livestock (OOL) Rule cannot be delayed by arguing for allowances to suit individual preferences of certifiers, brands or producers.

- Producers should take full advantage of the improved dairy subsidy program from the Farm Bill and get some benefit from a depressed conventional market which is affecting the price paid for excess organic milk. The 2018 Farm Bill gives dairy producers new market protection options, which can provide some protection for margins up to \$9.50. It renames Margin Protection Program for Dairy (MMP-Dairy) to Dairy Margin Coverage Program (DMC) and permits participation in both DMC and Livestock Gross Margin for Dairy (LGM) on the same production. DMC and the Dairy Revenue Protection program may also be used together. We lost the fight for an organic program but can now advocate for one as the Farm Bill is safely home.
- Work with the new entrants to organic dairy, Danone NA and Lactalis, to reinforce the position that a black mark for organic can affect their brands and position in the consumer's mind for integrity. They are milk buyers and have their priorities, but with Animal Welfare issues and consistent regulation, we have some common interests. In discussions with Danone, they are very open to working on improved standards and consistency that will create a level playing field.
- Trucking routes are expensive in the Northeast and getting worse. This will not change. The distance between farms and processing facilities is one aspect; each brand having its own segregated milk is another, but having multiple trucks for the same brand covering the same distances is expensive and inefficient. We need to explore the possibility of moving away from separately branded milk and having just an organic milk truck that picks up all the milk. Once the milk is homogenized, and ultra-pasteurized there is no uniqueness in taste. Once standards are consistently applied there will be no difference in adherence to regulations.
- Milk collection stations, where smaller loads are aggregated for pick up in one spot by a larger tanker, is another answer that needs exploring and feasibility studies commissioned. These will require infrastructure and local haulers to deliver it to the station but if there is a commitment to small operations, anything up to 100 cows, this is one answer that would benefit both organic and conventional supply.
- Cost plus pay pricing is an area that needs detailed and shared work between milk buyers and producers. Models for organic might well be complicated and will need to take into account the cost of land for pasturing but we need to examine and work on all possibilities.

Finally, the National Organic Program (NOP) has always been difficult for USDA to manage and most administrations have attempted organic to descend to where all the other AMS programs are. Once we lose that fight we will be indistinguishable from the crowd of label and claims. For a commodity like organic dairy, it is very apparent that losing the 'gold standard' is the end of any hope for a pay price that reflects the cost of organic production, and we descend to those that have low cost production and economies of scale. \spadesuit

Help Bring Social Justice to Organic Farms

By Louis H. Battalen, Northeast Coordinator, Agricultural Justice Project

he Agricultural Justice Project (AJP) and NOFA are launching a project to support the organic farming community here in the Northeast in addressing our shared social justice values while striving for dignified careers for farmers, our families, and workers on our farms. We believe our efforts are much in agreement with the four principles of NODPA's mission, and, as such, we look forward to your collaboration in addressing and realizing them. This project offers free technical assistance and resources to farmers to help put into practice some of the hopes that farmers have but fear are too expensive to achieve.

This project, following NOFA's 2013 survey of 280 NOFA farmers confirming that organic farmers considered social justice values an important aspect to their operations, will assist farmers in recognizing the key criteria that constitute a 'social justice' farm and by offering farmers the tools to implement and strengthen them. We will utilize AJP's social justice standards, concentrating on the areas of relations with buyers (fair pricing, developing long term relations, achieving a premium in the marketplace) and relations with employees (health & safety, conflict resolution, and efforts to achieve a living wage).

AJP works to transform the existing agricultural system into one based on empowerment and justice and fairness for all who labor from farm to retail. We provide farms and food businesses with technical tools to improve work and trade practices, including extensive toolkits and templates, one-on-one technical assistance, and a stakeholder-driven certification program for high bar social justice standards -- Food Justice Certification (FJC), the gold standard for labor and trade practices in North America.

We are looking for 50 farms to complete this checklist. AJP will then provide each of these farms with a summary review of helpful observations and suggestions for potential next steps in implementing social justice policies and practices, including a list of resources and, if they request, templates they can adapt. What is critical here is that regardless of further participation by the farm or whether the farmers chooses to seek AJP's Food Justice Certification, both AJP & NOFA want to encourage farmers to begin considering and developing written policies and practices relevant to their particular situation which they can begin implementing immediately. AJP wants to support farmers' efforts at whatever level of engagement and to provide the technical assistance needed through our tool-kit resources or through future NOFA and AJP workshops and presentations on specific issues.

From this first group of 50 farmers, we will identify 20 to complete the AJP self-assessment form, with AJP trainers providing any necessary assistance gratis. Completing this assessment will

provide farmers with a clear understanding of how they square up between holding values as ideals and how well these values are currently practiced, as well as how they compare with the standards of the AJP.

And, finally, AJP will select several farms where we will conduct on-site mock audits to our Food Justice standards also free of charge, and which any of the participating farmers will be welcome to attend.

The farmer voice in this process is important to us!

Go to the AJP website https://www.agriculturaljusticeproject.org to learn more about AJP's social justice standards and to fill out the Farmer Benchmark Checklist online. For the paper version contact louis@agriculturaljusticeproject.org. Full details of the Project are also included in the Checklist.

We anticipate completing the Checklist will take 15 minutes; responses will be confidential; and they do not require farmers walking their fields!

For this project to be successful, we are reaching out to a variety of farms, both urban & rural, trying to reach farmers who grow & raise different commodities—vegetable, field crops, dairy, fruit, and mixed livestock and poultry.

These are hard times for family-scale farms, we all know this. But there are incremental improvements farms can make that move towards putting ideals into life. Negotiating prices with a little more savvy, helping workers feel respected and part of a farm team – these are small steps in the direction of a healthier farming system.

Louis H. Battalen, Northeast Coordinator, Agricultural Justice Project can be reached by email at louis@agriculturaljusticeproject.org.

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MEMBER INFO

Chris Hill, NODPA's Longtime Graphic Designer and Webmaster Retires

By Nora Owens, NODPA News Editor

ost readers aren't familiar with the name, but Chris Hill of Chris Hill Media, Philadelphia, PA, has been NODPA's webmaster and graphic designer of the NODPA News for over 12 years. He's worked tirelessly to deliver a high quality print newsletter and e-newsletter for all of our readers, as well as creating and managing our NODPA website, perhaps the best resource for the organic dairy industry today. Unfortunately, Chris has recently experienced a series of health issues and has decided it's best to step away from his graphic design work. Now it's time for us to thank Chris for his many years of work and commitment to NODPA and to wish him well as he retires. There have been many, many early morning calls to get those last minute changes in to meet a deadline, as well as very lengthy calls to go over articles, edits and discussions about space needs. Throughout it all, Chris has exhibited amazing patience, flexibility and humor as we ventured into each issue. I have been lucky to work with such a wonderful professional who frequently walked me through the process of creating a 40-page newsletter, reminding me of all the details that needed to be done right. Chris did all of this with cheerfulness, good humor, and with a hearty laugh.

In addition to the print newsletter, Chris produced the NODPA e-newsletters and maintained our very complex website www.NODPA.com. On a moment's notice, he'd create ads for NODPA or for our advertisers, the Field Days brochures, and anything else we asked of him. Chris has never been one to say 'No' or back away from a challenge. He's also been building and maintaining websites for many businesses across the Northeast, with a special commitment to agricultural and cooperative organizations. Prior to developing his own private web business, Chris entered the world of agriculture and web design at the Rodale Institute where he developed federal grant funding and The New Farm website, which had an international reach, presenting the stories and faces of organic small-scale agriculture around the globe.

When not at his computer, Chris volunteers his time, supporting



a variety of community organizations, including five years as president of the board of the Weavers Way (WW) Food Cooperative; founding member of the WW New Economy Committee; and founding member of the Philadelphia Area Cooperative Alliance (PACA), which supports cooperative development in the region, especially among communities of color, traditionally excluded from access to the resources needed to launch successful businesses.

On behalf of all NODPA members and NODPA News readers, we thank Chris Hill for all his years of service and wish him good health and happiness in his retirement. Thanks, Chris, we will miss you!

Check out the new NODPA website!

At the same time we wish Chris Hill well in his retirement, we have been working with Montague WebWorks (www.monteguewebworks.com) on updating our NODPA website as we take it over. All the content has been moved to a new platform so things will look a bit different but we are working hard to offer a site that is easy to navigate and will provide you with the most in-depth resources on organic dairy. You will still be able to access all of the archived NODPA News newsletters, NODPA E-news, Featured Farms, Odairy

discussions, and Pay and Feed Price articles. As always, you can leave comments on the website, submit classified ads, and send in your events for the calendar listings. And, please check out our updated Business Directory.

We welcome all feedback, especially if you experience any problems at the site, so we can continue to make it the best resource for Organic Dairy. Please send Nora Owens any and all questions, noraowens@comcast.net, or call her at 413-772-0444.

Organic Production

Out-Wintering the Dairy Herd

By Brad Heins, Associate Professor of Dairy Science West Central Research and Outreach Center, University of Minnesota, Morris, MN

This article originally appeared in the WCROC Organic Dairy Research News, December 2018 is being reprinted with permission.

uests for profitability and increased public interest in farm animal welfare have fostered a need to investigate winter housing options for low-input dairy herds. Housing options in Minnesota, which has cold winters, include tie-stall barns, free-stall barns, compost barns, and "out-wintering" on bedded packs with wind shelters. We have long known that beef cows and older dairy heifers can thrive with minimal shelter during Minnesota winters. In contrast, milk cows have generally been kept indoors, in part because they were milked in tie-stall barns. More recently, curtain-sided free stall barns or cross ventilated barns have become the standard housing of new construction for larger herds.

Out-wintering continues to increase in popularity, and our stakeholders identified the economics of housing systems as an important research topic. In particular, they asked if outwintered dairy cattle will stay healthy and comfortable. If so, out-wintering could reduce winter housing costs.

We recently published a study that will develop practical strategies for organic dairy producers to enhance the profitability of their farm by evaluating two winter housing systems and their effects on economics of dairy cows. Dairy cows at the University of Minnesota's West Central Research and Outreach Center, Morris, MN, that calved during fall and spring calving seasons were used to evaluate production, somatic cell score, dry matter intake, profitability, and behavior of dairy cattle housed outdoors on a straw pack or indoors in a compost bedded pack barn.

During the three years of the study, 268 lactating Holstein and crossbred dairy cattle were assigned to a winter housing system (straw pack or compost-bedded pack barn). Wheat straw was used as bedding for the outdoor straw packs, which were 40 feet wide by 80 feet long, and maintained to keep cows dry and absorb manure throughout the winter. The open-front



Organic Production

compost-bedded pack barn (2 pens in the barn) was bedded with sawdust, and the bedding material was stirred twice per day with a small chisel plow. Cows were fed a TMR that included corn silage, alfalfa silage, corn, expelled soybean meal, vitamins and minerals.

The straw pack cows had similar milk, fat, and protein production than the compost bedded pack cows (see accompanying table). Surprisingly, there were no differences in production between the two winter housing groups of organic cows for milk production or somatic cell score. The groups of cows also had similar dry matter intake, indicating that the cows that were housed on straw packs did not require more feed than cows housed in the compost bedded pack barn.

Across the winter seasons, there were no differences for body weight or body condition score for dairy cows. For animal cleanliness, the cows housed on straw packs had udders that were cleaner than cows housed in compost bedded packs (udder hygiene score of 1.45 versus 1.73).

Milk revenue and feed cost were not different for the housing systems. Labor and bedding costs were lower and net return was higher for the outwintering system. The outdoor straw pack had a \$1.42/cow/day net return advantage over the compost bedded pack barn. The \$1.42/cow/day net return advantage for the outwintering system translates to \$19,880 in increased net return for a 100-cow dairy operation over a 140-d winter season. The net return was greater for the first year of study compared with the second and third year, and differences in profitability between years were driven by variation in feed costs and milk revenue. Economically, animals in colder climates may require about 10 to 30% more feed for the season compared with animals kept in a confinement freestall barn, so improvements in animal health and welfare from outwintering will need to exceed increased feed costs if outwintering is to be a profitable option.





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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Out-Wintering the Dairy Herd

continued from page 7

There are several obvious benefits to out-wintering; building costs are lower, diseases associated with close confinement and poor ventilation are avoided, animals are generally cleaner, bedding costs could be reduced, feeding may be simplified, and herd size may be adjusted if weather conditions change quickly. There are five key messages to consider when considering outwintering, 1) provide adequate wind protection, 2) additional feed may be required for cows and heifers, 3) lactating cow teats should be dry before they leave the milking facility during cold weather, 4) health problems tend to be fewer than cows housed indoors or in confinement facilities, and 5) housing under the stars may not be for everyone. \spadesuit

Brad Heins, Associate Professor of Dairy Science, West Central Research and Outreach Center, University of Minnesota, Morris, MN, can be reached at hein0106@ umn.edu or by phone: 320-589-1711 ext. 2118.

Table.

MEANS FOR COWS HOUSED IN A COMPOST BEDDED PACK BARN VERSUS AN OUTDOOR STRAW PACK

Measurement	Compost Bedded Pack	Outdoor Straw Pack
Milk (lb)	34.8	33.2
Fat (%)	4.1	4.2
Protein (%)	3.4	3.4
Somatic cell score	2.57	2.64
Dry matter intake (lb)	43.2	42.1
Body weight (lb)	1,177	1,164
Body condition score	3.23	3.22
Bedding (lb per cow/d	ay) 35.3	14.8*
Feed cost (\$ cow/day)	6.50	6.34
Net return (\$ cow/day)	2.78	4.20*

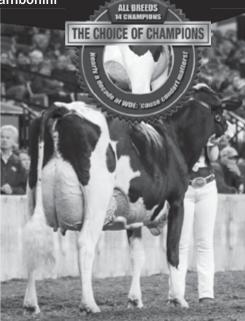
^{*} P < 0.05 for contrast of difference from compost bedded pack cows.





"We love what it does..."





GAMLAKE DAIRY, PETALUMA, CALIFORNIA Frank Gambonini Family 170 cows certified organic 23,500M, 150 - 180,000 SCC Frank and daughter Samantha (above) and with daughter Alexandra (right)

"We have been using Udder Comfort™ for many years on show cows and cows in the herd with any swelling or elevated SCC. More recently, we now use it on all fresh cows for a week," says Frank Gambonini after daughter Samantha's bred-and-owned Gamlake Destry Sallie became grand champion Holstein and reserve supreme of the junior show at World Dairy Expo.

The EX94 96MS Sallie is the second daughter of a homebred calf Frank gave his daughter to learn, show, and begin building with a decade ago. The aged cow made lactations of 26,000M in the certified organic GamLake Dairy herd of 170 cows near Petaluma, California. Housed now at RuAnn near Riverdale, Sallie has a 365-day record of 43,000.

Frank and Samantha say they "love the camaraderie in showing as well as the lifestyle and people in dairy farming. And we love Udder Comfort. We love what it does... the comfort, quality and consistency of the product."

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Pay And Feed Prices January 2019

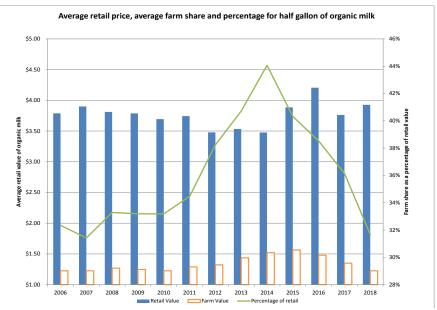
By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

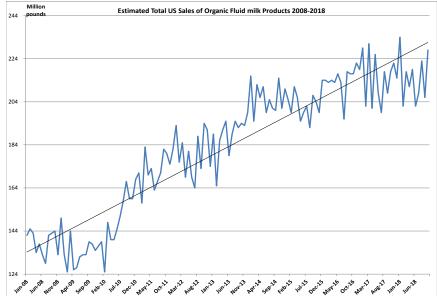
he good news for the start of 2019 is that sales of organic dairy at the retail level is holding in the same pattern of level demand for the non-fat categories and a seven per cent steady increase in organic whole milk. The continuing bad news is that producers are continuing to lose their markets and that now includes 100% grass fed operations.

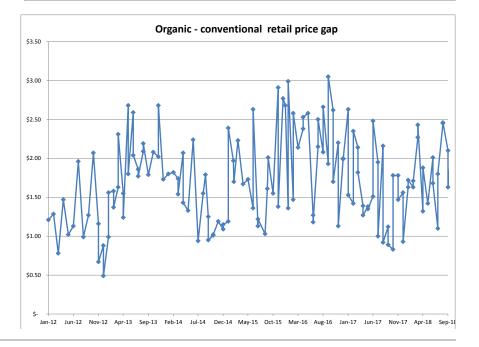
USDA Agricultural Market Service (AMS) reports that retail sales in October 2018 were 228 million pounds, up 4.7 percent from the same month in 2017 and up 0.7 percent, January to October 2018, compared with the same period in 2017. Sales of organic whole milk were at 93 million pounds in October 2018, up 7.1 percent over October 2017, and up 4.9 per cent over year to date comparison with 2017.

Reports for November 2018 on utilization of Class 1 organic milk in the Federal Milk Marketing Order One follows the national trend with a 4.74 percent increase in organic Whole Milk and a drop of 9.54 percent of organic Reduced Fat compared with the same period in 2017.

At the time of printing, CROPP Cooperative has not made available their 2019 pay price summary but the assumption is that there will not be much change on 2018. In 2018, Class III conventional prices will average the lowest since 2010 and the projections for 2019 are not much better, especially with the uncertainty in the international trade markets and a higher than usual volume of conventional milk going into powder and cheese in December 2018. Any surplus organic milk sold into the conventional market in 2019 cannot expect to get increased value than it did in 2018. Danone NA does not plan for any changes in pay price in 2019 but have confidence that they have more control over their supply. They intend to use their experience with their existing pool of GMO-free producers to introduce supply side protocols for animal welfare that their company and brand apply and enforce around the world. They join producers in advocating for greater enforcement and organic



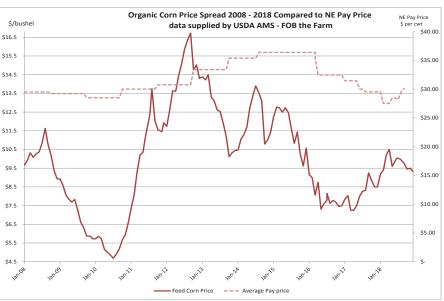


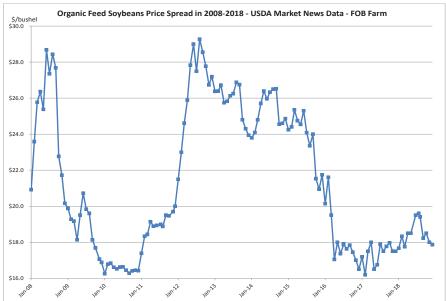


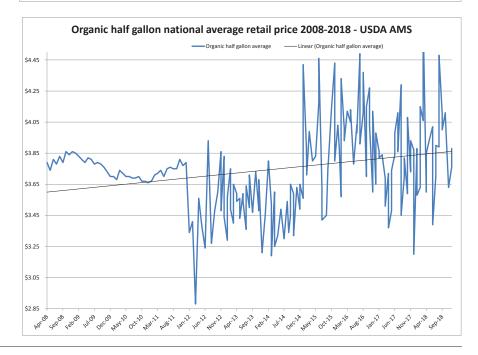
integrity, and are looking at different ideas for implementing cost-plus pay price and new ideas to solve the ever increasing hauling cost of farm milk pick up. Byrne Dairy has received over \$15 million in grants and tax credits to expand their existing plants and are committed to supporting family farms in New York, "We're excited to begin this next chapter of Ultra Dairy's growth," said Carl Byrne, president and chief executive officer of Byrne Dairy. "Our ability to expand to meet the growing demands of our customers is critical to the success of not only Byrne Dairy but also family farms throughout central New York." Reports from producers are that they have lowered their organic pay price in new contracts and not renewed some contracts in the face of cheaper spot price milk coming in from the Midwest.

The news gets no better on the 100% grassfed organic supply. In the face of oversupply and having to sell into a low priced conventional market, Maple Hill Creamery will end its contract with its 28 non grass-fed organic producers by the end of 2019 and has dropped an unspecified number of its organic grass-fed farms. The total number is reported as being 40 operations that will lose their contracts. In a letter to producers, Founding Farmer and CEO Tim Joseph said, "We have also notified the remaining Maple Hill organic producers that due to the dynamics of the organic milk market in general, we have made the decision to end all organic milk contracts by the end of 2019. We have communicated this to all of our organic farms and encouraged them to move to an alternative organic market as soon as they are able or begin the process of transitioning to grass-fed as soon as possible. In addition, we have given notice to a number of our grass-fed farms as they are on routes or in locations that despite our best efforts to make work, we are simply not able to make hauling costs reasonable. We are reconfiguring routes to reduce costs as best we can and were forced to make tough decisions around farm location, production quantities and many other factors. No one factor was used to decide which farms would be impacted as it is complex problem to solve." Inevitably the burden falls upon the small to mid-size operation many of whom are Amish when one talks about the economics of trucking routes and production quantities. At this point, the future of Maple Hill Creamery is uncertain

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Pay And Feed Prices

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as it struggles to survive in a difficult market. Back in November 2016, Sunrise Strategic Partners ("Sunrise"), a Boulder, CO-based accelerator of emerging brands co-founded by Steve Hughes and Trilantic North America (Trilantic North America currently manages six private equity fund families with aggregate capital commitments of \$7.9 billion), became a minority investor in the company. Tim Joseph may be looking to attract more investors or increase its connection with CROPP Cooperative in the future as they finalize their grassfed standards. Hopefully, the outcome will be better for producers than the supply agreement between CROPP Cooperative and Trickling Springs. BUT, for producers left without a market any buyer is better than the conventional market.

Upstate Niagara Cooperative continues to be committed to their organic producers and a realistic supply program. All reports are that their conservative attitude to expansion and geographic market has allowed them to manage their organic supply even though they are now selling surplus organic into the conventional market instead of the organic one. However, their organic members did receive notice last fall that the Board of Director's reduced the Market Adjustment Premium from \$2 to \$0 as of 1/1/2019.

Organic feed corn at the farm is remaining steady at \$9.36 per bushel and organic soybeans are at \$18 per bushel. Compared to a five year average organic feed corn is about average but organic soybeans are below \$5 below the five year average, not a great sign for organic soybean growers despite an intensified enforcement program by the USDA NOP. The Jacobsen reports that organic corn market participants are focused on several factors including domestic supply and imports. With prices currently above the average levels seen in January in 2017 (\$7.75 per bushel) and 2018 (\$8.75 per bushel) merchandisers are seeing a slowdown in rail car turnaround in the Pennsylvania area which means there could be a backlog of organic corn reaching the largest chicken inventory population in the United States. Farmers have yet to

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price approximately 40-50% of their current domestic harvest and continue to wait to assess the role that imports will play in early 2019.

Organic fraud is not restricted to imports. A Missouri farmer has pleaded guilty to federal fraud charges after he charged customers more than \$140 million for conventionally produced grain sold as certified organic. Randy Constant, who farms near Chillicothe, Missouri, owned and operated a business called Organic Land Management, as well as a grain marketing firm in Iowa called Jericho Solutions. In federal court, Constant said he pocketed an enormous premium selling corn, wheat and soybeans as certified organic when they were not. The three farmers from Nebraska that supplied the grain have also agreed to plead guilty to fraudulently marketing nonorganic corn and soybeans as certified organic as part of a lengthy, multimillion-dollar scheme. Documents filed in federal court in Iowa show that Tom Brennan, James Brennan and Michael Potter each intend to plead guilty to wire fraud. Prosecutors allege that the three sold non-organic grains to an Iowa company that marketed them nationwide with an organic label. In particular, they allegedly used unapproved substances such as pesticides and nitrogen to grow the crops. The scheme allegedly lasted from 2007 until 2017. ◆



Origin of Livestock Final Rule - Next Steps

On December 17th 2018, NODPA sent the letter below to the Secretary of Agriculture. NODPA is working with other groups to petition the Secretary to return the Origin of Livestock rulemaking process to the NOP 2019 work agenda. One of the attachments about the economic effect of the lack of rulemaking is attached. The other attachments that went to the Secretary were a condensed history of the regulation and a summary of the Inspector General's report.

The Honorable Sonny Perdue Secretary U.S. Department of Agriculture 1400 Independence Avenue SW Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

The Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (NODPA) is alarmed that the current Origin of Livestock standards are creating unfair and inconsistent interpretations of the standards and unpredictable implementation by certifiers across the country. We respectfully ask that USDA prioritizes implementation of an Origin of Livestock Final Rule. To accomplish this goal, we ask the Secretary to work with the National Organic Program (NOP) to immediately place the Origin of Livestock Final Rule on the work agenda for 2019 and immediately issue Guidance on the interpretation of the one–time transition provision based on the 2015 Proposed Rule.

The current rule is inhibiting the National Organic Program's ability to provide sufficient enforcement to ensure that our nation's organic animal standards are fair and consistent. The effect of this is market instability which could lead to a lack of consumer confidence in the domestic organic dairy industry.

NODPA has a membership of eight hundred and thirty six organic dairy producers in the Eastern US. NODPA's mission is to "enable organic dairy family farmers, situated across an extensive area, to have informed discussion about matters critical to the well being of the organic dairy industry as a whole." NODPA is not aligned with any one processor or cooperative and represents the views and needs of many different farmers.

Our dairy farmer members have seen inequities in the enforcement of regulation for dairies around the issue of the Origin of Livestock. They believe they can compete with the most efficient organic dairy producers if they are treated equitably. The Office of Inspector General (OIG) report supports their fears and concerns. The organic dairy industry lacks a clear uniform national standard for Origin of Livestock, a concept that is at the core of the creation of the Organic Food Production Act and the National Organic Program.

As you well understand, regulations must be enforced in a uniform and consistent manner to ensure all industry participants are competing on a level playing field. That is not the case of the current organic dairy industry. Our certified organic farmers continually declare organic integrity as their number one policy priority and wish to see a fair and consistent interpretation of the origin of livestock standard—through clarity in the standards.

USDA's Office of Inspector General audit confirmed that certain segments of the organic dairy industry are being treated differently than other segments and that certifiers are interpreting the standards for origin of livestock very differently. (See attachments)

We ask that USDA fix those inequities by publishing an Origin of Livestock Final Rule based on the 2015 Proposed Rule and the comments received on that Proposed Rule. We support the Organic Farmers Association Origin of Livestock policy position on this issue. We ask the Secretary to work with the National Organic Program to immediately issue Guidance on the interpretation of the one–time transition provision.

We support a policy that clearly states that the provision for transitioning conventional cows to organic in one year is a one-time allowance and continuous transition of conventional livestock is not permitted. This language is not controversial and mirrors language first published in the 2015 Proposed Rule. It also mirrors the language in the preamble of the rule further supporting this interpretation. This would put organic dairy on the same level as all other organic commodities, would stop the fraud and confusion existing within the organic dairy industry, would stop continual transition of non-organic dairy heifers, would open the market for certified organic replacement animals, and would ensure that all US-based and international-based certifiers are using the same standards.

NODPA supports the inclusion of the following in the Final Origin of Livestock Rule:

- 1. A producer as defined by USDA NOP may transition bovine dairy animals into organic production only once.
- 2. A producer is eligible for this transition only if they convert an entire established non-organic dairy operation to organic production at the same geographic location within a defined 12 month period. Once that transitioned has started, other non-organically certified animals cannot be added to the herd.
- 3. This transition must occur over a continuous 12-month period prior to production of milk or milk products that are to be sold, labeled, or represented as organic.

Origin of Livestock

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- A producer must not transition any new bovine dairy animals into organic production after the end of the 12 month transition period.
- 5. A producer is not eligible for the exemption if it has been used by a Responsibly Connected person who has a 20% or more ownership share in their legal entity.
- 6. The certifying entity will file an organic system plan prior to the start of transition and the transition process is overseen by the certifier as part of their accountability.
- Transitioned animals must not be sold, labeled, or represented as organic slaughter stock, organic bovine dairy animals or for the purpose of organic fiber.
- 8. If organic management of the dairy animal is interrupted, the animal cannot be returned to organic certification.
- 9. Split bovine conventional and organic milking herds at the same location are prohibited.
- 10. Once the regulation is finalized all entities will be required to immediately meet the requirements of the Final Rule. There will be no implementation period.

We further ask that USDA give serious consideration to providing more economic capabilities to collect the data and help the industry better understand the impact of proposed policies on the industry. NODPA is ready to work with USDA and Congress to build support for that request.

We would be happy to talk with you and your leadership within Agricultural Marketing Service more about origin of livestock. We urge you to move swiftly as family organic dairy farmers are suffering because of the lack of uniform and strict enforcement. We know you share this priority for strong enforcement and integrity and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely

NODPA Board Chair and New York organic dairy farmer

NODPA Executive Director

Liz Bawden

cc: Gregory Ibach, Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, Jennifer Tucker, Director, National Organic Program

Economic hardship caused by the lack of Origin of Livestock Regulation

- 1. Economic inequity for those operations that are transitioning to organic: For some conventional dairy operations that are transitioning to organic production their certifier is restricting the transition to one already established distinct conventional herd with a clearly defined start and finish time for the transition. After that they have to rear or purchase animals which are organic from the last third of gestation involving either increased cost of feeding animals both with the use of land which could graze milking animals and the purchase of organic higher priced feed. Other operations can form a new herd from purchased conventional animals and take one year to transition that initial number of animals. They can then add conventional animals to suit the supply side demands of the market or transition more non-organic animals at a different time or rear organically born calves on conventional feed and then transition them into the original transitioned herd or many other mixtures of conditions now being accepted by certifiers. All the many different ways of transitioning other than the first one are either cheaper in feed and cost of land use, allow staggered capital investment to reduce the cost of debt service or give the operations greater flexibility to respond more quickly to supply demand. Organic dairy farms that are raising all of their youngstock organically are at severe economic disadvantage because it is much more costly to feed calves organic milk than conventional milk replacer or milk (organic milk pay price is usually double that of the conventional pay price) and more costly to feed the youngstock certified organic feeds during the first year of life rather than conventionally grown feeds and they cannot respond as quickly to an increase in supply demand. Being able to raise the conventional youngstock with the whole arsenal of antibiotics, drugs, parasiticides, ionophores and other growth promoters, etc. allowed in the conventional production, creates a very un-level playing field.
- 2. Respond to supply side demand more quickly and undermine the pay price for all organic dairies: Organic dairy lacks the depth of reporting that conventional dairy has access to and therefore there is no independent data for volumes of organic milk produced, how it is used or the number of organic animals being milked. USDA AMS does publish retail sales of organic milk which make up approximately 75% of organic milk that is consumed as fluid milk. USDA AMS reported sales of retail fluid organic milk in 2008 at 1,676 million lbs. In 2012 it was 2,157 million lbs. and in 2017 total retail sales was 2,577 million lbs. This shows a slowing of growth of retail sales from roughly 8% annually to less than 1%. The USDA AMS reports that the average retail price for branded organic product from 2006 to 2018 is \$3.77 per half gallon with a high of \$4.21 in 2016 and a low of \$3.48 in 2014. The highest month for sales was January 2018 with 234 million lbs. with an average retail price of \$3.88 per

half gallon. Organic Valley (CROPP Cooperative) and Horizon Organic (Danone NA) together control about 84% of the organic milk supply. In March 2015 CROPP Cooperative raised its pay price to reflect an increase in costs of production and "a surge in market demand." In 2016 the twelve month average mailbox pay price was \$35.68 per hundred pounds (CROPP Cooperative); in May 2017 it had dropped to \$30.10 which included the ending of the \$2 market adjustment premium (MAP), the initiation of a quota and the start of an inventory management deduction of \$1. In 2018 the twelve month average mailbox pay price is \$29.52. In less than two years the deficit in supply was replaced by a significant surplus that resulted in a quota being imposed and a 25% reduction in pay price.

While sales were at the monthly highest level because of an increase in organic whole milk sales, growth of sales in non-fat organic dairy products were dropping at a rate of 4% annually, and the retail price was consistent, the average pay price was plummeting. For those operations whose certifier does not allow continuous transition of conventional animals, it will take a minimum of three years to have a significant response to a shortage of supply by increasing cow numbers, unless they have sufficient available capital to purchase organically certified milking cows. They will also be limited by their land base. For those entities whose certifiers allows continuous transition, they can respond within one year of seeing an increase in demand and pay price.

USDA NASS organic census shows an increase in the number of organic dairy cows from 2014 to 2015 was 1,068. The increase in organic cows from 2015 to 2016 was 38,326. This ability to expand rapidly gives those continuous transitioning operations economic advantage to increase profits quickly with a higher pay price. Large scale operations whose certifiers allow continuous transition were able to increase their volume quickly as they market their milk directly to store brand and private label contracts which are now the number sellers of organic dairy products. To give an idea of the difference between dairies' sizes in Texas and Wisconsin, a NASS survey showed there were 76 times more organic dairies in Wisconsin than Texas, yet Texas produced 1.3 times more milk. Put another way, the average dairy's production in Texas was 80 million pounds, while the average dairy in Wisconsin produced 810,000 pounds.

The inconsistencies in applying the Origin of Livestock regulations result in economic advantage for those whose certifiers allow for more than a one-time transition as they can respond more quickly to changes in the supply side market. With a deficit they can increase the number of milking cows and heifers quickly while the pay price is high. When the price drops they can sell their less productive milkers to minimize losses in the knowledge that they can buy in more animals if the demand changes.

3. Undermine the integrity of the organic market: The majority of organic dairies rely on selling their organic milk on the

wholesale market and the integrity of that market is tied directly to their pay price. Once that integrity is undermined, consumers will pay less for organic milk and the only operations able to provide the organic milk are large scale operations that have access to capital. Conventional youngstock being brought onto operations on a continuous basis as is practiced now belies the trust of organic dairy consumers who expect that organic milk is coming from animals that have not been treated with antibiotics or other prohibited substances nor fed genetically modified or other prohibited feeds. 'No antibiotics' was the top concern of organic dairy consumers in the Natural Marketing Institute survey in 2005 and in all other surveys since then.

4. Undermine the market for organic dairy replacements:

Currently there is no established market for organic dairy replacements that are organic from the last third of gestation. Although there are some private sales of both individual animals and herds there is no national reporting of the value of organically certified dairy animals. The fact that the number of organic dairy cows was able to expand by 38,326 in one year illustrates that the increase in organic dairy cows comes from continuous transition of conventional animals as it takes 24 -30 months to increase retention of heifer calves and grow organically certified animals from the last third of gestation. The organic dairy herds average a cull rate of between 20-24% and the USDA NASS data for 2016 shows a total number of organic cows of 267,523 who produce 133,761 heifer calves every year/lactation (50% male to female). If operations need to retain replacements for their own operations at 25% of heifer calves, there will be potentially 100,000 replacements per year, more than enough to supply all those who want to start or expand their herds. The inconsistent implementation of the Origin of Livestock brings uncertainty into the market for rearing and selling organic dairy replacements plus deprives established organic dairies of a secondary income stream that compensates for the investment of capital, sweat equity and building fertility in the land.

- ¹ Ye Su, Scott Brown, Michael Cook, Stability in Organic Milk Farm Prices: A Comparative Study, No. 150735, 2013 Annual Meeting, August 4-6, 2013, Washington, D.C., Agricultural and Applied Economics Association at 7 (June 3, 2013), http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/150735/2/Stability%20in%20Organic%20 Milk%20Farm%20Prices%20A%20Comparative%20Stud%20AAEA%203180.pdf.
- ² Ye Su, Scott Brown, Michael Cook, Stability in Organic Milk Farm Prices: A Comparative Study, No. 150735, 2013 Annual Meeting, August 4-6, 2013, Washington, D.C., Agricultural and Applied Economics Association at 21 (June 3, 2013), http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/150735/2/Stability%20in%20 Organic%20Milk%20Farm%20Prices%20A%20Comparative%20Stud%20 AAEA%203180.pdf.
- ³ Letter from CROPP Cooperative November 2014
- ⁴ Ye Su, Scott Brown, Michael Cook, Stability in Organic Milk Farm Prices: A Comparative Study, No. 150735, 2013 Annual Meeting, August 4-6, 2013, Washington, D.C., Agricultural and Applied Economics Association at 21 (June 3, 2013), http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/150735/2/Stability%20in%20Organic%20 Milk%20Farm%20Prices%20A%20Comparative%20Stud%20AAEA%203180.pdf



After Dairying: What's Next

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how they transitioned into other work and careers, and gleaned their insights and counsel to farmers struggling with the decision to stop milking cows or struggling to decide what comes next.

Henry Perkins

BULL RIDGE FARM, ALBION, ME

Henry Perkins farmed conventionally in Maine for thirty years, and then organically for ten years. He had sold his cows three separate times; he said "I felt I was losing my sanity, I would recharge my batteries when taking a break from milking." Henry would always keep his heifers and when they calved he would come back to milking cows. But in his late 50s, he had reached a point where he had enough and decided to call it quits for good. He had recently divorced, none of his kids were going to take over his farm, and he had always had side businesses doing road construction and logging, and had been very conservative financially. He sold his cows, then his heifers when they were ready to calve, and then his farm, keeping 40 acres on which he built a new house and keeps

12 head of beef cattle. He did custom work in addition to the road construction and logging work after the dairy farm was sold but severely injured his hand in a combine a year later.

While he was lucky in that he sold ten years ago when the market was still good for organic cows and heifers, he still lost some money (about \$23,000) on the cows when the buyer got hurt and was not able to finish paying what he agreed to pay Henry for his cows. Henry started out with a major debt load-- \$300,000 in the early 70s when he took over the farm from his dad, but otherwise he was very conservative with debt, deciding it was better to wait until he had saved up the money to buy a new piece of equipment. He counseled farmers debating whether to stay or quit milking cows—"don't be afraid to quit milking cows, there's no money in it now anyway." As far as what to do besides milking cows, Henry believes there are good alternatives out there—"you can do a job doing something else, rather easily, probably less work and more money." Furthermore, he pointed out, while cows and machinery may not get a good price, you can sell your land.

In thinking back, Perkins said at the time he felt "euphoria at the idea of not milking cows. I like to play in the dirt, but don't like to play in the shit." And his only regret was "selling cows to a dead-

beat in Louisiana who didn't finish paying for them." When asked about how he planned for retirement, he said, "I went from day to day. I'm not afraid to fail at things. It didn't cross my mind as far as what came next. I never gave a thought about retiring- but always put money aside in case. I had my own self-funded retirement program." Of course, the major caveat for Henry's situation is that relatively high milk prices at the time made it easier to smoothly exit dairy farming; farmers now are likely to be carrying more debt as the cost-price squeeze eats into equity. Nonetheless, stopping milking and stopping the losses may be the pathway to a stronger financial foundation.

Glenn Wise—Elizabethtown, PA

Glenn Wise and his family have a mixed livestock and vegetable farm in Southeast Pennsylvania where they used to milk a 16 cow organic herd and sell all the milk through direct market channels—as fluid milk, yogurt, butter, cheese and cottage cheese. They bought their 20 acre farm in 2001 and started out just with produce on 7-8 acres, got a personal cow and started selling milk in 2005. The main constraint for the Wise farm was the lack of land; for 16 cows they really should have had 40 acres, which meant they had to spend a lot of money buying hay and paying other farmers to raise their heifers. This meant that they were not making as much money as they hoped to. Glenn asked an advisor he had met at a grazing conference about what to do. "I figured he was more sympathetic than a Penn State agent would be, thought he would give advice on how to manage my cows better, but he looked over the situation and, based on limited land and other things, suggested we sell the cows." After making the decision to stop milking

cows in February of 2012, Glenn "advertised soon after that and took about 6 months to sell all the cows, selling a few at a time, trying to avoid a fire sale to maximize earnings from cows. I got \$1,500-1,800 [per cow] for unregistered Jersey cows." Glenn said that when he stopped milking cows, "it was kind of a relief, but I was sorry I had to tell customers they had to find milk somewhere else. I know what I was producing was difficult to find." One of the major lifestyle benefits of dropping cows is not being so tied to a daily schedule. "Now with vegetables, I can be a little more free; can go traveling sometimes; I don't have to get as much help to care for animals, or always having to do something with milk. Produce you can pick and store in a cooler—has a little more flexibility."

Glenn, his wife, four of his children and his sonin-law work on the farm, where they raise broilers and turkeys on pasture, and grow 7-8 acres of vegetables. They sell their meat and vegetables at an on-farm store, two farmers markets, a 50 member CSA, and a restaurant. Excess product will go to auction, but it's not a lot. Basically, the farm started out as a produce farm, and now it's back to being a produce farm along with it being a pastured poultry farm. Some fields have gone from vegetables to pasture and back to vegetables. The original foray into selling milk came after they acquired a personal cow and then worked with a group called CARE (Consumers Alliance for Responsible Eco-Farming) to sell raw milk products directly to consumers. In terms of farm finances, Glenn states "it wasn't a major change, still a struggle, but seemed to head us in the right direction. We're able to pay bills and pay down debt a little faster."

Similar to Henry Perkins, Glenn always had a side business to supplement farm income. He has delivered heating and diesel fuel part-time for most of the past twenty years, which complements farming well as the seasonal peaks and valleys are exactly opposite each other, with heating oil peaking in the winter when things are slower on the farm, and vice versa. When the cows were sold, he paid off all non-mortgage debt, and has since been careful to manage his debt load. Describing his frugal ways, he said, "When we bought the farm, we didn't want to spend a lot. I read too many of Joel Salatin's articles. Stuff that rusts, rots and depreciates—make it multipurpose or just don't have much of it; if you have cows on grass, they haul manure."

Glenn continues to talk to the same grazing advisor who originally advised him to sell his cows; he still goes to grazing conferences even though he's not grazing cows because he "likes to keep up

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After Dairying: What's Next

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with them." He also goes to vegetable meetings. When marketing his vegetables, he calls them "chemical free," which customers seem to accept. "Customers are not demanding certified organic. If they come once a week to the farm, that's a lot more than the organic inspector." When asked what advice he would give to those struggling whether to stop milking cows, he said "I would suggest talking to... others who have struggled through it already, see what they think looking in from the outside. Sometimes we don't see everything from the inside. Maybe they'll say it's hopeless or maybe they'll give suggestions on how you could do something to keep it going."

Bruce Drinkman—Glenwood City, WI

Bruce Drinkman started milking cows when he was a teenager. He was the third generation of his family to farm Desperation Acres Farm in Northwest Wisconsin, an hour east of the Twin Cities. In addition to being a farmer, Bruce has been a long-time farm advocate, serving on the board of the National Family Farm Coalition and



the Midwest Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (MODPA), and working with Farm Aid. He took over the farm from his parents in 1981 and milked a 50 cow herd for thirty two years, followed by a few years of just selling hay. He finally sold off the farm in 2017 after it was foreclosed on by the bank holding his mortgage.

A series of events, in between, contributed to his having to sell his farm and stop milking cows, including divorce, farm crisis, media fights with bankers, and personal injury. His divorce from his first wife in 2003 set him back almost \$200,000. In 2009, Bruce was quoted in a 2009 Wall Street Journal article on the tightening of farm credit in general. He said—

"my banker got mad because of the press exposure—he looked bad....article made for a lot of hard feelings. I couldn't switch banks, declared Chapter 12 bankruptcy in 2010, and then I got hurt. A more understanding bank would have worked with me. They wanted me dead. At that point, I could lose the use of my arm or sell the cows."

Bruce had a hard fall in 2012 that made it impossible to milk, and his wife had leukemia so he decided to sell the cows in 2013 and try to carry through by selling hay off his farm, but there was a glut of hay, and corn was not a good option because of the rugged topography of his farm. These factors, combined with the acrimonious relationship with his banker, and the bank-ruptcy making it impossible to find an alternative lender led to foreclosure and sale of the farm just ahead of the bank seizing it. Meanwhile, his wife Mari died in 2017 shortly before the farm was sold. As Bruce put it, "when it rains it pours."

Amazingly, after all that he has been through, Bruce is about to buy a small farm and intends to go back to milking cows, and eventually go back to organic certification. He offered the following words to those thinking about next steps—

"I strongly encourage anyone who may be considering changes to their organic dairy operation give some serious thought to what you want your future to be. Some may not have many options, others might. Many established farmers will struggle with working for someone else. It is hard to get independence out of your system when you are used to it. Some employers will value the independent steak of a farmer. Unfortunatel,y many will not in this day and age of micromanagement."

He has had several jobs since he stopped milking, including working as an auto and farm machinery mechanic, construction work, and herdsman, but, he says, "my heart is still with the cows." Bruce endured eight years of limbo with his farm before finally throwing in the towel. One key lesson he wants to share is that Chapter 12 bankruptcy, which allows farm businesses to continue to operate and reorganize, requires good legal representation to be successful, and this was very hard for him to arrange. Not only did he not have the funds needed to pay for good legal help, it was hard to find the help even if he had the money, as the number of farm attorneys has declined precipitously in the last few decades. Having better legal representation may have allowed him to reach a better outcome; either holding on to the farm or having more to show for 35 years of farming than the shirt off his back.

Bruce had a series of personal and business shocks that made it very difficult to plan. Bruce cautioned, "For those who can afford to research...plan steps carefully....think about what you want to do if you have to sell your cows. Do some research on what you're going to do for the next 10-15 years of your life." He thought that if he would do anything differently it would have been "to look at options a little sooner—financially and operationally with agriculture, today is good and tomorrow is crappy."

One option could be downsizing. Bruce had downsized in the past and felt he did a better job of producing milk.

"...need to get out of the box...think unconventionally where you can make a buck, how you can save money.... Make sure you are not overworking yourself, so you can take care of your physical and mental well-being. When you're doing a better job with smaller operations you do better work, and make as much money because things don't fall through the cracks....Sometimes, shrinking your operation might be the best thing to consider if you can raise your efficiency level....If you can make the same amount of money with fewer cows—there's some profit you can eke out.... If you're not keeping up, then you're that much further behind each day. [The two of us] were trying to do work for 3.5 people. With Chapter 12 we had to keep 110 head on hand; handcuffed in that regard. When divorced—I was down to 40 cows—I knew I did a better job with smaller herd, although at the time thought, 'oh I could make extra money with larger herd,' but didn't consider extra costs, time."

Faye Benson—Groton, New York

Faye and his wife bought their farm close to Ithaca, NY in 1983 and ran a 50 cow pasture based dairy for twenty years. His wife has had a job the entire time at Cornell University working as a lab supervisor at the veterinary school. He started transitioning to organic right after BST came out, and shipped organic milk in 1997. With the help of the organic pay price, Faye was able to pay off all his debt 7 years after going organic. In the months leading up to making his last payment to Farm Credit, Faye started looking for an alternative career as he no longer wanted to be so tied to the farm; he wanted more flexibility to travel and do things with his family. The same month he made the last payment to Farm Credit for the loan on his family's farm, he took a job with Extension. He said that at that time, "I was 49 and decided I wanted to do something else. I started looking around and tried to figure out what to do. I got an offer to be a grazing specialist with Cornell Extension... we sold the cows, but still have the farm, grazing dairy heifers and sell some hay. It'd nice to keep the farm, but I need to make sure it pays for itself. It would have been impossible to keep paying the note on the farm without the milk coming in, but once the farm was paid off that opened up new opportunities."

Background considerations that also factored into the decision to sell the milking herd were Faye's health issues—he had had farmer's lung for the last 10 years of his dairying career and also had 3 herniated disks. He had to use inhalers and got pneumonia fairly often, and pulling calves could be very painful. His farmer's lung cleared up shortly after he stopped milking cows. Also, while a 50 cow operation usually doesn't have hired help as the income doesn't justify it, often times the whole family pitches in quite a bit; in this case the farm was mostly Faye's responsibility. His wife handled the books, but her allergies prevented her from going to the barn and their kids had no interest in farming and did not have farm chores. Faye said

that if his kids, who were teenagers when the herd was sold, had been interested in farming that would have changed his decision making process.

Faye counseled that, "If I'm talking to a farmer thinking about leaving dairy farming [I suggest they] should try to keep the farm. Grazing dairy heifers is a good way to do it." It's relatively profitable and is not a lot of work.

Market conditions no doubt have changed since Faye decided to pull the plug on milking. He was able to sell his cows in less than a day after advertising in the NODPA News. Now this would be much harder, and the price is likely to be lower. "Figuring out debt, and what to do with the farm" is a challenge for those considering stopping milking cows. One option is to sell off parts of the farm. Regardless, Faye says it's important to seek counsel from outside professionals to prevent emotions from impairing one's business decision making.

Fay went on to say, "no doubt stopping milking cows is an emotionally fraught decision. Likewise, the stress of considering how to handle debt and figure out how to make a living without milking cows is filled with emotion, but outside help can smooth the process and help produce better outcomes. Everyone's situation is different there " is not one answer, if you have an interest in working with the public, selling things close to the consumer is a great thing, rather than selling commodities. The opportunity for small dairies to sell as a commodity is going away. The key to happiness is acceptance. You don't have to like something to accept it. For example, if the time for small dairies is gone, you're struggling with a large debt load, and are far from markets, you have to accept the situation. If you have loans on equipment, that's a burden. We had old equipment, not worth anything—no debt on machinery....It's not going to get any better; move on; take losses and get moving in a new direction." He continued,. "take time and figure out what is going to make you happy, don't follow what you're supposed to do, even if it doesn't work out, you can still be happy."

Fay added that resources such as SCORE and NY FarmNet can provide advice to farmers figuring out what they should do. Likewise, it's critical to network when developing a career transition plan. Faye explained "there are opportunities...with Extension. Be in touch with organizations you want to work with; stay in contact with people. Call people, get on people's mind. Find something you want to do. Get a job before you leave the farm. I used to go to pasture walks—fellow that was leading them was leaving his job...I got the job....Small farmers like to be on their own—you need to be social.... it pays to go to meetings if you're not sure what you're going to learn, because you're going to meet people. My big success has been networking, talking to people, learning things."



After Dairying: What's Next

continued from page 19

One thing farmers may not appreciate is how much certain aspects of farming carry over into other endeavors. Faye explained how "work ethic from dairying carried over. I know how to get the job done. With dairy farming—you have to be creative to be a dairy farmer.... If you do a good job there are opportunities. Farmers are problem solvers. And have a great work ethic."

And as far as concerns about whether leaving dairying will leave a hole in one's life, Faye emphasized how stopping milking cows opens up one's life. "When I've talked to people, they don't realize how hard the work is until they leave it. Once out of farming it's a relief....so much stress and responsibility with animals...[people] don't realize how much of a burden it is until they leave. You gain this thing called a weekend...it's a whole new experience."

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The present downturn in organic dairying may not be a passing thing, which makes it that much more urgent to think ahead about next steps, whether that means changing one's milking operations to increase efficiency, seeking alternative farming opportunities or exiting farming completely. Every situation is different, and conditions have worsened in the organic dairy industry since our informants stopped milking, which makes it more difficult to keep one's farm now after selling one's herd. Nonetheless, an emergent theme is that it's critical to manage one's debt carefully regardless, and if conditions are bad and you're losing money there's no sense in throwing good money after bad. Look around, talk to people about what to do, and cut the cord if necessary. What these informants told us is that yes, it can be traumatic to sell one's farm, or to stop milking cows, but there are opportunities out there. It's critical to accept the reality one is facing, think ahead, seek outside resources, see how one's dairy farming experience can open new doors, and make plans for the next stage in the journey of life. •

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(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 milk marketing but can now be returned to you as an organic producer in	
\$0.07 per hundredweight (the \$.05 marketing check-off plus	\$0.02)
as an assignment from my milk check starting the first day ofNODPA. This agreement may be ended at any time by the producer by send NODPA.	
Milk handlers please send payments to:	
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Producer signature:	Date:
Producer number/ member no:	
Number of milking cows:	
Certifying Agency:	
Farm Address: (please print)	
Producers—please send this form AND YOUR EXEMPT FORM to NOT Deerfield, MA 01342, so we can track who has signed up and forward the plying for the exemption, check here Thank you.	nis form to the milk handler. If you need assistance in ap-
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NET UPDATE

Recent ODairy Discussions

By Liz Bawden, Organic Dairy Farmer, NODPA President

A few farmers were discussing the use of organic milk replacer in their herds. Most thought it was a good tool if Johne's Disease was a problem. One farmer said that she adds the milk replacer to her calf feed, at a rate of 100 pounds per ton, and feels it make a "tremendous difference" in the growth and health of calves as they are weaned. One of the vets on the list wondered if the addition of milk replacer to a calf's ration might keep them more robust so that internal parasites would be only a minor problem after weaning.

There was a lot of discussion about integrity in the interpretation of the organic standards. Certain certifiers, and even the USDA, seem to be unwilling or unable to certify to the organic standards. One contributor said that the problem is the NOP is "out of touch" with the very farmers they are supposed to serve, and they are controlled by the corporate interests that dominate the organic processing and retailing sectors. "We just lived through a remarkable experience with the animal welfare rule in which USDA was ready to do the right thing for organic farmers, and Capitol Hill shot it down."

A grassmilk producer asked the group about their experience with grazing corn before tasseling; he wanted to know if openpollinated corn would be more digestible than hybrid corn at this stage. In response, a farmer suggested that his theory might be correct since modern hybrids have bred for improved standability which is reputed to have reduced the digestibility of the plant. Another farmer shared his experience with a tillering BMR corn variety from Masters Choice called Mastergraze. "It produced a tremendous amount of growth in a short time. With staggered planting dates and rotating the cows to higher protein pastures for a part of the day I think it would work well. I found the hardest part to be keeping the cows from trampling it into the ground and managing the residue."



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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.

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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.

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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.

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CCOF's Jake Lewin Resigns

14-Year Veteran of Top Organic Certifier to Become CEO of SaaS Firm Serving Accreditation, Certification Markets

Posted by Sustainable Food News

Jake Lewin, chief certification officer of CCOF Certification Services LLC, one of the largest U.S. organic certifiers, has resigned and will step down effective Nov. 30.

Lewin's departure after 14 years of service at CCOF comes less than three months after the company's executive director/CEO, Cathy Calfo, stepped down after seven years at the helm.

Santa Cruz, Calif.-based CCOF, founded in 1973, represents more than 3,600 certified organic members in 44 states and three countries.

Lewin said he has been hired as CEO of Intact US, Inc., the North American arm of Austria-based Intact GmbH, developers of software for audits and inspections, certifications, supply chain traceability and transparency.

"I will be leading Intact's expansion in the U.S. and into additional sectors while supporting product innovation and

positioning as the de-facto standard tool as it transitions to a true Software as a Service (SaaS) offering globally," Lewin said in an email to colleagues. "Intact's software currently certifies more than 38 percent of U.S. National Organic Program entities and will be a huge player in food safety, management certification, supplier audits and more. The growth, industry leadership, and operational excellence of CCOF certification can be credited in many respects to Intact's flagship product, Ecert."

Lewin will start his new position at Intact US on Jan. 1, and will work from his hometown of Santa Cruz, which he refers to as Intact's new "Silicon Beach" location.

Lewin said Jody Biergiel Colclough, CCOF's director of certification operations, will become interim chief certification officer. ◆

Northeast Organic Milk Buyers

Upstate Niagara

Upstate Niagara is a member owned dairy cooperative dedicated to high quality dairy products. 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.

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!

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

WINDMILL MEADOWS FARM, HAGERSTOWN, MD

continued from page 1

the farm when he retires. Horst has run the farm with his wife since 1988, right after they got married, and has been certified organic since January of 2015, raising their eleven children on the farm.

While his farm has only been certified organic for just under four years, Horst has been moving the farm in that direction for the better part of two decades as he has sworn off corn production and shifted towards a low input, pasture based model of running his dairy farm. He could have started selling organically in 2009, but was unable to find an organic buyer until five years later when Trickling Springs Creamery came through looking for organic milk to supply its regionally marketed brand of glass bottled organic milk. At the time Horst was stretched thin, and saw organic as a way to improve farm profitability without having to change what he was doing, save for the switch to organic grain.

Windmill Meadows is a grass-based dairy in western

Maryland, in Hagerstown, with 130 milking cows on 400 acres, of which the Horsts own 270, 130 are tillable, and 270 are permanent pasture. All work on the farm, and even marketing activities related to selling cheese, beef, eggs, chicken and pork at a local farmers market is done by Jacob, two of his sons who work full-time on the farm, and his wife and two daughters who work part-time on the farm.

These non-milk activities have proven to be critical to the farm's well-being. Jacob relayed how when he first went to organic, milk prices were fairly high; in fact during his transition year he was earning \$28/cwt, including a \$2/cwt premium paid by Trickling Springs to Windmill Meadows to ease the transition, which was as good or better than the organic pay price he received in 2018. These high milk prices gave Jacob reason to believe that milk income would be enough to cover family living and business expenses, including a loan to pay for the purchase of a neighboring farm in 2014.



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Jacob had worked out with an extension agent that the cash flow from organic would support additional debt needed to buy the 50 acre farm, as well as continuing to make payments on another farm that had been purchased at auction in 2007. However, volatile organic milk prices make an additional farm income stream separate from the milk market extremely valuable. A small portion of the farm's milk goes to a local cheesemaker that makes several kinds of raw milk cheese for the farm under the Windmill Meadows Farm label, which is then sold, along with chicken, pork and beef at the 232 year old Historic City Farmer's Market in Hagerstown through a buying club. These products, as well as some Trickling Springs glass bottled milk, are also sold at a farmers market in Springfield, Virginia and directly off the farm. The markets for artisanal cheese, grass-fed beef and pastured chicken do not track milk prices, and direct marketing generally means more stable prices than the national organic milk market. Jacob noted, "Direct marketing is still an important part of the business plan. It's demanding, it takes time, and this is on top of farming, but it's an important part of the whole picture." This diversity in products and markets builds on the diverse, grass-based farm Jacob has developed over three decades. To make a grass-based organic dairy successful requires a different set of conditions than a confinement dairy, and this has led Horst to systematically adjust his planting, feeding, animal breeding, and animal care practices to optimize for soil health, forage quality, pasture growth, herd health, quality milk, and reproductive success.

Jacob decided grazing was the way to go years before going organic and stopped growing row crops. "I'm not a conventional grain thinker. I don't like corn- I don't think it's good for animals." Jacob stopped growing corn and soybeans in 2005, and now only feeds barley and a small amount of soybean meal as supplemental grain. In the winter cows get 8-10 pounds of grain daily plus chopped sudangrass and winter annuals such as spelt and barley, which is direct cut so it has some grain in it. The herd gets two bales of baleage per day consisting of alfalfa or clover in the winter.

Windmill Meadows Farm has 180 acres of grazeable pasture, with break wires surrounding 3 acre paddocks moved every 4 hours, with the animals grazing day and night during the grazing season. Jacob preclips the grass starting in mid-May before the cows get to it to increase grass utilization and encourage faster regrowth. Cows come back to the same paddock after 35-40 days, with longer intervals sometimes



in the summer. By May 1st there is no winter forage left and the cows are just grazing for forage, with up to 5 pounds of barley daily as a supplement; they do not receive any protein supplement in the summer. Heifers and dry cows receive no grain at all during the grazing season—from May through October. Cows get about 80% of dry matter intake from pasture during the grazing season. Heifers are on 100% grass in the grazing season, and only get grain in winter if they are less than 6 months old. Calves are weaned at 4 months and are fed grain from 4-6 months.

In the summer of 2018, Jacob put his milking herd on a grass only diet in the summer because a buyer wanted some grassfed cows, and he is considering continuing this practice. While milk production is most likely higher with supplemental grain feeding—Jacob estimates he gets an additional pound of milk per cow daily for each pound of grain, it may not pay to feed grain if the milk prices remain low.



WINDMILL MEADOWS FARM, HAGERSTOWN, MD

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Pastures are seeded with a mix of fescue, orchard grass and clover. There is a tradeoff with fescue and orchard grass as the cows prefer orchard grass but it doesn't last as long as the fescue. They are experimenting with digestible grasses and festoliums, which may last longer than orchard grass and be more appealing than fescue to the cows. When a pasture is depleted, it is planted with summer and winter annuals for two years before it is returned to pasture.

A mixture of summer and winter annuals and legumes are planted to make sure cows have a balanced diet in the grazing season and throughout the winter. Jacob explained—"I like mixtures- diversity is our big thing. A little bit like with genetics- I like diversity. We're mixing...annuals—sudangrass, brassicas, cowpeas, buckwheat (new this year), put in different things—they each help each other....the buckwheat helped other plants....Buckwheat didn't provide much forage, but it helped other plants come up. Also, saw lots of pollinators come







in—that's got to be good." And buckwheat also helps build soil health as cows trample it down, and it may even work as a weed suppressor. Jacob also plants barley and triticale to be harvested for winter feed. He has other winter annuals such as crimson clover, winter peas, millet, and hairy vetch to round out the cows' diverse diet. Dietary diversity helps maintain a healthy grass-fed herd, but it's also important to have the right kind of cows that will thrive on this regimen.

While his father always grazed his cows, it was more simply putting them out to pasture, with a large part of their DMI coming from grain. As the farm switched over to a more intensive grazing system Jacob looked for new breeds, transitioning from the 100% Holstein herd he inherited from his dad to the mix of dual purpose breed cows he has now. Starting in the early 2000's, he starting crossing the Holsteins with Swedish Reds as he knew that red cows are better able to withstand the heat than black cows and if he was going to emphasize grazing this was an important consideration.

Jacob then started incorporating MRY dual purpose genetics into the herd as he was concerned that dairy-only breeds were not suited for a low grain diet. In his experience, the dual purpose breeds are more likely to maintain body weight and breed back successfully on a low or even no grain diet compared to dairy breeds, which tend to get too boney and have

reproductive problems.

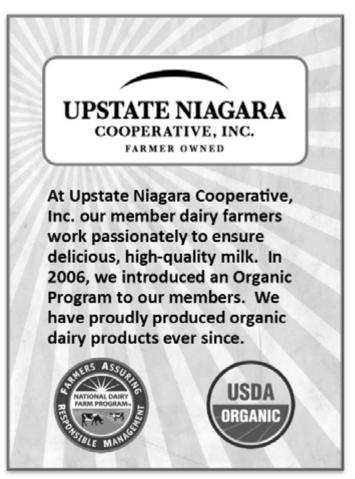
However, the MRYs were not going to work with Trickling Springs because they wanted cows with A2A2 genetics, which spawned a search for another dual purpose breed with A2A2 genetics. Jacob explained—"I looked around, started using Fleckvieh—liked them—same bodyweight—1100-1300 lbs. dual purpose....Very hearty, good feet, legs, udders. Tried Normandy and Montbeliard—other dual purpose breeds. Fleckvieh—liked them the best." They are well-suited to a bi-seasonal pasturebased dairy as they milk well in the heat of the summer and through the winter. Jacob has bred several other dairy breeds back with the Fleckvieh, including Jerseys, Ayrshires, and Guernseys, but still likes the Fleckvieh for their breeding success and ability to maintain body weight only on forage. The average breeding interval for the entire herd is now 12.1 months, down from 14 months when the entire herd was registered Holsteins. He has a closed herd, with plenty of extra animals, which are sold off to generate extra income. He also compensates his sons for their work on the farm with cow sales as a way to help them start their own farms or simply give them a boost as they start their own families.

He has to monitor animal characteristics in the herd to optimize for multiple qualities. He said that he "still likes capacity and bone

WINDMILL MEADOWS FARM, HAGERSTOWN, MD

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size of Fleckvieh, but if they get too beefy I'll bring in Jersey... Haven't seen it hurting milk production [yet] but if I kept crossing only Fleckvieh it might." He mostly uses AI but raises bulls and uses them for clean-up as well as selling them to other farmers for breeding. Some steers are raised for beef, which is sold through direct marketing channels, either directly off the farm ½ or ¼ animal at a time or by the cut at the Farmers Market. Not only do dual purpose breeds help optimize conditions for grass-based dairying, they also provide a valuable secondary income source to help manage the volatility of the milk market. And while genetics are clearly important, it's also critical to have the right animal care program in place, closely monitoring diet and cow comfort to promote health and stable milk production.

Jacob has a dairy nutritionist that comes every 5 weeks to the farm, sells minerals to him, does forage sampling and can balance the ration. While Jacob knows how to balance the ration it's helpful to use his nutritionist as a check. In the winter he wants to know how much protein he needs to feed the cows, which he feels "is almost more important than energy." One year this meant adding 1.5 pounds per of bean meal to the cows daily ration.

When it comes to veterinary care, Jacob follows the principle that prevention is the best medicine. "Vets hardly know us; if they had to live off of us they'd go broke. My vet costs are less than \$10/cow per year. Prevention is the main thing. Genetics is a big part of prevention." Breeding for reproductive ease, udders and heartiness, along with grazing and organic practices have all contributed to excellent herd health and low veterinary costs. "Basic preventative health is having the right genetics. I am not on a vaccination program, unless a buyer wants vaccinations...I feel like if you feed animals right it's going to prevent a lot of problems." Jacob did emphasize one key difference in herd health that has come with the shift to organic—the almost complete eradication of Bovine Leukemia Virus (BLV) in his herd. He would have cows that would go down, get paralyzed, and there was no treatment for it. After going to organic, Jacob has had very little incidence of BLV. Another common dairy problem—milk fever—has been kept to a minimum by using low potassium forages for the dry cows as a preventive measure.

And even though his farm is a grass-based dairy, Horst likes using a TMR mixer so he can mix in minerals with hay and grain in the winter because "it's difficult to get enough minerals in the milk if it's all free choice." He has actually found that the somatic cell count drops in the winter because the cows are getting more minerals with the use of the TMR mixer. Other preventative health measures include good air ventilation when cows are inside to prevent pneumonia, and plenty of dry clean bedding in lieu of calfhood vaccination.

WINDMILL MEADOWS FARM, HAGERSTOWN, MD

Windmill Meadows Farm has free stall housing with 123 stalls for the milk cows, and loose housing for the heifers. Bred heifers are kept in freestalls in the winter. For milking he converted an old 40 stall stanchion barn to a parlor and holding area. The parlor is a 16 stall step-up California parlor with walk through stalls in a motivational parlor arrangement with continuous flow milking that has the capacity to milk 60-70 cows/hour. He decided to only have 8 milking units because "if I had 16 units I'll have unused units while prepping cows. It's more efficient this way, might fudge on cow prep with more units. I've got a large enough line for 16 units, but the thing is—is it going to be efficient?" The cows don't have to back off the platform, which helps facilitate the flow of cows through the parlor.

MARKETING ORGANIC MILK: FARMER CONTROL

We ended our conversation by reflecting on the state of the organic dairy industry and what could be done to stabilize economic conditions for farmers. Jacob has experienced the highs and the lows of the organic dairy market, and while he has been able to survive and persevere through these difficult conditions he is concerned that the current market dominance by one player in this region—Organic Valley—is taking away control from farmers, and making it difficult for them to meet their needs. Having one big national organization, with nationwide distribution and marketing of dairy products, leads to less choice for farmers and fewer opportunities for input into decision making. Jacob said "I don't like how the organic industry is going in the same direction as conventional, with one or two big players, Organic Valley has everything has tied up. I don't think it's good. It's good to have competition; it's good to have options. I have a nephew who wants to go into shipping organic milk, but he has no options."

Trickling Springs, when it started out, was in some ways a new model for a regionally focused organic dairy company that was directly accountable to its producers, but it expanded too fast and has since had its milk supply taken over by Organic Valley.

"They got more markets...got more farmers, but they got too big... It's not the volume of milk we can sell, its quality, and having a good quality market, a solid market. For producers here on the eastern seaboard there's no reason we couldn't find a population to support small local producers... [we just] need to band together, I'm already working with graziers on a farming basis (has monthly pasture works with a group of area pasture based dairies), why not work together on marketing basis?"

Jacob pointed out that Trickling Springs is now basically just a bottler, having outsourced its distribution and milk

aggregation, so it has very little control over the supply chain. He believes a truly farmer controlled operation is called for—"If we could ever get together and have our control over it- if we startfarming out things, don't have control over it, for example with Trickling Springs farming out distribution—they need to meet distributor's demands. If it's a closed organization—all farmer-controlled—there's less pressure from outside organizations."

Jacob believes strongly that with less pressure from outside organizations and more farmer control it would be easier for farmers like himself to meet market demand while achieving their personal goals and serving as good stewards of the land. For Jacob and his family this means embodying an ethic of stewardship. The Horst's guiding philosophy can be summed up by the following statement— "our family sees the importance of resources, of stewardship, of the privilege of taking care of God's resources and making it better for next generation. We see the ground, soil life improving. It's not a matter of production units, but rather 'is our farm improving, is organic matter higher? Is it more sustainable?"



Calendar

NEW YORK CERTIFIED ORGANIC (NYCO) 2019 MEETINGS

Geneva, N.Y. New York Certified Organic (NYCO) begins its 26th year as an organic field crop and dairy discussion in 2019. The meetings bring together grain and dairy farmers to hear guest speakers on topics of organic crops and dairy production. The 2019 dates are January 8, February 12, and March 12. Each program begins at 10 a.m. in Jordan Hall, 630 West North Street at the Cornell AgriTech, formerly known as the Ag Experiment Station, Geneva, N.Y. There is no need to register to attend the free NYCO meetings; participants are asked to bring a dish for a potluck lunch. Roundtable discussion after lunch provides the opportunity to ask questions and hear from the combined experience of the group to advance organic production. New and transitioning farmers as well as long-time organic producers are welcome.

February 12, 2019

NYCO meeting agenda also includes Cornell University Soil Health Laboratory Director Bob Schindelbeck and Cornell's Small Dairy Specialist, NY Organic Dairy Program Leader and NY Soil Health Trailer Coordinator Fay Benson discussing and demonstrating the importance of working with the biology in your soil to feed crops, store water, and, at the same time, remove carbon from the atmosphere. Their talk will focus specifically on management tips for organic farmers.



March 12, 2019

NYCO meeting agenda will include a farmer panel on new machines for reduced tillage and organic weed management with Dr. Charles Mohler of the Cornell University Department of Crop and Soil Sciences.

For more information, contact Fay Benson, 607-745-3807, afb3@ cornell.edu, or Kara Lynn Dunn, 315-465-7578, karalynn@gisco. net. Information on past NYCO meetings is online at http://blogs.cornell.edu/organicdairyinitiative/.

January 18-19, 2019

2019 Vermont Grazing and Livestock Conference, Lake Morey Resort, Fairlee, VT

Our conference features Charlotte Smith of 3CowMarketing. com on Friday and speakers David R. Montgomery and Anne Biklè on Saturday. Additional Workshop Topics Include: Grazing Fundamentals; Innovative fence and water solutions; Farmer mental and physical health; Grass-based farm research; Business building; and Livestock business and risk management. 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. The event takes places at the family-friendly Lake Morey Resort in Fairlee, VT just off Interstate-91. The weekend highlights local, grass-fed and organic foods, livestock farmers and supporters from over six states, and plenty of new ideas to take home and ruminate on as you plan for 2019. More details and registration are at: http://www.uvm.edu/~pasture/?Page=conference.html.

January 18-20, 2019

NOFA-NY 37th Annual Organic Farming and Gardening Conference: Climate of Change, Saratoga Hilton and City Center, Saratoga Springs (Saratoga County)

We have a fantastic lineup of speakers, including Leah Penniman of Soul Fire Farm, Jean-Martin Fortier of Les Jardins de la Grelinette, and Fred and Karen Lee of Sang Lee Farms. Workshop schedule includes topics such as profitable dairy management, soil health, silvopasture, and practical fencing solutions, among others. For more information, visit: https://nofany-winterconference.squarespace.com/

January 26th, 2019

11th Annual Winter Green-Up Grazing Conference, The Century House, 997 New Loudon Road, Latham (Albany County) C

Come join us at our eleventh Winter Green-Up, the Capital District's original grazing conference! Hear talks from grazing experts, get to know other farmers, and enjoy a buffet luncheon featuring local, grass-fed meats and other local products. Speakers include Greg Brann of Resource Regeneration Services (and formerly with NRCS), Jason Detzel of Ulster County Cooperative Extension, and others. Cost: \$75.00 per person. If you have questions or need assistance with registration, please call (518) 765-3518 or email cce-caahp@cornell.edu. More information available here: http://files.constantcontact.com/ad338351501/aa5ece92-cadc-48ad-ba2f-5c5c478f58a9.pdf

January 26-27, 2019

WC19: Collaborate, Regenerate, Celebrate!, NOFA-NJ 29th Annual Winter Conference, Rutgers Douglass Student Center in New Brunswick, NJ

NOFA-NJ is proud to offer an amazing lineup of national and internationally recognized speakers who will share their insights and experience. For the first time in four years, NOFA-NJ is bringing back the Business Track in order to help growers focus on getting the most from their investments of time and money. The five tracks at WC19 will be Business, Crops, Gardening, Livestock, and Policy. Tickets on sale now! Beginning farmers with a current student ID are eligible to receive a 20% discount by entering the code "WC-STUDENT" when registering. Learn more and apply on our Scholarship webpage. Become a member and save today on all NOFA-NJ programs! Join our community! If you have any questions or require any assistance, please call us at 908-371-1111.

February 1, 2019

5th Annual Hudson Valley Value-Added Grain School, Pegasus Restaurant, 10885 Rte. 9W, Coxsackie, NY

The 5th Annual Hudson Valley Value-Added Grain School will meet on Friday, February 1, 2019 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The focus this year is on accessing and developing markets for value-added grains, with topics to include current grain market sectors and their quality requirements, developing direct markets to consumers, developing a grain-processing enterprise, distribution strategies, accessing capital, and marketing tools. An extended panel discussion in the morning will feature representatives from the milling, malting, distilling, and feed sectors. Afternoon sessions will feature presentations by small- and larger-scale grain-processing enterprises.

This meeting is sponsored by Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) and the Organic Growers' Research and Information-Sharing Network (OGRIN). Register at https://tinyurl.com/hvgrains2019 by 5:00 p.m. January 29 for \$40, or \$60 thereafter (registration includes lunch). Presenters include:

Mark Fischer who, with his wife Fran, produces stone-ground wheat and specialty flours (rye, spelt, emmer) and corn meals from grains purchased from local and regional farmers at a restored mill (est. 1730) in Doylestown, PA. Castle Valley Mill (http://castlevalleymill.com/) sells to bakeries and restaurants and to consumers through retail outlets and an on-line store. Scott Morgan (http:// morganicsfamilyfarm.com) who grows and processes grain on his organic farm near Hillsborough, NJ, for direct sale to consumers. He currently produces raw rolled oats, wheat, einkorn, and barley and is experimenting with pulses. Brad Estabrooke, of Breuckelen Distilling (https://brkdistilling.com) who has been making craft spirits "from scratch" using New York grown wheat, rye, corn, and barley since 2010. Dennis and Jeanette Nesel, of Hudson Valley Malt (http://www.hudsonvalleymalt.net), an artisan craft malthouse in Germantown, NY, who are passionate about buying only local grains and malting them for local brewers and distillers. Vince Bruno of Bruno Farms Custom Feeds (Hudson, NY), who since 1995 has grown and purchased local grains to make custom feeds for livestock owners in the region. June Russell of GreenMarket/GrowNYC, an expert on value-added grain markets and an innovator in grain distribution. Lauren Melodia of the Center for Agricultural Development and Entrepreneurship (CADE) who has developed a marketing toolkit for farmers for value-added products. Elizabeth Dyck (OGRIN), an organic researcher specializing in the production, processing, and marketing of value-added grains.

The burgeoning local grain economy provides opportunities for many farmers, e.g., vegetable growers who can now profitably add grains in their rotations to reduce pests and improve yields and dairy farmers looking to diversify into new enterprises. Please contact the program office at 845-340-3990 if you have any special needs.

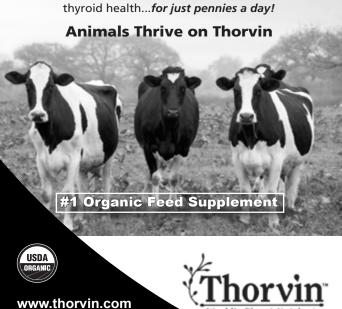
February 3-9, 2019 Ranching For Profit School, Burlington, VT

Are you looking to increase your farm's profitability? Are you ready to look at your pasture-based livestock business with a fresh perspective, challenge some things you currently do and have the time to explore new ideas? If so, we are bringing that opportunity to your doorstep. For the first time ever, Dave Pratt and his Ranching for Profit School (RFP) are bringing the leading livestock profitability business school to Burlington, Vermont. The one-week course aims to help you find the breakthroughs that will increase your profitability, improve the health and productivity of your farming operation, and improve your quality of life. The school is designed for all types of pasture-based livestock farming

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Classifed Ads

ANIMALS

FOR SALE: A group of American Milking Devon heifers, all A2C2, for sale. Some open and some bred, and have been all grass fed for over 18 years. They are NOT certified organic, but are managed organically. The farm is in NW Vermont. Flack Family Farm, 3971 Pumpkin Village Rd., Enosburg, 05450, or flackfamilyfarm@gmail.com or contact Sarah Flack at sarahflackconsulting@gmail.com

FOR SALE: Four Jersey Heifers. They range from 13 month to 16 month. They are all open and ready to be bred. Located in Northern Vermont. Also have a 17 month old Jersey steer for sale. Lazaro Gonzalez, 802-755-6301

WANTED: Heifers. Two farmers are each looking to buy 5-10 organic cows. Holsteins, jerseys or crosses- milk cows or close up bred heifers. One farm is near Malone, NY and the other is in Franklin, VT. Please email me directly and I will put you in touch with them. John Cleary, Organic Valley, john.cleary@organicvalley.coop, 612-803-9087, cell.

WANTED: 5-10 heifers, 14 month old breed-able Jersey cross. The farmer wants cows suitable for grass-fed, certified organic production. Please call Bob Bondi in Prattsburgh, NY, 14873. 607-522-7733

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

SEASONAL FARM WORKER POSITION

Looking for a self-motivated, adaptable, physically strong person who is healthy and willing to learn our way of sustainable holistic farming. On our biodiverse, organic, hill farm in Northwestern Vermont, you will help grow and process 3/4 acre of cabbage and other vegetables for our traditionally fermented kimchi and sauerkraut business, be hands on in all aspects of producing grass fed meats and dairy, including management intensive grazing with cattle and sheep, and cultivate superior organic medicinal herbs. Position runs from late March through the end of November. Must enjoy working long days in all weather. This is so much more than a job! Rustic on farm living (cozy cabin with most modern conveniences,) and farm food provided. On farm interview required. Please send cover letter and 3 references to: Flack Family Farm, 3971 Pumpkin Village Rd., Enosburg, 05450, or flackfamilyfarm@gmail.com. Contact Sarah Flack, sarahflackconsulting@gmail.com for more information.

THE DAIRY GRAZING APPRENTICESHIP (DGA) VETERANS' LIAISON, FULL-TIME, LOCATION: VIRTUAL

Join our team! DGA is hiring a Veterans' Liaison to coordinate activities between DGA, veteran participants, and veterans' services agencies and organizations. Posted DECEMBER 05 2018

Date Closed: Open until filled; salary: Negotiable/ based on experience; reports to: Executive Director

POSITION SUMMARY: We are seeking a motivated, organized, efficient, and communicative veteran liaison officer to coordinate activities between the DGA, Veteran participants, potential Veteran Candidates and applicable veterans' organizations. This position will act as the cohesive link between the DGA, Veterans and the outside agencies to increase awareness, provide comprehensive training, incorporate peer coaching, expand the DGA into new geographical areas, and increase the number of veterans participating in the training program. This position reports directly to the Executive Director and works closely with DGA Administrative Staff. This is a remote office position that requires access to high speed Internet. Travel (approximately 10%) with some overnight is required. Must have reliable transportation and good driving record with insurance. To be considered for this position, please submit a PDF version of your resume and cover letter to Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship at admin@ dga-national.org

Review of submissions will begin January 7, 2019 with an anticipated start date of March 1, 2019

For full job listing, go to https://www.dga-national.org/news/job-opportunity-dga-seeking-veterans-liaison

The Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship (DGA) is a nonprofit organization with a federally registered National Apprenticeship in managed grazing dairy production. The Apprenticeship program consists of 4000 hours over two years: 3700 hours of paid fulltime work-based training under an approved Master Dairy Grazier and 300 hours of related instruction. DGA recently started its own approved online school, the Managed Grazing Innovation Center, to provide related instruction. The organization has over 150 approved Master Dairy Graziers who deliver the work-based training on their dairy farms. DGA works with eight partner organizations to deliver the program in the eleven states where it operates. A local part-time Education Coordinator employed by the partner organization works directly with Master-Apprentice pairs to support the learning process and provide peer-learning opportunities.

FULL-TIME LIVESTOCK MANAGER

Sterling College seeks applications for a full-time Livestock Manager responsible for overseeing a diversified livestock operation, including support for our draft animals. The Livestock Manager plans and executes farm operations in support of student learning in sustainable agriculture and food systems, while producing food for the College's award winning farm-to-plate dining service. Successful applicants should have several seasons of livestock management experience, and a passion for education and collaborative management. For full employment and application details, please visit: https://sterlingcollege.edu/more/employment/

NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE COALITION DIRECTOR, Washington, DC

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) is seeking an energetic, passionate, experienced and collaborative Coalition Director to provide executive level leadership to NSAC, its staff, govern-

ing body, and membership. The Coalition Director must be deeply committed to serving the sustainable agriculture movement's policy and grassroots work and to becoming an integral part of our high-performing, passionate, and diverse team. The Coalition Director is a full-time, salaried position and is based in Washington, DC.

The Coalition Director works with NSAC's governing body, the Organizational Council (OC), membership, and staff to set and implement strategies to achieve the vision of its membership and to shepherd it into the future, and is responsible for the organization's consistent progress in meeting its mission-driven goals and fiscal objectives. The position requires at least a Bachelor's degree in Agriculture, Sustainability, Environmental Studies, Business Management, Public Policy, or related field, plus a minimum of 10 years of professional organizational or program management experience. Applicants must have successful experience in the nonprofit sector and working with foundation and government funders at the senior level. The position also requires a proven track record of successful strategic planning and delivering superior results implementing such plans. Preference will be given to applicants with background and experience in sustainable agriculture and food systems.

NSAC offers competitive non-profit salary and benefits. Salary will be dependent on qualifications and experience, within the range of \$95,000 to \$110,000. Excellent benefits include generous vacation and other time-off policy, health, dental, and long-term disability insurance, contributions after two years in a retirement plan, financial support for professional and personal development, and a pleasant, collaborative, professional working environment.

APPLICATION PROCESS: Applications will be accepted until a suitable candidate is identified. Early applications are encouraged, and applications will be considered as they are received. All persons interested in being considered for the position must submit a resume, a recent writing sample, and a cover letter highlighting their experience and skills relevant to the listed qualifications, 3-5 references (whom we will not contact until after a final interview), as well as explanations of why you left any other position in the last ten years. More information about NSAC can be accessed by visiting our website at www.sustainableagriculture.net and to see a full job description and application process, go to http://sustainableagriculture.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/NSAC-Coalition-Director-Position-Announcement-3.pdf.

CERTIFICATION DIRECTOR, NOFA-NY Certified Organic, LLC

NOFA-NY Certified Organic, LLC is a USDA-accredited organic certification agency, whose primary purpose is to provide high integrity organic certification to over 1,000 organic farmers and processors throughout New York State and surrounding areas. We have been the primary organic certification program in New York State since 1984.

POSITION DESCRIPTION: The Certification Director provides leadership and oversight to grow and continually improve the NOFA-NY organic certification program. They are responsible for managing and overseeing certification processes, resources and outcomes.

The Director maintains the integrity of the certification program and ensures compliance to the USDA National Organic Program Regulations while providing exceptional customer service. Director collaborates with the parent company, (NOFA-NY-INC), staff, inspectors, applicants, and Management Committee to design and execute program. The starting salary for this exempt positon of \$60-\$70K depending on experience along with annual pay increases. Benefits include healthcare, dental and 403(b) as well as generous paid holidays/vacation time. Be a part of a growing company working with a dedicated team that supports local organic food and farming. For more information and to apply, please visit https://www.nofany.org/about-us/opportunities

ASSISTANT MANAGER

Grey Barn and Farm 22 South Road, Chilmark, Ma 02535

The Grey Barn and Farm is looking to fill an assistant manager position on the farm starting immediately. Great opportunity to work with a dedicated crew on a diversified organic farm. Competitive compensation with housing and benefits. Livestock and machine skills a must. Details and link to contact us on the website at https://www.thegreybarnandfarm.com/work-with-us-1/ For more information, call 508.645.4854 or email us at: FARMER@THEGREYBARNAND-FARM.COM

REAL ESTATE

ORGANIC CREAMERY FOR SALE: Green Mountain Organic Creamery, Home of Kimball Brook Farm Organic Milk and CBD Products

Offering: Green Mountain Organic Creamery LLC, Vermont's largest certified, locally owned, independent organic bottled milk processing plant was established in 2012. Sales of our milk, non-dairy beverages, unique line of CBD products, and private label services generate revenues in excess of \$2 million annually.

Expansion Opportunity: Current production is 4 days per week, 1 shift per day. Production could readily quadruple without additional capital investment by simply expanding to 2 shifts per day up to 7 days per week. Sales are growing at 20% per year and have maintained this high level of growth since inception.

Distribution logistics and reach: GMOC products are found throughout Vermont, NY and the Northeast, as far as MD. We operate our own delivery trucks and are re-distributed throughout the rest of the Northeast via UNFI and Albert's Organics who pick up from the plant.

The offering includes: a newly renewed lease to our 15,000' (whatever size plant) in the Hinesburg industrial park, all inventory, equipment, and vehicles, a dedicated and trained staff, and the transfer of our Kimball Brook Farm Brand and current accounts. CONTACT: Cheryl DeVos CEO, Green Mountain Organic Creamery, 10516 VT RT 116, Hinesburg, VT 05461, 802-734-6346, Kbfvermont@gmail. com. Posted on November 29, 2018

From the MODPA Treasurer

Greetings from the Midwest,

Hopefully this finds everyone in good health and hopefully good spirits. As far as 2018 goes, for me, and I am sure many of you, 'good riddance' is what comes to mind. What a turbulent year it was. It seemed like there was no letup in the bad news. Yet here we are at the start of a new year. I do think that we potentially have a better year coming. At the very least we will likely be a little better prepared. We seemed to end 2018 like we started, with producers being served notice of the loss of their market. I don't need to remind you of many of the whys; this lack of enforcement and big money seem to be the name of the game in every moment of our lives.

We do need to make sure that we do our part to take care of ourselves and our neighbors and friends. There is no magic potion or formula for this, although I wish there was at times. We do have the right to ask for help from others and we should. We also have an obligation to offer help to others. I know from my own personal experience how crucial this can be when we are not expecting to need it. This last year has definitely taught me that. The outpouring of support from friends near and far still makes me smile and also brings tears to my eyes. I can only hope to return the favors down the road. What a wonderful family we have in the organic community. As tensions continue in our farm lives, take the time to talk to others and enjoy the comfort that you can find in others.

The year ahead is going to be a trying year for many. Some will be forced to make decisions that they did not plan on ever having to make at this point in their lives. Others will have the opportunity to not feel forced in their decisions. I was one who was forced out. That has been devastating to me in many ways. By the time you read this it will be 6 years since I have milked a cow that was mine, although I have milked a lot of cows for others in the last 6 years. It is not the same as milking your own. My love for cattle is still there. I am also certain that it will be the same for those who decide to exit the business in the future. I have witnessed an exodus of dairy farmers in my area this year. Most of them seem to be sad but relieved.

I was interviewed for an article that is included in this issue of the newsletter. I found it hard to talk about some of the time since my cows left. It's not easy to elaborate on having had 5 jobs over the last 5 plus years. I am grateful for my mechanic skills but they are not where my heart is. My heart is still in farming. My advice to those who may be looking at a change in your farmer status is to take the time to think about what your heart tells you. There is more to our lives than just paying the bills. The toll on families in difficult times is horrendous. I know that it is hard to make the time to step away. But remember life is short. Children grow up way too fast. My oldest granddaughter is already 9. Seems

like just yesterday Chloe was helping Mari feed calves milk from a bottle. My son was home for Christmas with Chloe and we had time to reminisce about those days. I also felt good listening to my son talk about day trips that we had taken when he was young. I am proud to say that he has continued that tradition.

There is life after farming. I am sure that most of us have heard that line more than we care to. It is up to us to choose what that life is. It may even be farming in a different situation. It may be moving to town. No two of us are the same, don't let society dictate or define you. Be yourself, dare to do what you have dreamed of doing with your life. I have been doing some of my dream stuff since the cows were sold. I have stayed busy advocating for the family farmer and I intend to continue doing that. This work has taken me to places that I never thought I would be able to go. It has also introduced me to many good friends. As I said, I will continue in this work, but through all of this I have had one dream that I have yearned for.

I have wanted the opportunity to get my own place again with my own cattle. If things continue to go as planned, I will achieve that dream by the time you are reading this. I didn't know if I would ever get this chance in life again; never say never. Life seems to

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.

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

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work in mysterious ways, ways that we do not have the ability to predict or see.

If you are making decisions about your future reach out to others. Ask what they have experienced, what would they have done the same? What would they do different? No two situations are the same but there is common ground that we all share. Feel free to call me if you want. I will gladly talk your ear off. One piece of advice I found out the hard way is don't be afraid to reach out to others. DO NOT go through it alone. You will not be reinventing the wheel, but with the help of others you can keep the wheel of life turning.

I strongly encourage all of you to get out to the many conferences that are going on in the area. The time spent with others is priceless. Who knows, you might even learn something. We do have strength by working with others. Please continue to support each other and organizations like MODPA and NODPA.

Be safe and remember to find time to stop and smell the clover, even if it is just a bale of hay.

Bruce Drinkman, MODPA Treasurer 3253 150th Avenue, Glenwood City, WI 54013 715-977-1314

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Classifed Ads

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SERVICES

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(beef, sheep, dairy, etc.), and is appropriate for all regions and farm sizes. This is not a school focused on production practices, but rather an intense business school focused on looking at your farm business and what could make it more profitable. This intense course runs from Sunday night to Saturday afternoon. Participants must stay on-site to avoid home distractions and to take advantage of individual consultations that happen outside of class hours. The cost is \$2,750 for the first person from a farm and \$2,000 for each additional person (multiples are encouraged since team members learning together are more likely to be successful). Register now (space is limited) https://ranchmanagement.com/ranching-for-profit-school-registration/. Contact Ranch Management Consultants, 953 Linden Ave, Fairfield, CA

94533, Phone: 707-429-2292 • Fax: 707-429-2100, Email: rmc@ranchmanagement.com

February 6, 2019 – February 9, 2019 28TH ANNUAL PASA CONFERENCE, Lancaster, PA

Each February, thousands of farmers, homesteaders, educators, and agriculture and food system professionals gather for four days of intensive learning on more than 120 sustainable food and farming topics at our annual sustainable agriculture conference, now in it's 28th year. Keynote speakers include Michael P. Hoffmann, executive director of Cornell Institute for Climate Smart Solutions, presents Climate Change & Our Global Food System: A Call to Action! Leah Lizarondo, chief executive officer and co-founder of 412 Food Rescue, gives a keynote address, Waste Not: The Moral Disconnect between Food Waste & Hunger. Michael Rozyne, founder of Red Tomato, presents An Unlikely Collaboration: Who Can We Trust? For more information, visit the event website: https://pasafarming.org/conference/ or call: 814-349-9856