

NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE: Organic Industry News

19th Annual NODPA Field Days	1
From the NODPA President	2
From the NODPA Desk	3
Gene Editing and Organic Certification	4
Feed & Pay Prices	10
Origin of Livestock Final Rule: Small Organic Dairy Farmers Say the Rules are Stacked Against Them. One Rule in Particular.	14



Organic Production

Featured Farm: Grunen Aue Farm, Canastota, NY	1
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Net Update

Recent ODairy Discussions	23
Subscribing To ODairy	23



Member Info

Calendar	30
Classifieds	33
Support NODPA Through Milk Check-Off NODPA News Subscription	34



Grunen Aue Farm

FEATURED FARM:

GRUNEN AUE FARM, CANASTOTA, NY

Nathan and Kristine Weaver's Family Farm

By Sonja Heyck-Merlin, NODPA Contributing Writer, updated by Adam Diamond

The Weaver's farm will be the Friday afternoon tour at the upcoming 19th Annual NODPA Field Days, so we wanted to feature an updated version of this article which first appeared as a Featured Farm in the March 2015 NODPA News.

Grunen Aue Farm is a seasonal all-grass, no-grain dairy in Canastota, New York that takes its name from Psalm 23, Verse 2: "He maketh me to lie down in green

continued on page 24

The 19th Annual NODPA Field Days: Register Today! Preparing for the Future of Organic Dairy: Strategies for Long-Term Sustainability September 26 & 27, 2019

Theodore's Restaurant, 3231 Seneca Turnpike, Canastota, NY

By Nora Owens, NODPA Field Days Coordinator

As we move into the planning homestretch for the 19th Annual NODPA Field Days, taking place on September 26th and 27th in Canastota, NY, we wanted to bring you the latest news and encourage

everyone to take advantage of the Early Bird Special by registering ahead of time; and you pay on-site if it is more convenient.

The July NODPA News spotlighted the Field Days speakers and the topics they will be

continued on page 17

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Message from NODPA President

Interesting things sometimes happen when your phone number appears in the NODPA News. Farmers looking to reach out for information, or perspective, or vent frustration occasionally call one or more of us on the list on this page. This month I found myself talking with more individuals than usual, and realized that I was saying the same thing to all of them: "You are not alone in this." It's true that every farm is different, and every farmer has a different story, but we are all struggling right now.

And I only tell you this because it is worth repeating to every farmer: you are not alone in this. Our problems may be similar, but our solutions will vary widely. We can get some great ideas

from meeting other farmers who have tried new ideas, cut costs, or launched new enterprises. I really encourage all of you who can get away from the farm for a day or two to attend NODPA's Annual Field Days, this month on September 26 and 27 in Canastota, NY. There are details in this newsletter, and you probably have a brochure sitting in that pile of mail on your desk. We greatly appreciate the farmers and speakers that have agreed to share their experiences and observations, and those that have graciously offered tours of their farms. We hope you can attend!

So come and listen to some good ideas, and maybe offer some of your own. And know that you are not alone in the struggle to keep organic dairy farms in the northeast healthy and vibrant.

*Liz Bawden, NODPA President
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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From the NODPA Desk:

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

It's that time of year again. The 19th annual NODPA Field Days are upon us. The Field Days are scheduled for the last week in September, as they have been for many years, and we hope that as many of you as possible will join us in New York. When the NODPA Field Days started there were few educational workshop and farm tour opportunities for organic dairy producers. These days, there are many excellent workshops and organic dairy farm tours by many non-profits across the northeast and Pennsylvania. Our Field Days have many good workshops and two excellent farm tours; one family will have to rush back from a large Amish wedding to give the tour; but at NODPA we hope we give something more. At many farmer meetings the actual discussion and participation does not happen until folks reach the parking lot and lean on their pickup or buggy. At the Field Days we try to give as much opportunity to gossip, exchange ideas and complain to each other within the meeting. The emotional release to be able to talk to our colleagues and peers in a comfortable setting is as important as any educational presentation. USDA Secretary Perdue recently made a joke about 'whining farmers.' This highlights his disengagement from the reality of 21st century small to mid-size farm family operations. Farm families battle to stay in business by every means possible against a backdrop of international trade, ineffective and inconsistent regulatory enforcement, false marketing and the ever present economies of scale that cut the cost of production while undermining the environmental health of the world. We hope to see you at Field Days and especially at the producer meeting on that Friday morning when we decide the future of NODPA.

We saw incremental change with the actions of the National Organic Program against the Texas Department of Agriculture when they settled violations of federal organic rules by agreeing to a compliance review and not to accept any new livestock clients until the NOP gives its approval. The NOP said the Aug. 15th settlement agreement is in response to non-compliances identified with their organic livestock program. Sustainable Food News reports that the terms of the settlement included:

- *Resolve outstanding noncompliances generated during NOP's August 2018 livestock-focused site visit*
- *Have livestock inspectors and reviewers complete an additional eight hours livestock training by the end of 2019 in addition to training already done*
- *Conduct at least one unannounced inspection of each of its livestock operations by the end of April 2020*
- *Confirm that inspectors have the knowledge and experience needed to inspect assigned operations*
- *Conduct a program review of its livestock scope, and provide NOP the report and corrective actions*

These are all very basic requirements for running an organic livestock certification program and yet nearly ten years after the publication of the pasture rule we still have certifiers that do not carry out the basics

of applying the regulation. None of the operations they certify have yet been decertified. Of course we should ask: why not? One of the operations they certify is Natural Prairie Dairy Farms LLC, one of the nation's largest organic dairy farms with a 14,000-cow operation in northern Texas. If you let your mind wander, perhaps dream a little, then there are approximately 280,000 organic dairy cows in the US. The Natural Prairie Dairy Farm has approximately 5% of that total. Making the believable assumption that with the little grazing they do they will also have a great total mixed ration giving a yield of about 18,000 lbs. of milk a year, approximately 1½ times more than most organic dairy cows and probably double most Grass Fed herds. This one herd could believably be producing about 8% of the organic milk in the US. Decertify that herd because they have never met the organic regulatory requirements and we are a big step forward in solving the milk surplus and increasing the integrity of organic milk. There is no need to change the regulations, just apply them consistently.

USDA Under Secretary Ibach appeared in front of Congress to give his opinions on the benefits of Genetic Engineering/Gene Editing in organic, and how big is better. He was taken to task by many of the politicians for his comments, especially when it comes to the publication of the Origin of Livestock Rule. He has never been a friend of organic, especially organic dairy, so his comments were not a surprise but guess who makes the recommendations for who serves on the Organic Standard Board? His desire for a more representative Board will translate into a Board that will recommend more materials that undermine the basics of organic production, and increasing the dollar volume of organic products without the subsequent benefit to the environment. Organic production does make a beneficial contribution to addressing climate change but we need to maintain the integrity of the regulations to ensure it continues. More practically, we need a program that has a high level of veracity, that is not seen as just another USDA rubber stamp for standards that aren't accountable, in order to maintain even the smallest price differential in the market place.

The USDA has said that the Origin of Livestock Rule will be published this fall. Hopefully, at a minimum, it will be the 2015 Proposed Rule, hopefully with some additions from comments made. When the Rule is published we will be ready to analyze and assess it. We will very definitely be looking at the updated economic study to ensure that the economic impact on organic dairies of all sizes of **not** having the regulation in place will be accurately portrayed. Many of you will remember that some of those that were against the Pasture Rule made a lot of noise about the harmful effects it would have on many dairies. That never materialized.

Secretary Perdue, responding to questions from the Bloomberg News about the inequality of application of the regulations and how large scale operations were ruining the integrity of the Organic seal said, "If you believe in socialism, you probably ought to export your operation somewhere." That bias has been very evident with this administration, so be prepared to defend the integrity of organic certification with the publication of the Origin of Livestock. See you in Canastota, NY at the end of September to help plot our future activities. ♦

Organic Production

Gene Editing and Organic Certification

In recent weeks, following the USDA's Under Secretary Greg Ibach's comments on gene editing in organics, a number of advocacy organizations have addressed the question of gene editing in Organics. In this article, we bring you perspectives from Beyond Pesticides and the Cornucopia Institute.

In the Organic Farmers Association's most recent e-newsletter, Mark Rokala, the Policy Director, asks the question, "Is it time to discuss gene editing methods within organic?" His question stems from comments made by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, Greg Ibach, before the U.S. House Agriculture Subcommittee on Biotechnology, Horticulture, and Research on July 17, 2019. Beyond Pesticides reported that in his remarks, the Under Secretary opened the door to consideration of allowing new gene-editing technologies to be permitted under the federal National Organic Program (NOP) and its standards. He said, "As the National Organic Standards Board set the rules originally, GMOs are not eligible to be in the organic program. However, we've seen new technology, including gene-editing, that accomplishes things in shorter periods of time than a natural breeding process can. I think there is the opportunity to open the discussion to consider whether it is appropriate for some of these new technologies that include gene-editing to be eligible to be used to enhance organic production and to have drought and disease-resistant varieties, as well as higher-yield varieties available."

Targeted genetic modification (TagMo) or targeted genome editing is emerging and being adopted quickly. These are very clearly genetic engineering techniques but are not regulated by the current government structure because they do not involve DNA from a "pest" under the USDA APHIS regulatory structure. Many of these techniques involve precise changes in existing DNA without using foreign DNA from a different species. These new technologies make genetic modification much more accessible and less expensive. The resulting plants may not show up as genetically engineered in the commonly used testing methods because they contain no foreign DNA, just native DNA that has been changed at the gene level by humans

Historic Perspective

In 1997, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) published a draft rule that would have allowed GE, irradiation, and sewage sludge (the "Big Three") in organic production, which was met by the second largest number of comments the agency had ever received—well before the days of internet advocacy—overwhelmingly opposing the inclusion of the "Big Three." The prohibition of gene editing falls under the "excluded methods" provision of the organic regulations. The law prohibits "a variety of methods used to genetically modify organisms or influence their growth and development by means that are not possible

under natural conditions or processes, and are not considered compatible with organic production." (7 CFR 205.2) These prohibited methods include cell fusion, micro- and macro-encapsulation and recombinant DNA technology (including gene deletion, gene doubling, introducing a foreign gene and changing the positions of genes when achieved by recombinant DNA technology). The secondary effects from the use of GMOs are starting to emerge clearly in parallel with the new technologies. Issues such as reduction in diversity on farms where GMOs are grown, the demise of beneficial species both above and below the soil, the decline in soil fertility and resilience from increased use of herbicides, the evolution of weeds resistant to those herbicides, the altered nutritional profiles of the GMO crop products, and the displacement of small farmers from their land are all violations of the principals of organic agriculture.

In April 2013 the NOSB Materials/GMO Subcommittee started to grapple with the definition of "excluded methods" in the USDA organic regulations. They recognized that this 1995 definition of "excluded methods" was in need of re-examination and updating due to rapid advances in recombinant DNA biotechnology that have resulted in gray areas for the organic standards regarding interpretation and enforcement. In 2011 and 2012 the NOSB had a number of issues to consider which the 1995 definition was inadequate to clarify including genetically engineered vaccines for livestock, the use of cell fusion within plant families to create male sterility in brassica hybrids, whether or not GMOs could be used in biodegradable bioplastic mulches, and the question of whether mutated algae might therefore be genetically engineered. The question of clear definition was further required with the rise of gene editing with no insertion of foreign DNA, synthetic biology, and the genetically engineered insects that are starting to appear made a revision even more important. In November of 2016, the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) unanimously adopted a recommendation that clarifies that new gene editing techniques are not permitted in organic <https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/MSExcludedMethods.pdf>.

The recommendation builds on the previous definition of 'excluded methods' in organic to encompass new genetic technologies in this rapidly expanding field. The recommendation also recognizes that the NOSB and USDA National Organic Program will need to continually review new genetic technologies as they emerge to determine if they are prohibited.

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— Jonathan Miedema



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Organic Production

Gene Editing and Organic Certification

continued from page 4

Genetic Engineering vs. Gene Editing: What's the difference?

(Source: *Beyond Pesticides* website. www.beyondpesticides.org)

Genetic Engineering (GE) techniques typically have employed gene transfer — moving selected genes for some desirable trait from one plant (or bacteria) species into another. A well-known example is Monsanto's iconic Roundup Resistant soybean: its genetically engineered resistance to the impacts of glyphosate allowed use of the company's glyphosate-based herbicide Roundup to kill weeds without killing the soybean plant. With wide adoption of the seed, Roundup's use spiked, as did the inevitable issue of glyphosate resistance in the soybean plant itself.

Gene editing is described as different from gene transfer GE technology. It is described by a *National Geographic* article as the removal of certain bits of DNA (genes) from a plant cell's genome

“in order to control traits. The cell's genetic structure then repairs itself automatically, minus the targeted gene.” The changes to the genome made by gene editing are permanent — they are passed on to the seeds the edited plant will generate.

Beyond Pesticides' Analysis

There are many problems with Genetic Engineering (GE), and consumers trust the organic label to provide food free of GE. USDA has long promoted GE, but has avoided pushing it in organic since the run-in with organic producers and consumers over the Big Three. Former Secretary of Agriculture Vilsack, for example, promoted a policy of “coexistence” between GE and organic producers. In this regard, organic producers are joined by others who choose not to grow GE crops because they limit export sales.

Unfortunately, even USDA's “coexistence” policy threatens the genetic and chemical integrity of organic food. In practice, “coexistence” means that those who develop and use GE technology are not held accountable for the damage they cause. The damage includes that arising from both genetic drift—which can make organic crops unsaleable in the organic marketplace—and chemical drift arising from the increased use of chemicals in GE-chemical intensive cropping systems. Any standard of acceptable use of technology would require control over the consequences. If the technology cannot be controlled, it should not be used.

Organic systems are modeled on natural ecosystems. GE organisms belong in neither: GE is based on an out-of-date theory of “one gene—one effect” and ignores pleiotropy. Thus, a gene that makes a plant tolerant of glyphosate is assumed not to have other effects that might be important ecologically or nutritionally. Even the effect of herbicide tolerance itself may result in the presence of toxic metabolites of the herbicide in food. Traditional breeding, like evolution itself, depends on forces acting on the whole organism. Exposure over time to different environments exposes unexpected traits. GE plants are created by manipulation of DNA that may create unanticipated results—results that may not be apparent until, for example, the plant is grown under unforeseen conditions.

Risks associated with GE crops cannot be predicted. While the GE/chemical industry has created many claims to virtue for GE crops, the net effect of GE-based agriculture has been an expansion in the use of pesticides and subsequent resistance to pesticides—in other words, the pesticide treadmill.



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Organic Production

The Cornucopia Institute's Perspective

GMO-Friendly USDA Ogling Organic: Under Secretary's Testimony

Opens Discussion to "Enhance Organic Production" By Melody Morrell, Operations Director, Cornucopia Institute and Marie Burcham, Domestic Policy Director, Cornucopia Institute

USDA Under Secretary Greg Ibach recently made comments before the House Agriculture Subcommittee suggesting it is time to discuss the possible allowance of gene editing methods within organic production. Ibach's words are in line with the Trump administration's stance. Organic standards currently prohibit the use of genetic engineering (GE) and genetically modified organisms (GMOs), but USDA Secretary Perdue has been very friendly toward biotechnology companies and products. President Trump's June executive order to streamline approval for new GMO crops was immediately followed by a USDA proposed rule that would allow biotechnology companies to regulate their own GE creations. Ibach's testimony is not surprising in this environment.

"The allowance of any GE techniques under the organic label raises legitimate 'slippery slope' concerns. The USDA would be hard-pressed to find the resources to track allowed GE technologies and products in the organic sector, assuming they could summon the will," observes Cornucopia's director of domestic policy Marie Burcham, JD. We have already seen the playbooks of biotechnology companies. Because GMOs are an expensive investment, both in terms of time and money, only the largest biotechnology companies are positioned to research, develop, and test new crops. They benefit enormously as regulatory hurdles are removed.

The majority of genetically engineered crops currently on the market have been modified to withstand synthetic

pesticides, repel pest species, and extend crop shelf-lives to benefit processors and retailers. Biotechnology companies hold patents on their seeds, which ensure they retain all rights to the engineered traits. As a result, four seed companies now own more than 60% of the global proprietary seed sales. This runs

continued on page 8



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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Gene Editing and Organic Certification

continued from page 7

counter to the spirit of organic agriculture. As noted by our allies at the Organic Seed Growers and Trade Association (OSGATA), organic seed promotes biodiversity, democratizes collective resources, celebrates seed quality over quantity, and preserves agrarian tradition.

GMO seeds are not needed or wanted in organic agriculture. In a 2017 survey conducted by Natural Grocers, 70% of respondents said they buy organic to avoid GMOs. Although advocates of GMOs claim that these crops will help farmers respond more quickly to environmental and pest threats, it takes years of testing to ensure the crops will perform as expected. In addition, the FDA does not perform testing to ensure the safety of these plants to the environment and humanity; instead they rely almost entirely on manufacturer claims of safety and only monitor the food safety and nutrition of gene-edited foods if the manufacturer requests consultation.

The alternative to this technology is selective breeding—an important and deeply underfunded tool for organic farmers. Our ancestors used this technique to domesticate wild plants and to produce crops, including tomatoes, broccoli, and corn. Selective breeding continues to hold promise for improving drought, disease, and pest resistance in future crops. Farmers can further improve yields in challenging conditions by promoting plant and wildlife biodiversity and soil health. These practices also result in higher nutrient levels in food, better pest management, and overall superior environmental sustainability.

Since one of the hallmarks of organic agriculture is the prohibition of genetic engineering, allowing for the certification of GMO crops would further erode consumer confidence in the organic label. Indeed, the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) voted to exclude all genetic modification and manipulation from organic production in 2016 and again in 2017.

The track record of regulators in safeguarding the organic standards is not reassuring. For years, Cornucopia has reported on the USDA's consistent refusal to enforce organic laws.

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION



Industrial-scale, confinement livestock facilities, providing no legitimate grazing or even access to the outdoors, are currently being certified organic. And in 2017, the NOSB voted to allow hydroponic production methods in certified organic agriculture, despite the mandate to steward soil and the outcry from hundreds of venerated organic farmers and advocates. When interviewed on this subject, USDA Secretary Perdue demonstrated little understanding concerning the foundation of organic agriculture. Additionally, when the NOSB voted to remove several materials from the list of substances allowed for use in organic production, including carrageenan and non-essential conventional ingredients, Perdue's USDA overrode its own organic advisory board.

Looking at this spotty history, there is little reason to believe the current USDA will protect the integrity of the organic label. Any allowance of GMOs in organic agriculture would also further embolden industrial organic companies and their lobbyists. The pressures on ethical, family-scale farmers would increase, further hurting their bottom lines.

While the USDA ponders the use of gene editing to help farmers, funding for organic plant breeding continues to lag far behind that of conventional plant breeding. The benefits that Ibach and others claim we would get from new gene editing technologies can be achieved through selective breeding. These authentic breeding methods should be funded fully and used to their best advantage to develop cultivars that are resistant to drought, pests, and other organic agricultural concerns. ♦

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Pay And Feed Prices September/October 2019

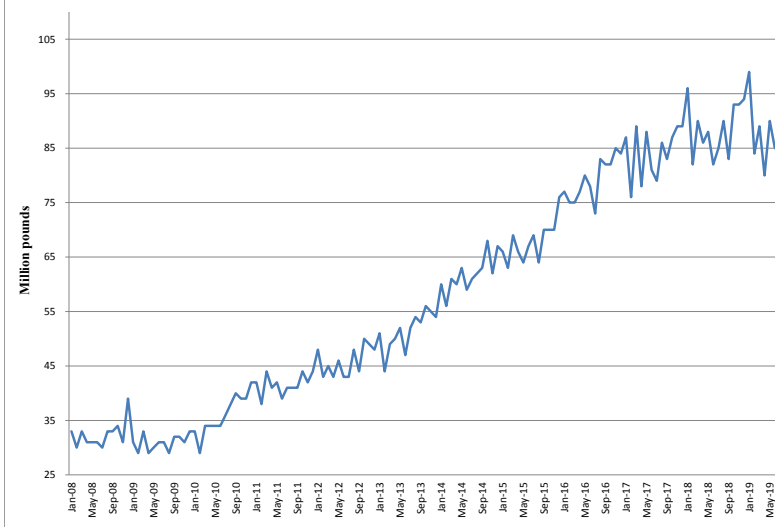
By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

The good news on the data from the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is that they made a mistake in April and while the trend in total sales is still downward, whole milk is maintaining its steady increase into June 2019. Conventional milk price in Class 3 is predicted to increase and then drop dramatically while Class 4 is predicted to increase at a steady rate which is good news for sales of surplus organic. There are no predictions that organic pay price will increase and no good data that shows the utilization of organic milk from which producers can gauge their future. There are plenty of projections by buyers and marketers of organic milk that they see a strong future in nut, plant and candy based drinks that have hijacked the word milk and are undermining the market for organic milk.

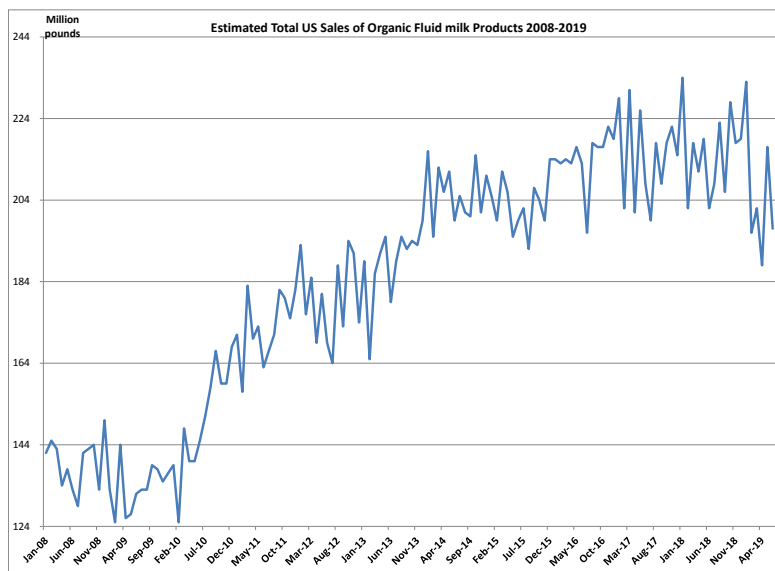
USDA AMS revised its estimated sales of total organic fluid milk products for April 2019, and while sales were still down, the drop was not as drastic as the original figure portrayed. Total sales of organic milk products for April 2019, 188 million pounds, declined 11 percent from April 2018 and dwindled to 6.1 percent compared with the same January-April period last year. Total organic whole milk sales for April 2019, 80 million pounds, was down 8 percent compared with April last year, and 0.3 percent lower, compared to year-to-date 2018. Fat-Reduced milk continued its downward trend and decreased from a year earlier by 13 per cent and year-to-date by 10 percent.

May 2019 total organic milk products' sales were 217 million pounds, down 0.7 percent from May 2018 and down 5.0 percent compared to January-May 2018. Total organic whole milk products' sales for May 2019, 90 million pounds, were up 2.4 percent compared with May last year and up 0.2 percent compared with the year-to-date in 2018. May's Low Fat milk (1%) sales declined 19.6 percent from the previous year. The trend continued into June 2019. June 2019 total organic milk products sales were 197

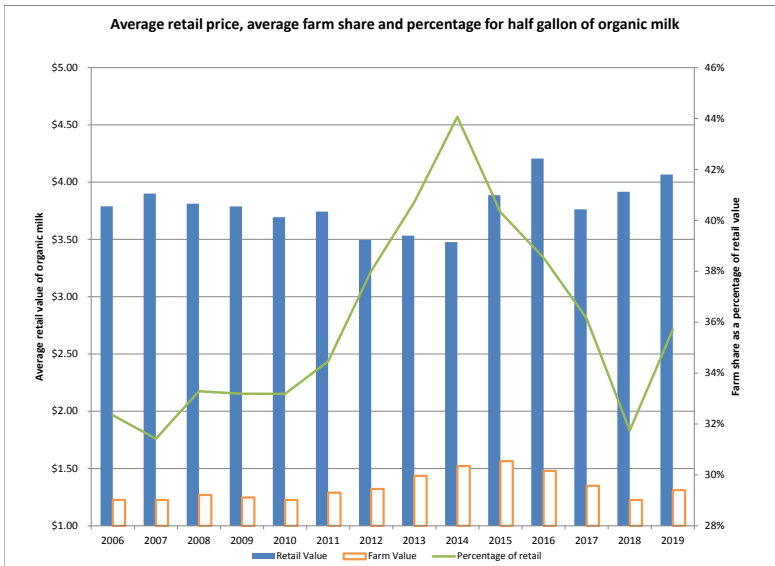
Organic Whole Milk Retail Sales 2008-2019



Estimated Total US Sales of Organic Fluid milk Products 2008-2019



Average retail price, average farm share and percentage for half gallon of organic milk

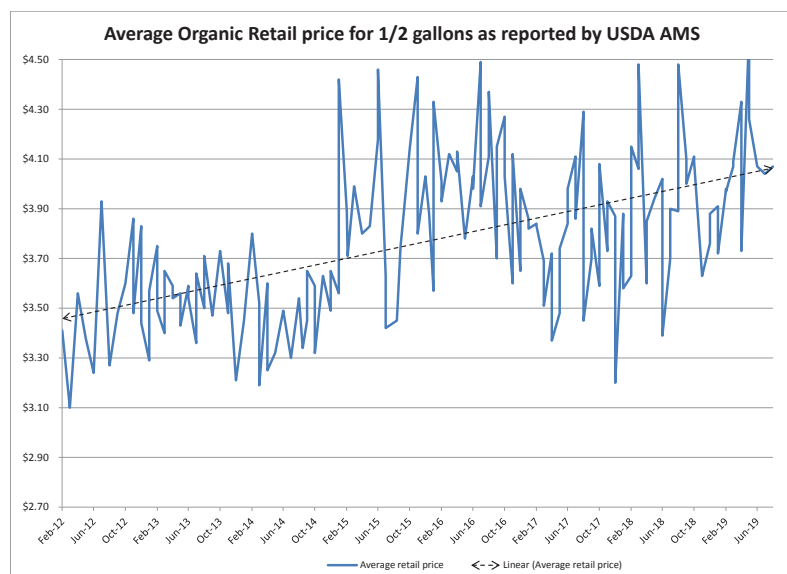
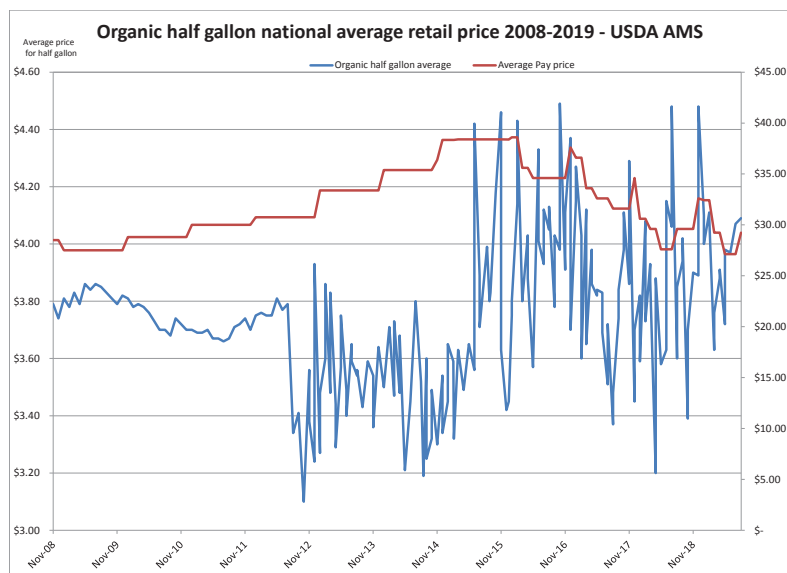
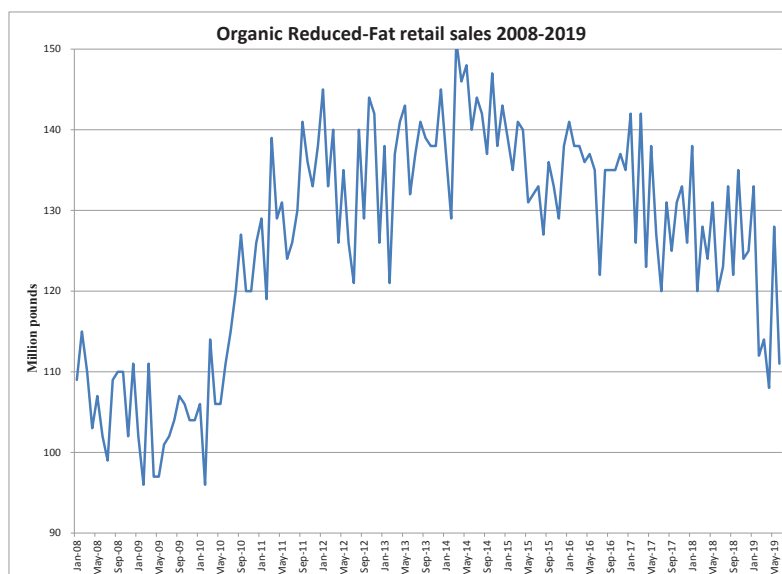


million pounds, down 2.5 percent from June 2018 and down 4.6 percent compared to January-June 2018. Total organic whole milk products sales for June 2019, 85 million pounds, were up 4.5 percent compared with June last year and up 0.9 percent compared with the year-to-date in 2018. June Fat-Reduced milk sales were 111 million pounds, down 7.2% from 2018 and down 8.3 per cent year to date. June Low Fat milk (1%) sales declined 21.9 percent from the previous year and 11.2 per cent year to date.

After the changes in management at CROPP Cooperative and a \$10.8 million loss, the company is launching some new products which will compete with mainstream conventional dairy based foods. Its new CEO is quoted in the Sustainable Food News as saying: "At Organic Valley, we're always creating innovative ways to give consumers high-quality, great-tasting organic options that meet their needs for healthy food from companies that align with their values," said Bob Kirchoff, CEO of Organic Valley. "Not only does Organic Valley Ultra provide consumers with an organic, ultra-filtered product they can feel good about buying and consuming, it ensures we can support our cooperative's mission to save small family farms by marketing their organic products. It also further affirms our commitment to ensuring that all of our animals live happy, stress-free lives."

CROPP's new Organic Valley Ultra contains 50 percent more organic protein and 50 percent less sugar than regular milk due to the filtering process, which reduces the naturally occurring sugar-lactose in the milk. Plus, the addition of a lactase enzyme makes the milk lactose-free. The ultra-filtered milk category, until recently, has been dominated by Coca-Cola's Fairlife brand, which is sourced from conventional, non-organic farms. The milk is currently available for \$5.99 only at Whole Foods Market stores nationwide, but is rolling out to other retailers in October.

CROPP has also launched its reformulated, certified-organic, high-protein milk shake under the FUEL brand. The reformulated FUEL contains 20 grams of organic protein. During the milk's ultra-filtering process, the naturally occurring sugar-lactose in the milk is lowered and a lactase enzyme is added,



continued on page 12

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Pay And Feed Prices

continued from page 11

making the beverage lactose-free and containing half the sugar of the original formula. FUEL comes in three flavors: chocolate, vanilla and new to the product line, coffee, which Laurie Drake, senior brand manager at Organic Valley says is the “first-ever organic coffee milk protein shake.” The coffee variety has the same amount of caffeine as an eight-ounce cup of coffee.

USDA is now making payments under the new Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) program, which replaced the Margin Protection Program for Dairy (MPP-Dairy). As of July 16th, more than \$110 million has been paid to enrolled dairy operations. Dairy producers can enroll through September 20, 2019. The program provides no-cost catastrophic coverage (other than an administrative fee), and various levels of buy-up coverage. Farmers can choose buy-up coverage levels ranging from \$4.00 to \$9.50 per cwt, in \$0.50 increments, and can cover 5 to 95 percent of the dairy

operation’s production history. All dairy operations in the United States are eligible for the DMC program. There are no restrictions from participating in DMC in conjunction with any Risk Management Agency insurance products. The program provides coverage retroactive to January 1, 2019, with applicable payments following soon after enrollment. The margin is not calculated on your individual production but on a national set of criteria and pricing.

We all greeted the passing of the Pasture Rule in 2010 and the educational work that was done by the NOP over the following few years with hope for the future. After all, the regulation was not a surprise and had been intensively worked on and lobbied for by all organic groups for over 6 years. The comments made by Greg Ibach, Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs to the House Committee on Agriculture Subcommittee on Biotechnology, Horticulture, and Research in his opening statement make it seem like the regulation was recent and certifiers still needed education on it. His comments included the following on dealing with

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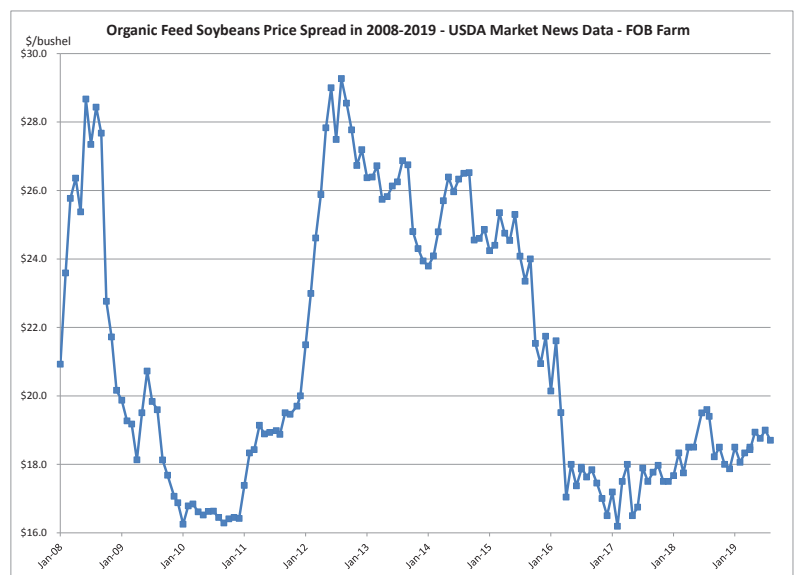
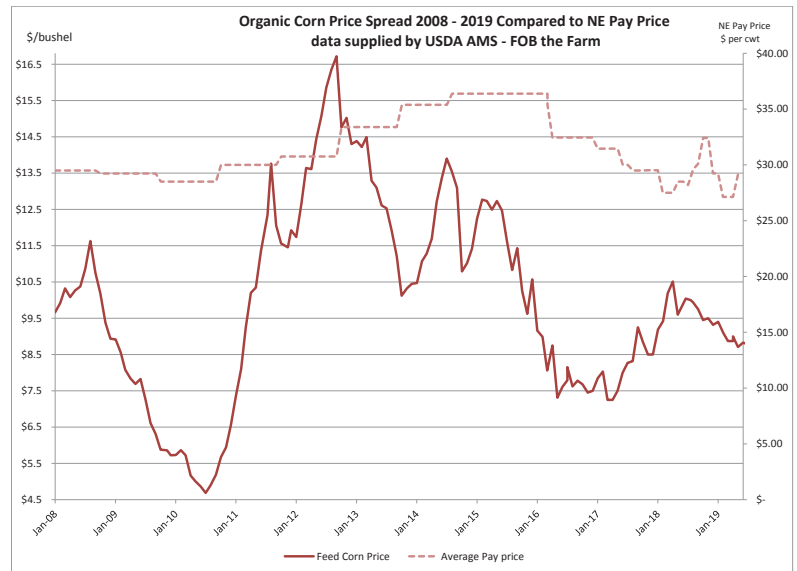
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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

fraud on organic dairies: “In the U.S. organic dairy sector, in 2018, USDA initiated a Dairy Compliance Project to better assess industry compliance with the USDA organic regulations, particularly with respect to the pasture standard. This initiative began with face-to-face training on pasture compliance for certifiers in January of 2018. This was followed by unannounced, on-the-ground visits by Federal auditors to assess both certifier and operation compliance. The visits were conducted at dairies across the United States. The visits confirmed that all the dairies visited were grazing their animals on pasture. Several correctable issues were identified, requiring action from operations. This work also resulted in targeted audits of certifiers based on their oversight of specific livestock operations. We will also be publishing training materials this summer to ensure that certifiers and operations have the same information needed to ensure compliance. Based on the 2018 results, we are expanding the Dairy Compliance Project into 2019.” This very weak and ineffectual response that they did find non-compliances (otherwise why would they need to publish more information) and they will continue their auditing (they know the problem is ongoing) is clear government speak that there are problems with the competency of certifiers and their ability to enforce regulation. How many organic dairy farm families has suffered because organic CAFO’s are more experienced in regulations than their certifiers? ♦



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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Origin of Livestock Final Rule: Small Organic Dairy Farmers Say the Rules are Stacked Against Them. One Rule in Particular.

The Origin of Livestock rule is being applied in different ways by different certifiers, which producers and advocates say gives an unfair advantage to large dairies

By Lisa Held. This article first appeared in the online magazine, Civil Eats on August 13, 2019. NODPA would like to thank Civil Eats for granting permission to reprint it.

<https://civileats.com/2019/08/13/small-organic-dairy-farmers-say-the-rules-are-stacked-against-them-one-rule-in-particular/>

Organic dairy farmers are often isolated and don't get to connect to each other, said Liz Pickard, a farmer at Twin Oaks Dairy in Truxton, New York. But right now, when they do, the National Organic Program's (NOP) "Origin of Livestock" rule is a hot topic. "Everyone's talking about it. It's a huge deal," she said on a recent phone call from her farm, as she cursed a stalled tractor. "This is probably one of the biggest things that's putting a drag on the milk market right now."

Just like crops cannot be certified organic until the soil they're grown in has been under organic management for three years, the Origin of Livestock provision was included in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) organic regulations to specify how long an animal must be under organic management before its milk can be called organic. But many farmers say the rule is being interpreted differently by different certifiers, putting small, family-owned dairies at a disadvantage.

While the provision requires livestock to be raised organically since before birth, it offers a one-time exception for farmers who want to convert a conventional herd. The controversy is over that exception—farmers say some certifiers allow large, industrial organic dairies to repeatedly add cheaper-to-feed, conventionally raised calves to their herds and then convert them to organic over a shorter time period. Able to grow their herds quickly and inexpensively, small farmers say the dairies that operate this way flood the market with cheap milk, undercutting dairies that are held to a different standard.

A diverse group of stakeholders in organic food and agriculture agree that the rule should be updated for clarification, and they're pushing for the USDA to finalize an updated rule proposed in 2015 that would fix the discrepancy. In April, the Organic Farmers Association (OFA) sent Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue a letter on the issue, and more than 60 groups



signed on, including organic certifiers from across the country, industry groups, farmer associations, and environmental organizations (some of which are rarely aligned). Perdue responded with a letter that did not commit the USDA to any action, stating that the agency, "continue[s] to review stakeholder feedback on this topic."

On July 17, at a House Committee on Agriculture hearing on enforcement of organic standards, Representative Chellie Pingree (D-Maine) grilled Agriculture Undersecretary Greg Ibach on the topic. "I discussed this with Secretary Perdue ... earlier this year, and he said to me, 'Well there are some opinions on either side,'" Pingree said. "No, there are not a lot of opinions on either side. This is a real consensus item."

And while groups such as the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Association (NODPA) have been working on the issue since as far back as 2006, it's coming to a head now because, while large organic dairy operations in the South and West have grown, many small and mid-sized organic dairy farms are struggling to survive.

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

More than half of the roughly 125,000 (conventional and organic) dairy farms that operated in the U.S. in 1997 have disappeared, with more than 15,000 lost between 2007 and 2017 (and many more in the two years since those numbers were reported in the latest Agricultural Census). For a long time, organic dairies were shielded from that shrinking market, as demand for organic milk rose and companies paid a premium to farmers. But that has changed in the last several years.

NODPA executive director, Ed Maltby, a dairy farmer for 40 years, said New York's farmers are now being paid five to six dollars below the cost of production for organic milk. He adds that some farmers who belong to NODPA (a membership-based nonprofit) are retiring or switching back to conventional milk, since it costs less to produce. He points to the Origin of Livestock misinterpretation as a core problem.

"That unfair playing field has an impact, and it's on quite a few different levels," he said. "One of the prime reasons that we're pushing so hard is partly the economic sustainability for our members and all organic dairies. It's also to maintain the integrity of the organic label."

How Dairies Raise Organic Cows

"We never bring in new cows," Liz Pickard said, and that's true of the majority of small organic dairies, unless they're going through a significant expansion.

In fact, since dairy cows give birth once a year in order to continue producing milk, most dairies have extra calves they sell annually. If they're in need of new milking cows to replace those that are aging out, they raise the calves according to organic standards from birth, feeding them exclusively organic milk and organic grain. After two years, those cows reach breeding age and can start producing organic milk.

When the animals are raised in that way, their milk is eligible for organic certification under the Origin of Livestock rule. And the NOP allows for one exception, which is where the controversy begins. Essentially, the rule was written with an exception, to allow farmers with existing conventional dairy herds to transition an "entire, distinct" herd to organic certification over a period of one year.

continued on page 28



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and Producer Meeting and Dinner**



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The 19th Annual NODPA Field Days

Preparing for the Future of Organic Dairy: Strategies for Long-Term Sustainability

continued from page 1

discussing, and in this issue, we dive deeper into the details of the very topical Thursday evening presentation and panel, entitled 'Adapting to the New Realities of Organic Dairy: Where do we go from here?' The panel features organic dairy farmers that represent a wide variety of farming philosophies, practices, ages, and cultural perspectives and geographic locations, all that have an abiding commitment to the integrity of the organic seal.

The organic dairy market has been changing over the past two decades culminating in an increase in pay-price in 2015 followed by a collapse in 2017 and 2018 and serious concerns over a future recovery. The substantial double digit growth in organic dairy, matched by pay price increases from 2002 to 2008, was not sustainable but did give many the opportunity to operate profitably. As the supply side righted itself and HP Hood disappeared as a buyer, a surplus developed and there was the first introduction of quotas and restrictions on supply but without a dramatic drop in pay price. It took a few years for supply to catch up with demand and for buyers to recognize the reality of the increased costs of production, and once again we saw pay price rise to a profitable level. Grass-Fed milk bounced into the market and became the new silver bullet for many low cost producers who had developed fertile pastures and genetics more suited to grazing. Enthusiasm and passion are admirable qualities but do not do much to sustain and grow a market. Unfortunately, other new drinks came into play under the guise of a milk label and the Grass-Fed supply side was hit with over production and the reality of needing enforceable standards.

With pay price high in 2015 there was a rapid expansion of supply and competition among buyers. Historically, the process of transitioning to organic slows any rapid expansion of supply but the uneven interpretation of regulations favored the large scale producers funded by outside capital who flooded the market with low cost organic milk, undermining any controls that established buyers were able to impose. As demand for organic milk slowed, pay price crashed by as much as 35% and has not rebounded. In the Northeast, a conservative break-even figure for organic milk production is a pay price of \$35/cwt. The average for 2019 will be \$31/cwt. Larger, vertically integrated dairies are expanding, capitalizing on their ability to produce low cost milk. The future for small to mid-size organic dairies in the whole country is bleak. Those established operations that have a low debt load and fertile pastures will be able to continue to compete. Other family operations have diversified, have full time off-farm employment or stopped milking altogether and concentrate on other crops.

Field Days were started for producers to share their experiences both positive and negative. In these dramatically changing times, the diverse panel that we are featuring all brings positive thoughts to operating in the current milk market. After a short presentation by each panelist we will open the floor for questions and interactive discussion. We learn best from each other especially when times are tough.

Annie & Ryan Murray, Vaughn Sherman, Forrest Stricker, Anne Phillips, and Roman Stoltzfoos will all be panelists, and here is a sneak preview, including a little background on their farming history and practices, and some of their insights on adapting to the difficult circumstances facing organic dairy now.

continued on page 18

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The 19th Annual NODPA Field Days

continued from page 17

Panel Spotlight

Annie and Ryan Murray Murraydale Farms, Truxton, NY

Annie and Ryan Murray milk 82 cows in Truxton, NY, in Cortland County and sell their milk to Upstate Niagara. Currently they are seasonal, grazing intensively and keeping grain feeding to a minimum to lower costs. Ryan first started farming at 19, and started shipping organic milk at 21; he is a 5th generation dairy farmer, whose parents transitioned to organic in 2007, a few years before Ryan started his own organic dairy farm. They are renting land from Ryan's parents, and plan on doing that for the foreseeable future as his parents plan on farming for a while. Annie is not from a farm family, but Annie started working on a dairy farm independently, and met Ryan at the 2015 NODPA Field Days conference where she was sold on the value of organic production, having been previously skeptical.



Regarding efforts to respond to current conditions in organic dairy, Annie said “--We’re trying tobe adaptive, don’t be set in one way. With breeding, we’re looking to A2 genetics, and [want to] find more of a niche than just organic. We’re always looking to lower our cost of production.” To secure high quality baleage Annie emphasized that it’s critical to “make good relationship with folks who grow baleage, if you’re not in a position to make it all yourself.”

Ryan added “Mainly we’re preparing to make the jump into grass-fed when a good opportunity comes up, upping our grazing game, breeding for grass-fed production....We have a lot

of room to bring down our cost of production, through better management on our part, better feed, putting cows in shade on warm days, more fly management....There’s a lot we can do on our end to deal with declining milk prices....There’s a lot we can do to increase carrying capacity of our land by investing in chicken manure and lime.”

Roman Stoltzfoos Spring Wood Dairy, Kinzers, PA

Roman Stoltzfoos has been farming organically in Lancaster, PA since 1987; he has been grass-fed since 2012. Along with his herd of 200 milking cows, he also raises organic turkeys and has 400 layers that follow the cows in the field with chicken tractors. He works with his son Dwight on the farm, and is currently working on a succession plan for Dwight to take over the farm; he would be the 3rd Stoltzfoos generation on this farm. Roman emphasized that diversification is key to his overall survival strategy; in addition to poultry, he also rents space on the farm to a gelato maker, and sells organic beef, raw milk, and cheese off the farm. Regarding the organic beef market Roman commented that “people are waking up to the health of beef. I want to tap that more. I use dairy cows for beef. Dairy cows taste better as they get older.” And he said he’s “constantly looking for ways to cut costs, and form partnerships with people with land and equipment, especially equipment.” Those who own the equipment earn some extra income, and farmers like Roman get the use of the equipment without having to sink large amounts of capital into it.



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Panel Spotlight

Forrest Stricker Spring Creek Farms, Wernersville, PA

Forrest Stricker is a 4th generation dairy farmer in Wernersville, PA who raises 135 milk cows on 500 acres of pasture and hay land at Spring Creek Farms. His farm has been certified organic since 1999, and exclusively grass-fed since 2011. Forrest has gradually ceded management responsibility for the farm to his son Gregory, 36. The farm also has 2 full-time and 5 part-time employees, with much of the labor connected to direct marketing activities. In order to diversify farm income beyond wholesale milk sales, the farm produces chicken, beef, cheese, eggs, butter, and farm fresh bottled milk for sale on the farm and at a farmers market in King of Prussia, PA. In March of this year, he started 1x daily milking to compensate for the loss of labor for the 2nd milking, to help the cows build up body condition after a year of poor forage, and to improve quality of life. Forest and his family can now spend more time making better quality forages and hay from the time freed up from 2x/day milking. Forrest sells his milk to Natural By Nature, and also raises 70 acres of crops that he sells to other organic farmers.



Forrest and his wife Barbara, who works full-time at a hospital, formed an LLC with Gregory and his wife Stacy to address liability concerns due to the high amount of foot traffic from retail customers coming on the farm. Anticipating generational transition, Forrest and Barbara have sold Greg and his wife half the cows and half the machinery; Greg and Stacy will buy the other half in the coming years; Forrest also explained

there is gifting going on every year from the older to the younger generation.

To increase soil organic matter, forage quality, and by extension milk production, Forest and his son are doing taller grazing, i.e. they let cows eat the top third to top half of the pasture and trample the rest into the ground. Partial grazing leads to deeper roots and provides more organic matter for bacteria and fungi to feed on, building up soil matter, and keeping the soil from drying out. Since shifting their grazing practice in this manner, they have "seen a great reduction in purchased inputs such as compost, lime, chicken manure. By feeding the soil you improve pasture quality. The plant grows, collects sunlight, creates sugar, and feeds soil life, which brings back just what the soil needs. When we work with natural system it's very economical and profitable."

Anne and Jim Phillips Triple 3 Livestock, Marathon, NY

Anne Phillips and her husband Jim milk 135 crossbred cows with New Zealand genetics on their 315 acre farm in Marathon, NY. They have been seasonal for more than 20 years; have been organic since spring of 2007; and went to 100% grass-fed in 2014. The Phillips ship their milk to Organic Valley, where Anne works full-time as the New York East Regional Pool Manager. Anne and Jim are partially diversified now, raising 75 Dorset



continued on page 20

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The 19th Annual NODPA Field Days

continued from page 19

Panel Spotlight

sheep primarily for meat. Anne explained that while she would like to diversify more—get back into producing beef and pork for direct market channels, even open a farm-store, she is too busy right now with her full-time day job with Organic Valley to do this.

The Phillips have no hired labor, with Jim on the farm full-time, Anne part-time, their 18 year old son and 23 year old daughter part-time, and their 21 year daughter quarter-time. Their middle daughter has expressed a strong interest in joining the business, and Anne hopes all three kids will have their own niche on the farm in the future; they are thinking about and researching what it would take to transition the farm, but nothing firm has been put in place.

Regarding the challenging conditions in organic dairy, Anne said “we really just try to control our expenses as best we can....being seasonal, we don’t need higher quality forages in winter time when the milk cows are dried off....When we moved to our current facility we built a quick, streamlined milking facility, wanted that to be as efficient as possible....Have permanent pastures. We don’t want lots of costly inputs.” Going forward, Anne emphasized how diversification could help the farm “be resilient to a changing pay price, [including] if kids come on board, creating other enterprises for more income and leveraging what we have here [on the farm]. Ideally we would both be on the farm full-time.” She went on to say that minimal use of equipment also helps keep cost down and maintains resiliency to a changing pay price. “We try not to use our tractor a whole lot. We don’t have a lot of equipment to upkeep and maintain. We use other people’s equipment for custom hire—to turn compost, help with hay, etc. We don’t want to be on that merry-go-round of equipment that sits unused or buildings that you have upkeep on.”

Vaughn Sherman Jerry Dell Farm, Dryden, NY

Vaughn Sherman’s dad started farming in the hills of Dryden, NY in 1946. Vaughn explains how in a lot of ways things have come full circle. “I grew up in the 50s and 60s, of course we grazed in those days. We were pretty much organic in those days, [then] we got into this conventional mode—BST, 3x milking, total confinement, hated every minute.... I’m an outside person, think animals should be outside unless it’s really hot. We got into that conventional mindset, had a bad year in the late 90s, negative profitability. I said, this is nuts, I don’t even like what I’m doing. Got rid of BST, went from 3x to 2x a day milkings; started paying our bills. Herd health—used to have vet here every day. Went from 100 to 50 lbs/day per cow....We decided to go organic [in 2000].”



Vaughn is currently with Byrne Dairy after first shipping to Organic Valley and then Upstate Niagara. Vaughn and his wife Sue have four sons, all of whom have become involved in farming in some capacity. Over the course of the last two decades the Sherman’s have significantly expanded their operations as neighbors have sold their farms and Byrne has wanted more milk. Currently the Sherman’s milk 1,000 cows across four milking facilities, employing a total of 26 people. Two of the farms are in the sons’ names, and they also own stock in the home farm.

This expansion took place when milk prices were higher; the high debt load incurred to purchase neighboring farms, combined with lower milk prices, means the Sherman’s are losing money now. Vaughn commented on this turn of events, saying “the price went down 35%. Nobody else dropped prices 35%. Not easy to survive. It’s an interesting time; it’s the worst year ever, organically, for sure. Otherwise made money every year. Different than what we’re used to in the organic world.”

Vaughn is considering retiring, but wants to wait until conditions improve in the industry. One near term survival strategy the Sherman’s are pursuing is refinancing what were fairly short mortgages on the new farms. Another possibility is selling one of the farms, but the low prices for organic cattle make this unappealing. Vaughn compared the current situation to his childhood, saying, “in the 50s I went to meetings with my dad— they said ‘tighten your belt and you tough it out.’ Same thing now.”

The 19th Annual NODPA Field Days



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Friday afternoon's farm tour will take place at Nathan and Kristine Weaver's Family Farm where attendees will learn how Nathan, a leader in grass-fed milk industry, puts his beliefs and theories into a highly successful grazing operation.



Final Details

Recognizing that everyone has tightened their belts as much as possible, it's good to know that NODPA keeps the cost of attending Field Days as low as possible, with free registration for farmers and their families, and a minimal charge for non-farmer attendees, with only the cost of meals passed along. We are grateful for our sponsors, supporters and trade show participants for helping us keep the costs low, and for their ongoing support for NODPA's work. Please be sure to visit all of them at the trade show!

Remember to register early to get the lower rates, keeping in mind that you just have to call, 413-772-0444, email, noraowens@comcast.net, register online, <https://nodpa.com/p/19/2019-Field-Days-Register--Payment>, or mail in your registration form, and if it's more convenient for you, pay when you arrive.

If you have questions or need further information, please call Nora Owens, Field Days Coordinator, at 413-772-0444, or email her at noraowens@comcast.net.

September 26 & 27, 2019
Theodore's Restaurant, 3231 Seneca Turnpike, Canastota, NY 13032

The 19th Annual NODPA Field Days

Thursday, September 26, 2019

- 8:30 – Noon ***Morning Farm Tour:***
John Troyer Family Dairy Farm
5537 Nelson Rd., Canastota, NY.
- Noon-1:00 pm Registration and Lunch
- 1: 00 – 2:30 ***Meeting the Needs of the Current and Future Grass fed Milk Market: Production practices and trends to help farmers meet the demands of the grass fed milk market.***

Nathan Weaver, Grunen Aue Farm
Canastota, NY
- 2:30 – 3:00 Milk Break
- 3:00 – 4:00 ***Small Retrofitted Milking Parlors: planning for the future and increasing efficiency on your farm.*** A workshop on the benefits of converting, plus the nuts and bolts of the retrofitting process.

Steven Weaver, Meadowley Farm
Morrisville, NY
- 4:00 – 4:30 ***Industry and Policy News: updates on the issues that are critical to all organic dairy farmers***

Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director
- 4:30 – 5:30 **Trade Show and Social Hour**
- 5:30 – 7:00 **NODPA Annual Meeting and Banquet:** Liz Bawden, NODPA Board President, and Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director
- 7:00 – 9:00 ***Keynote Presentation and Panel Discussion Adapting to the New Realities of Organic Dairy: Where do we go from here?***

Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director, facilitates a panel of organic dairy farmers from diverse backgrounds that discuss 'where to go from here' based on their ages, farming practices, geographic location, and more.

Panel: Annie and Ryan Murray, Murraydale Farms, Truxton, NY, Jim and Anne Phillips, Triple 3 Livestock, Marathon, NY, , Forrest Stricker, Spring Creek Farms, Wernersville, PA, Roman Stoltzfoos, Spring Wood Dairy, Kinzers, PA, and Vaughn Sherman, Jerry Dell Farm, Dryden, NY
- 9:00 pm Meeting adjourns.

Friday, September 27, 2019

- 6:30 – 9:00 am Continental Breakfast
- 7:00 – 9:00 ***Producer-Only Meeting: A meeting in which producers can speak freely about all things related to the organic dairy industry.***

Facilitated by Henry Perkins, past president, NODPA Board
- 9:00 – 10:30 ***Positioning Your Farm for the Future of the Organic Dairy Industry: Strategies for diversifying into a mixed organic operation and how to best utilize organic acreage in response to the current organic dairy market.***

Roman Stoltzfoos will highlight current food trend opportunities for farmers to consider as well as providing strategies for reducing costs and increasing marketable production during his 'think outside the box' presentation. Klaas Martens' presentation will focus on using annual and biennial forages plus traditional pastures to maximize milk production per acre, by matching the growth of forage to the needs of the cow.

Roman Stoltzfoos, Spring Wood Organic Dairy, Kinzers, PA and Klaas Martens, Lakeview Organic Grain, Penn Yan, NY
- 10:30 – 11:30 ***Cow Care: Creative, effective treatments to increase your herd's health without breaking the bank.*** A roundtable of organic dairy farmers shares a wide variety of successful approaches that include botanicals, homeopathy, and off-the-shelf treatment strategies.

Liz Bawden, Bawden Family Farm, Hammond, NY, Kathie Arnold, Twin Oaks Dairy, Truxton, NY, and Jacki Perkins, Organic Dairy Specialist, Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA), Unity ME
- 11:30 – 12:00pm ***Farm Tour Preview: Grunen Aue Farm.***
Nathan Weaver will orient us to the farm ahead of the on-site tour
- Noon – 1:30pm Lunch and travel to the Weaver's farm
- 1:30 ***Farm Tour, Grunen Aue Farm***
Nathan and Kristine Weaver's Family Farm
Canastota, NY

NET UPDATE

Recent ODairy Discussions

By Liz Bawden, Organic Dairy Farmer, NODPA President

There was a long discussion last month on what makes milk froth, and what makes it stay flat. One farmer/processor sells his milk directly to stores and restaurants; he was told by some of the coffee shops that the milk would no longer froth up in the machines used to make expresso drinks. The high-fat Jersey milk just stayed flat. The farmer was puzzled because he could think of no recent change in feed that could contribute to the problem. There was some quite technical information shared that revealed how the relative size of protein molecules, the amount of mono- and di-glycerides present, the SCC, and the bacterial count and types all interact to cause milk to foam or not to foam. The farmer added, "I did some searching online and learned that while it is protein that makes the foam, it is glycerol that breaks up the foam. I have been concerned for some time that it takes my bulk tank too long to cool the milk after milking. I had the tank checked and the technician said it was okay. In warm weather it takes even longer to cool the milk, and I have been seeing butterballs in the milk. My suspicion is that the butterfat globules are being broken down and glycerol is being released." He decided to install a plate cooler to cool the milk down faster. Another producer felt that he should see good results with the addition of a plate cooler, and suggested that the warm water can be used to clean the parlor or water the cows. She reminded all that plate cooler water cannot be used to clean milking equipment, so it cannot be plumbed to go back into the water heater.

A farmer noticed a heifer was having difficulty urinating. Examined by a vet, he diagnosed a urinary tract infection,

and the farmer asked the group for treatment suggestions. Apple cider vinegar was recommended; another farmer recommended, "Dr. Paul's System Support Tincture along with CEG Tincture, 3 cc (5 cc for adult cows) of each administered under the tongue 3x daily for 7 days. System Support contains Golden Seal, Juniper, Watercress, Plantain, Dandelion, and Astragalus. The Cayenne, Echinacea, and Garlic in CEG make an excellent natural antibiotic."

A grazing consultant asked for suggestions for portable mineral feeders that could be easily moved with the cows from one paddock to the next. A few different feeders were suggested: Fertrell's Pride Tuff Mineral Feeder (the farmer mounted it on a tire, ran a bolt through the side of the tire for dragging, and moved it around with a 4-wheeler), Farmer Boy Ag's 40-cow Mineral Feeder, and Free Choice Enterprises Mineral Feeder (this one was mounted on skids to drag with a 4-wheeler). ♦

Subscribing to ODairy:

ODairy is a FREE, vibrant listserv for organic dairy farmers, educators and industry representatives who actively participate with questions, advice, shared stories, and discussions of issues critical to the organic dairy industry.

To sign up for the Odairy listserv, go to:

www.nodpa.com/list_serv.shtml

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FEATURED FARM

GRUNEN AUE FARM, CANASTOTA, NY*continued from page 1*

pastures; he leadeth me besides the still waters.” Grunen Aue, which translates to green pastures in the Amish tongue, is owned and operated by Nathan and Kristine Weaver and family. The farm is located about 35 miles east of Syracuse and is comprised of 132 acres. About half of the acreage is in pasture/hay ground, and the other half is wooded. Adjoining the farm are another roughly 60 acres of rented ground. The land is reasonably flat save for a few marginally steep corners, with good dark loamy high calcium soils that make it very conducive to productive grass and legume growth. It’s rocky land, but cropping and pasture renovation are not a big part of the farm’s cow feeding

program. Their pastures are a mixture of more than 20, mostly native species. In every pasture they aim to have 3-4 legumes, 5-6 grasses, including orchard grass, rye grass, blue grass, timothy, fescue, and brome, and forbs such as dandelions, plantains or fleaworts, and dock. They have increased their herd size from 30 milkers to about 60 since 2006. Excluding calf milk and milk diverted for home use, their annual production per cow is about 9,000 pounds with an average SCC of 250,000, 5.0 butterfat, 3.4 protein and 5.65 other solids. Their milk goes to Organic Valley’s grass-milk pool, which was newly established in their region in October of 2014.

Paraphrasing the oracle of intensive grazing—Andre Voisin—Nathan said “grazing is where the cow and the grass meet. You have to have a cow that is able to perform on grass. And the grass has to have a nutrient profile sufficient to taking care of the cow’s needs. Each farmer needs to figure out how best to accomplish this.” The odyssey of Grunen Aue Farm traces the quest for a pasture system and animal genetics base that will profitably produce high butterfat, organic grass-fed milk with minimal inputs.

Grunen Aue Farm bought its last load of grain in April of 2013; they ran out a month later and didn’t call the grain company to deliver more. The transition to a no-grain dairy herd started almost twenty years prior. Nathan and Kristine both grew up in farm families in north central Ohio. In 1997, they purchased Nathan’s father’s registered Holstein herd. Although during Nathan’s childhood the herd saw some pasture, it was primarily an input-intensive operation. After they purchased the herd from Nathan’s father they slowly transitioned to a pasture based system, ratcheting down the tillage system required for grain and corn silage growing as they learned more about grazing. It’s been said that a change in your pasture program is probably your biggest return on your invested dollar. Nathan agrees and, “can’t fathom why farmers, organic or not, aren’t excited about pasturing.”

By 2001, the Weavers had eliminated corn silage from their ration and transitioned



The milk room at the Weaver’s Farm

FEATURED FARM

to seasonal calving beginning on April 1st. They certified their Ohio farm organic in 2005. They moved to their current location in Canastota, New York in 2006, attracted by affordable farmland in the region, and began shipping organic milk (their certifier is Canadian based Pro-Cert Organic) from this farm in 2011. Organic Valley's grass-milk premium came along in October, 2014. From the time they stopped feeding corn silage, it would be over a decade before the combination of productive pastures, cows, and skill set would coincide with an expanding market for 100% grass-fed milk, thus liberating the Weavers from any incentive to keep feeding grain. The cows had only been receiving four to five pounds of grain per head so eliminating the grain was not a dramatic change. Nathan does not encourage dramatic change, in fact he has: "little hope for graziers who try to make money with self-sufficiency from low fertility soils and cows and pastures that are not well adapted to the system. The goal is to achieve soils with organic matter levels well above 5%, phosphorus levels that allow clovers to thrive, and well-balanced levels of cations and trace minerals." (Graze- April 2008).

The Weavers, whose pastures are white clover and rye grass based, note that, "The farm lives and dies with our white clover. Naturally, clovers want to grow here; we just need to create a situation for them to express themselves." This means grazing hard and low in the first 60 days of the grazing season. Aggressive rotations at a minimum of twice a day are used. The herd may be moved up to four times a day during the thick of the summer as an incentive to keep the cows eating. After that, they pull back. "It's pressure and then release." There is a 15-20 day resting period before cows return to the same pasture at the beginning of the grazing season; as the season progresses the gap grows to 30-35 days. With this system each paddock should be animal free for 358 days and have intensive animal pressure for the other days. Pastures are clipped at least once a season with a sickle-bar mower.

When asked how he balances his high protein pasture for energy, Nathan replied: "We grow what we feed, the cows eat what we give them and we live with the consequences. Animals growing up on this system make adjustments for it. It's far less of a problem than with animals that were raised on grain." The Weavers pasture system is completely reliant on perennial forage. They are always looking to improve their pastures through careful grazing, never reseeding them.

Pasturing starts in mid-April and goes through late November; from mid-May through mid-October pasture accounts for 95%



Enjoying the grass at the Weaver's Farm

of DMI for the milkers and 100% of DMI for the heifers and young stock. Young stock grazes about one week ahead of the cows, which has mitigated parasite problems. Calving begins in April and baby heifers see grass by mid-May. Calves are fed milk outside on gang barrel feeders and are rotated separately on 6-8 acres until they are weaned in mid-July. The average age at weaning is three months.

Nathan's pastures see six to eight grazings per year, removing roughly 1,500 pounds of dry matter per acre each time. Management intensive grazing increases organic matter because repeatedly harvesting the tops of the plants causes repeated atrophy of the root systems of the plants; when those dying roots degrade they build up soil organic matter, leading to faster plant growth. This pulsed harvesting is the fastest way to increase soil organic matter. Nathan's farm now averages 8% organic matter. Not only is this good for pasture growth but it has wider implications for sustainability. Nathan said "that's where we're going to save the world—from grass fed production. If all farmers would do this –increase their soil organic matter, it would immediately have a very positive effect on the climate."

Nathan explained that one way to increase pasture productivity is to be very careful about the timing of manure applications. The cows have winter housing where they are fed hay, and they have a bedded pack in the barn that incorporates wood shavings and straw. Combining manure with these carbon sources keeps the nutrients in place, and keeps the manure from acidifying

continued on page 26

FEATURED FARM

GRUNEN AUE FARM, CANASTOTA, NY*continued from page 25*

and going anaerobic. He applies this semi-composted manure before the summer slump—in June, and before the fall dormancy—in September, boosting pasture growth at critical times.

Regarding the use of a semi-composted mixture of manure and carbon sources, Nathan explained that it doesn't make sense to use a lot of fossil fuel to produce a finished compost product. "We can either use a lot of diesel fuel to turn our manures to the point where they become true compost, or we can have a vibrant microbial system out in the pasture that will turn carbon stabilized manures into compost. Either you have the microbes work for you with machinery, or you have them work in the soil."

Despite his intensive pasture program, Grunen Aue is only able to put up about 65% of its stored feed in the best years, dropping to 50% in poor years. They also buy in bedding. Mostly they put up baleage wrapped with an in-line wrapper. All the traction is provided by horses. His goal is to achieve an average of 8,000 pounds of dry matter from each of the 120 acres annually, which would be enough to support his herd for the year without buying any forage; his ultimate goal. Nathan emphasized that the standard yield metric of pounds of milk per cow is not particularly useful. In addition to the DMI benchmark, he doesn't want to rest until he is able to get 250 pounds of butterfat per acre, accounting for off-farm forage. Right now the farm is producing 150-175 pounds of butterfat per acre because a significant amount of forage is imported to the farm. If the farm is self-sufficient in forage and each cow produces 10,000 pounds of milk at 5% butterfat on two acres that would work out to 250 lbs/acre. "As an industry we're using far too many acres to produce milk to make it viable. The biggest challenge [for grass-based farmers] is to make our pastures productive enough so we can put product out to consumers that is within the average consumer's budget and still be able to produce a profit on the farm."

As Nathan began to shift his farm to a forage-only system, he simultaneously began cross breeding his Holsteins to Jersey, Milking Shorthorns and Dutch Belted to develop a smaller framed cow more suited to grazing. In the April 2008th edition of *Graze* magazine, Weaver wrote: "First we need a small cow.... New Zealand research shows that compared to a larger animal, a cow weighing less than 1,000 pounds uses a smaller percentage of feed to maintain body functions, and a greater



The homestead at Grunen Aue Farm

percentage for meat and milk production. Also, such a small cow is capable of consuming 4% of her body weight in grazed grass (dry matter basis) for 60 to 80 days post calving.... A cow over 1,000 lbs. can graze only 3.6% of her weight." Despite his intentions to develop a smaller framed cow by cross breeding, Nathan was disappointed in the outcome— what he called "a duke's mixture instead of peas in a pod." The results were too unpredictable and didn't produce the traits he wanted in the cows. He now focuses on building up Jersey genetics that are particularly suited to his all grazing herd, using a combination of AI in the first three weeks of the breeding season, and bulls that have been raised on the farm for the remainder of the season. For AI genetics Nathan is looking to breed "cows that can produce milk profitably without a lot of inputs, other than the grass that is grown on the farm." Nathan chooses A2/A2 sires with high components and then looks desirable physical traits for good grazers. Getting the appropriate genetics for an all-grass dairy is a challenge and Nathan sees this as, "the last frontier of the grass-based movement. We need to create our own domestic line of genetics in order to meet this challenge." The herd now is 60% Jersey, 20% Holstein with the remainder Dutch Belted and Milking shorthorn. When the herd has the genetics most suited to the farm they will stop doing AI and rely on internal genetics only. According to Nathan, "why not get to the point where cows are completely fitted to our farm, and our

FEATURED FARM

farm alone. Nobody knows those needs better than the owner of the farm.”

He has one son with a keen eye for cows and imagines a scenario in which the farm becomes a seed stock producer for grass-based dairies. For now, they keep replacements based primarily on when they appear; the heifers born earliest in the season are the ones they keep. Nathan sees a need to perhaps be a bit more scientific about their selection of heifer calves rather than merely basing their decisions on timing. They retain about 15-20 heifers a year and sell the rest; they do not receive an organic premium when they sell calves.

Nathan has more faith in the grass-milk market than the traditional organic one. Initially he was reluctant to even join the organic movement, predicting that it was a passing fad, one which consumers wouldn't pay a premium for, and for which the standards were too lenient. He then acknowledged that he was mistaken about his predictions and “the organic movement is here to stay.” Grass-milk is a niche product within the traditional organic milk market, one that Weaver feels can transcend consumers' confusion and doubt about the integrity of their organic milk. He commented that grass-milk has a “promising future, especially with its measurable health benefits such as CLA content and Omega 3 to 6 ratios.” The extra premiums paid for grass-milk allow the farmer to develop a true perennial system which allows for the sequestration of carbon in the soil. For Nathan, this is an added benefit for the consumer who “would love to see carbon removed.” The Weavers' farm is now certified by Organic Trust ++ to the new grass-fed standard that was jointly created by Organic Valley and Maple Hill Creamery. He remarked that he did not have to change any of his production practices to meet this new certification.

Growing up, Nathan remembers being on a first name basis with the local veterinarian but now his family rarely calls a vet except for the occasional difficult calving. “We try to create situations where animals live right and thrive and we will move an animal out if she doesn't do well within our system,” he explained. To deal with the occasional acute case of mastitis Nathan will dry off a quarter if necessary, and he has only had to treat a few cows for milk fever in the last two years. Conception rates vary from season to season but the majority of the cows breed back at the appropriate interval. Although he is not opposed to vaccinations, they do not strike him as a benefit. The only significant herd health issue is an as yet undiagnosed foot problem that causes lameness in 5 to

6 cows a year. Most cases clear up but each year one cow has an extended period of infection. This issue aside, overall herd health is excellent.

The agricultural support between members of the Amish community is tremendous. This, in combination with local conferences, a hearty amount of reading (Grass to Milk: A New Zealand Philosophy by Campbell McMeekan is a favorite), and collaboration with fellow farmers—there are 10-12 other dairies within the family's fingertips—is a recipe that “can't be beat.” It is a unique social framework in which to farm. It would behoove us all to culture such a thoughtful, holistic and community-oriented agricultural society.

Nathan commented on the recipe for success as follows—“we need to balance farm needs and consumer needs. The path to profitability is paved with lower costs AND a good pay price. It's not just about the pay price.” He encourages aspiring/transitioning grass-fed farmers to visit other grass-fed farmers, be very observant of what others do, and gain confidence in the potential of what perennial pastures can do for us. “Build the farm from the grass up.”

Nathan and Kristine Weaver have nine children, seven girls and two boys: Luann Yoder (26), Emily Mast (25), Elizabeth (23), Alex (22), Corrie Hershberger (20), Lydia (17), Samuel (14), and Abigail (7), and Elsie (2). The family strives to maintain the same health and wellness for themselves that they see in their animals and land. The children are well-versed in all aspects of the farm; it is a true family affair. The children know how to “put their shoulders under the load and push” when it comes to the “rotational choring” schedule that the family maintains. They have worked hard to make the farm as efficient as possible and gauge that it takes about 3,000 hours of dairy work a year for the operation to run smoothly. In addition to producing milk, it is the Weavers' aim to be as self-sufficient as possible, raising their beef, pork, and poultry, maintaining a large vegetable garden and making their own yogurt, butter, and ice cream. Off farm and non-local groceries are extremely limited. “The agricultural way of life is part of my spiritual make-up,” said Nathan, “Our people see the farm as the ideal way of raising our families and building character in that it helps us serve God and our fellow man. We have great faith in how God created the world, and if we study it closely we can go a long way in structuring our farms by mimicking nature.”

Nathan Weaver can be reached at 4225 East Milestrip Rd., Canastota, NY 13032. ♦

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Origin of Livestock Final Rule: Small Organic Dairy Farmers Say the Rules are Stacked Against Them. One Rule in Particular.

continued from page 15

Farmers and advocates say that the rule was always meant to allow for that transition one time, to create a pathway for conventional dairy farmers to convert to organic management with the expectation that growers would then raise calves organically from birth once they had an organic herd in place. But the language in the rule was vague, and evidence started to emerge showing some certifiers, which are responsible for making sure farms are meeting the organic standards, were allowing large organic dairies to “continuously” utilize the exception, purchasing and transitioning conventional cows to organic whenever they needed them.

In an audit conducted by the USDA in 2013, the agency found that three of the six certifiers the agency interviewed interpreted

the rule in this way, in that they “allowed organic herds to continue to be transitioned and producers to add cattle to organic herds.”

The Cost of an Organic Calf

That interpretation hurts small organic dairies raising calves organically from birth, explained Fay Benson, a dairy farmer for 20 years who now works for Cornell University’s Organic Dairy Initiative. “The [organic] feed is the biggest cost of raising a heifer, since you’re raising it for two years without any kind of return,” he said. (A heifer is a young cow that has not yet borne calves.)

At a New York Organic Dairy Task Force meeting in March, the group talked about the Origin of Livestock issue and directed funding to Benson in order to allow him to study what that cost differential really looked like.

While Benson has not completed the research yet, he has been gathering data from three organic dairy farms and comparing it to research that had already been done at Cornell on the cost of raising a conventional calf. At one of the farms in his study, he found that the cost of raising a heifer for its first 60 weeks was \$3,628 or nearly triple the \$1,274 cost of a conventional heifer.

In other words, if a certifier allowed a farm to continuously transition in new cows, those cows would cost much less for that first year, up until the farm began feeding organic feed in the second year for the transition period.

Why would a farm even need a continuous supply of cows if it was raising a herd organically and producing new calves each year? Essentially, a large-scale operation could sell off the organic calves being born on its farm and buy in cheaper conventional heifers to transition over one year. Being able to cheaply rotate in new cows also allows farms to produce more milk.

Small organic dairies generally keep production at a rate that maximizes a cow’s life span, because intensive production causes the cows stress that many people consider inhumane, and the cost of raising heifers is so high. “[Large dairies] maximize production by feeding large amounts of grain, which shortens the cow’s life,” Benson said, “and then they need to replace those burned-out cows.”

A particularly egregious example is reported in a letter that CROPP Cooperative, the coop behind Organic Valley, sent to Secretary Perdue in November 2018 in support of fixing the Origin of Livestock loophole. In the letter, Chief Mission Officer Melissa Hughes reports that one state agriculture department, which is an accredited organic certifier, “permits an organic cow ... to give birth to a heifer calf, rear the calf conventionally, and then transition it back to organic status for organic milk production.”



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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

All of this is compounded by the fact that small organic dairies already have a hard time competing with large industrial operations, Maltby said. "The cost of organic milk we produce on a small operation, it's higher than some of the larger operations that have economies of scale when it comes to labor, feed, etc.," he said.

Clarifying the Rule

After the 2013 USDA audit, the Office of the Inspector General recommended that a proposed rule be issued to clarify that the Origin of Livestock provision only allowed for a one-time transition of a dairy herd. In 2015, the USDA posted the proposed rule and opened it for public comment. However, after the comment period ended, the rule was never finalized.

In addition to the letter the Organic Farmers Association sent to Secretary Perdue, director Kate Mendenhall said OFA made the issue a policy priority for 2019 and testified about the rule at the last meeting of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), which advises the NOP on rulemaking.

The pressure from all of these groups, including legislators, may bring the issue back to the fore. A USDA spokesperson told Civil Eats the agency "is moving forward with the Origin of Livestock rulemaking process and exploring the best ways

to get that completed. We hope to have a draft for inter-agency review this year."

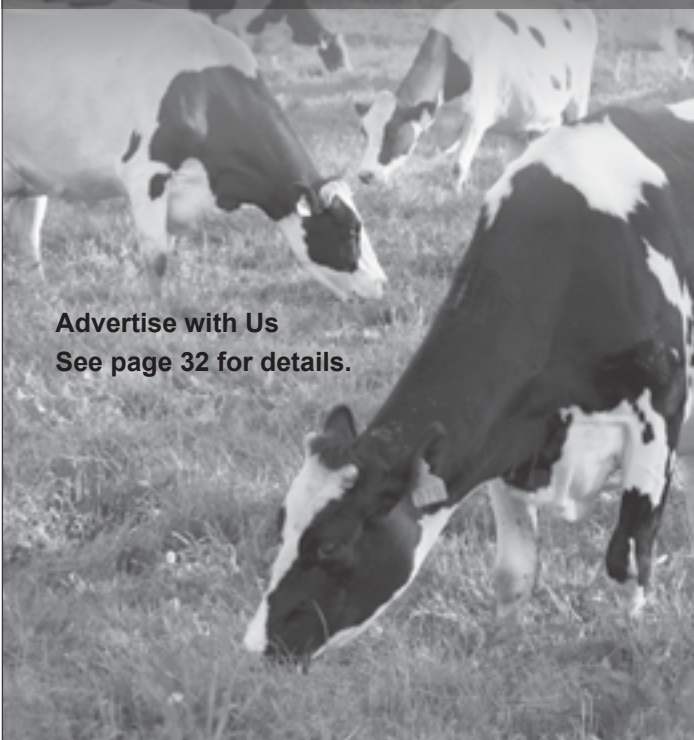
Of course, many advocates bristle at repeating that process, just four years later. "It's completely unacceptable," Rep. Pingree said at the July hearing. "We had a proposed rule in 2015 ... there should be a final rule this year." Mendenhall put it even more bluntly. "[Organic] dairy is suffering right now," she said, "and it's a direct result of a lack of proper enforcement by the National Organic Program."

Lisa Elaine Held is a New York City-based journalist who writes about the food system, health, and sustainability. She is a regular contributor to Civil Eats, Eater, and Edible Manhattan and Edible Brooklyn; she is also the host of The Farm Report on Heritage Radio. Her work has appeared in print publications like Women's Health and Conde Nast Traveller. She covered health and nutrition as an editor at Well+Good for more than six years and has a master's degree from Columbia University's School of Journalism.

This article was updated to correct that 15,000 dairy farms went out of business between 2007 and 2017, not between 2012 and 2017. USDA statistics show that nearly 10,000 dairy farms closed between 2012 and 2017. ♦



NODPA News
Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance



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Calendar

September 17, 2019 - 3:00pm to 6:30pm

EXPLORING PRACTICES & POLICIES FOR IMPROVING SOIL HEALTH SERIES: DIVERSIFIED LIVESTOCK FOCUS (BRATTLEBORO)
Rebop Farm, 1320 Sunset Lake Rd. Brattleboro, VT 05301

Join Ashlyn & Abraham McClurg of Rebop Farm, a highly diversified, grass-based livestock farm in Brattleboro, as they share techniques they have used to improve the health of their soils and the productivity of their pastures. Some of the strategies discussed will include frost seeded perennials, interseeded annual cover crops, poultry tractors, and intensive rotational grazing. Stick around after the technical portion of the workshop for pizza from NOFA-VT's mobile pizza oven and a discussion of how changes in policy and other tools can help to expand the use of good soil health practices on Vermont's farms. NOFA-VT's new Executive Director Grace Oedel will also be at this event!

Meet and learn more about Grace and what she brings to the organization. This workshop is part of a 3-part series focusing on soil health solutions for commercial farmers, and opportunities to create meaningful policy change to expand healthy soils practices in Vermont. Farmers: free; Non-farmers: \$15 to cover cost of dinner

WEBSITE: <https://nofavt.org/onfarmworkshops>, contact Livy Bulger, livy@nofavt.org.

September 30, 2019 - 10:00am to 3:00pm


SOIL HEALTH FIELD DAY AT RED SHIRT FARM: HIGH AND LOW TECH APPROACHES TO SMALL SCALE NO-TILL FARMING
Red Shirt Farm, 60 Williamstown Road, Lanesboro, MA

Are you inspired to learn more about No-Till farming and want to see for yourself the tools and methods being used to build soil and grow vegetables? Join us at Red Shirt Farm in Lanesboro, MA to learn from farm manager Jim Shultz and guest presenter Bryan O'Hara of Tobacco Road Farm in Lebanon, CT. These two farmers both run well-organized, profitable and small-scale vegetable production systems, but diverge on the level of mechanization they employ. Together they will present a range of options for equipment and mechanization on the small-scale farm. You can engage with them during an interactive field walk and discussion of their farm systems. Topics of discussion will include: climate battery greenhouse, Johnson-Su Bioreactor, permanent bed systems, primary tools and cover cropping. Jim will give a demonstration of his BCS transferred mulch system, including mower, rake and mini-baler. This system is used to convert cover crops to mulch that can be used elsewhere on the farm. NOFA Members: \$25 / Non-members: \$30* For questions contact Doug Cook, Education Events Coordinator, at doug@nofamass.org or (603) 969-8195.

October 2, 2019, 6pm - 8pm



CROPS, COWS, AND CRITTERS: HOW CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION'S REGIONAL AGRICULTURE PROGRAM APPROACH IS SUPPORTING OUR FARMING COMMUNITY
Cider Creek Hard Cider
6459 Cunningham Creek Road, Canisteo, NY 14823

The Southwest New York Dairy, Livestock, and Field Crops Program (SWNYDLFC) is a new initiative that started in July 2019 as a partnership between Cornell University and



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the CCE Associations of the 5-county region that includes Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, and Steuben. SWNYDLFC Regional specialists work with Cornell Faculty and Extension Educators statewide to address the issues that impact the dairy, livestock, and field crops industries in New York through educational programming and events, consultations, and on-farm research.

Join Katelyn Walley-Stoll, Business Management Specialist, and Joshua Putman, Field Crops Specialist, as they discuss the program's efforts so far and their initiatives moving forward. This interactive presentation will highlight the agricultural industry, its needs and challenges, and tools Cornell Cooperative Extension can provide to help farmers feed the world. Southwest New York Dairy, Livestock & Field Crops Program, 607-664-2300. This free program includes a cider making tour and tutorial!!

October 12, 2019, 10am - 3pm

BEEF QUALITY ASSURANCE TRAINING

Bingham Hall, 5381 Depot Street, West Valley, NY 14171

Beef Quality Assurance Training to be held in Cattaraugus County

Beef Quality Assurance is a national program that provides training to beef and dairy cattle producers in food safety, proper cattle handling techniques, handling of animal health products, injection sites, and record keeping. The goal of this program is to maximize consumer confidence and acceptance of beef by focusing the producer's attention to daily production practices that influence the safety, wholesomeness, and quality of beef and beef products.

All beef producers are welcome to participate in this BQA Certification training to be held in Cattaraugus County on Saturday, October 12, 2019, from 10 am - 3 pm. The classroom training & lunch will be held from 10 am until 12:30 pm, at Bingham Hall, 5381 Depot Street, West Valley, NY. The hands-on chute side training will follow through 3 pm, hosted by Valley View Farm, Nathan & Chelsey Nelson, 8567 Route 240, Machias, NY. Dr. Shannon Carpenter, Veterinarian with the NYS Department of Ag & Markets, will teach this Beef Quality Assurance program. There will be a nominal fee to cover the cost of lunch, the BQA manual, and program. To register or for more information, please contact Lisa Kempisty, Cornell Cooperative Extension Educator at 716-664-9502 Ext 203 or lj4@cornell.edu.

October 19, 2019 - 10:00am to 5:00pm

HEMP CULTIVATION: SEED TO SALVE

Eastfield Mall, 1655 Boston Road, Springfield, MA

Hemp production is on the rise nationally, as is demand for locally sourced hemp-based products. With that in mind, Massachusetts farmers are diversifying their crop plans. Come learn how hemp fits into your farm. With its broad range of uses, hemp has tremendous potential for cultivation on a large scale as well as for home remedies and value added products. Join NOFA/Mass for this full-day intensive seminar to hear Dr. Heather Darby, lead agronomist on the UVM Industrial Hemp Research Program, present on hemp agronomy, strain genetics, transplant care, soil preparation, fertility needs, pest and disease management, and large scale production techniques. Keith Morris, of Willow Crossing Farm in VT, will focus on how to diversify with hemp and grow for CBD production. He will cover extracting CBD oil on the farm, proper harvest windows and ways to craft a high-quality finished product. Sarah Grubin, MDAR, will provide a thorough overview of the regulations around hemp

continued on page 32

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Calendar

continued from page 31

production in Massachusetts including what farmers need to know to prepare their farms to grow this crop. Stay for a conversation with Marty Dagoberto, NOFA/Mass Policy Director, and other local activists about current advocacy to improve the hemp laws and regulations in Massachusetts and ways to take action. Read their great article on the UVM Hemp Research Project at headyvermont.com/high-hopes-for-hemp-at-the-university-of-vermont/cannabis. NOFA Members: \$65 / Non-members: \$90* For questions contact Doug Cook, Education Events Coordinator, at doug@nofamass.org or (603) 969-8195.

October 21, 2019, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

BUILDING YOUR FARM TEAM TO BUILD HEALTHIER SOIL

Soul Fire Farm, 1972 NY HWY 2, Petersburg, NY 12138

This field day will focus primarily on two components, communication strategies on the farm and building healthy soil and the mutual support between the two.

For Soul Fire Farm, positive relationships and clear communication among team members are essential to the organization's work to fight racism in the food system while promoting soil health and carbon sequestration on the farm. During this field day, the Soul Fire Farm team will explain the benefits and challenges of the communication strategies they use for building healthy organizational culture. The Soul Fire team will also discuss their implementation of reduced tillage practices and other regenerative soil farming methods and describe Soul Fire's other programs including Black-Indigenous-People of Color (BIPOC) farmer and builder immersions, youth food sovereignty programs, and multiracial Uprooting Racism in the Food System workshops.

In addition, the Soul Fire Farm team will share their perspectives on the process of engaging in Food Justice Certification and how it has supported development of organizational policies. A representative of the Agricultural Justice Project will report on the joint NOFA-AJP project to provide technical assistance to farms on their labor

and pricing policies and answer questions about Food Justice Certification.

There is no charge. Free and open to the public. Please RSVP, especially if you would like to stay for lunch. <https://www.nofany.org/our-events/2019-on-farm-field-days>

November 2-4, 2019 – Saturday, Sunday, Monday

FARMER TO FARMER CONFERENCE 2019 Point Lookout Resort and Conference Center Northport, Maine.

MOFGA's annual conference for farmers provides a great opportunity to talk about what works and what doesn't while learning new ideas from university faculty, fellow farmers and others. FARM TOURS: Snakeroot Farm and Balfour Farm in Pittsfield (bus tour), North Spore Mushroom Farm in Westbrook (no bus available). Contact MOFGA, 207-568-4142, Email: mofga@mofga.org for more details.

Advertise With Us!

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

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

2019 Ad rates and sizes listed below.

**Deadline for advertising in the
November 2019 issue is October 15, 2019.**

Full Page Ad (7.5" W x 10.25" H) = \$660

1/2 Page Ad (7.5" W x 4.5" H) = \$340

1/4 Page Ad (3.5" W x 4.75" H) = \$190

**1/8 Page Ad/Business Card:
(3.5" W x 2.25" H) = \$100**

Commit to a full year of print advertising and get 10 percent discount: Full: \$600, Half: \$306, Quarter: \$171, Eighth: \$90.

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

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

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

Classified Ads

ANIMALS

FOR SALE: Complete herd of A2 A2 Dexter cows with quality bull combination beef and milk. Only grass and hay; no shots or antibiotics ever; very gentle disposition. Only to a like-minded home. Contact John Davey, John.davey59@gmail.com, 508-889-8733.

Location: Lyons NY

WE ARE SELLING OUR HERD! We have 20 certified organic Holstein plus Holstein cross open cows (not long on milk), plus calves and ready-to-breed heifers! We are asking \$750 each (for cows and ready to breed heifers) heifer calves are \$150 each (this price is if you take the whole herd). Contact Lynette Swendsen, at lynette.swendsen@gmail.com, 585-205-4998.

Location: Akron, NY

100% GRASS MILK, ORGANIC HERD: Mostly Holstein with a few Jerseys and crossbreeds. 50 milkers, 20 bred heifers, approximately 40 young heifers and calves. Nice looking herd. Come and see. Paul de le Bruere, 802-370-6268, pfcml73183@gmail.com.

Location: Essex, VT

FEED

ORGANIC HAY FOR SALE: Large square bales of July 1st cut certified organic hay. 3x3x8 750-800 lb bales. Also have some 3x3x7.5 bales that fit inside silage boxes. It is mixed hay, June grass, brome, clover, a little trefoil and some bales have more reeds canary. Great for dairy. We have test results. Pick up or delivery available. Sold by the ton, prices start at \$160/ton. Contact Jason by email, jasonrot@gmail.com, or call, 802-989-8180.

Location: Addison VT

HAYLAGE FOR SALE: Organic 1st cut 2019 haylage, cut early. Will load for \$38.00 per ton. Call 802-537-2435.

Location: Vermont

HAY FOR SALE: Late June cut NOFA-NY certified organic 4x5 dry grass hay for sale. Never rained on and stored under cover, net wrapped. Nice solid bales, pick up only, happy to load for you. \$55 a bale, we want to have room to store some second cut dry hay. Located in Eastern NY, Tammy Thomas, disneytam89@gmail.com, 518-727-1712 please leave message.

Location: Greenwich, NY.

EQUIPMENT

FOR SALE: DAIRYMASTER MOBISTAR 2G MOBILE 8 COW MILKING PARLOR. The MobiStar 2G is a mobile parlour utilizing 8 unit milking equipment. The unit was in use daily between September of 2015 and June of 2019. It has been modified to meet the Pasteurized Milk Ordinance and State of Maine milk inspection criteria. Features:

Unique design allows installation to stand alone. Only minimal entrance and exit space required due to hydraulic cow platform and rapid exit. MobiStar 2G framework including positioning system, hydraulic cow platform lifting frame with 4 rams and a rapid-exit gate at the front. There is a rubber flooring (Kraiburg) at the cow standing. The system has pre-mounted lights included. Dairymaster Milking MobiStar incl. clusters, pulsators (1 per 2 clusters), pulsations controller, centrifugal milk pump, milk receiver, vacuum pump, manual rinsing equipment, high level wash line, s/s pulsation line, s/s milk line, fresh airline. 8 Unit Cluster remover incl. smart-start; Dairymaster Autowasher incl. stainless wash trough; 8 Unit Dairymaster Weighall electronic milk meters (ICAR international approved) with control panels. This milk meter is allowed by the integrated sampling system to take approved milk samples. Dimensions: 34 ft long, 8 ft wide, 9.8 feet tall. Purchased in October of 2015 for \$120,000.00; asking \$45,000.00, or best offer. Contact Joe Grady, Senior Director of Programs, Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture & The Environment, office: (207) 865-4469 ex.103; cell: (207) 400-7999 or email: jgrady@wolfesneck.org

Location: Freeport, ME

FOR SALE: DUMP WAGON. McConnell 771-97 dump wagon in very good condition. No welds on the body or frame and the dump box is also in great shape. With all those wet fields chopping hay and corn this year is going to be a challenge and a dump wagon might very well come in handy! We no longer grow corn and we do all baleage now so no need for a dump wagon, \$7,500. Located in Eastern NY, Tammy Thomas disneytam89@gmail.com, 518-727-1712 please leave message.

Location: Greenwich, NY

FOR SALE: HESTON 4760 LARGE SQUARE BALER WITH PROCESSOR. Excellent condition; stored under cover \$15,500. Call Kari Lussier 802-537-2435.

Location: Benson, VT

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION TECHNICIAN, PASA

We're seeking a Conference Registration Technician to play a pivotal role in running the registration system for our 2020

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance Producer Milk Check Assignment Form

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

deduct the sum of :

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

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

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

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

Milk handlers please send payments to:

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

Producer signature: _____ Date: _____

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

Number of milking cows: _____ Tel #: _____

Certifying Agency: _____

Farm Address: (please print) _____

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

Subscribe to the NODPA News and support NODPA!

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

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

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

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

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

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

_____ \$100 to become a supporter of NODPA

_____ \$1,000+ to become a Benefactor

_____ \$150 to become a Business Member

Name: _____

Farm Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Date: _____

Are you a certified organic dairy producer? YES NO

Number of milking cows _____

Milk buyer _____

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

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

Credit card: Master Card Visa Card #: _____

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

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From the MODPA Treasurer

Greetings from Western Wisconsin!

By the time you get this the season will definitely have changed. For the first time in a while I had to find a sweatshirt. Where did the summer go? It definitely has been another one-of-a-kind summer in my area. Wet, wet, wet has been the main topic for the entire season. It has been hard to make hay. Dry hay has been nearly impossible. The quality has suffered but at least there is some. Small grains had a terrible year. I have seen very few acres of decent grain. Some winter rye did ok. Most of the spring planted grain had tremendous weed pressure. The corn that was planted has come along surprisingly well. It will suffer some from the wet and the late start. First frost will make or break many.

This has also been a year of animal welfare issues. One of the latest involves a large organic dairy in Texas. I am still trying to figure out how they can possibly pasture that many cattle. Can you say cheaters? Farms like this have been the biggest problem for those of us who are the traditional small family farm. Now, more than ever, we need to put pressure on to get the situation corrected. We cannot afford to go on looking the other way. We cannot afford to be complacent about this. Our futures are dependent on this being corrected. It will take all of us together to get the changes that we need. We cannot count on our processors to do it for us as some of them are sourcing milk from these operations. We need to have the pasture rule enforced and we also need to get the origin of livestock rule in place. It will take all of us, so let's do it! We also need to make sure that we are doing all that we can for our own animals. While we know that perfection is tough to do, doing the right things on a daily basis is crucial. We must set a good example.

As we enter the final stretch of the harvest season, may you all find a bounty of crop. And may you all have a safe season.

Don't forget to take the time to smell the clover before it takes its winter break.

Till next time,

Bruce Drinkman, MODPA Treasurer

N14264 490th Street

Ridgeland, WI 54763

715-977-1314

bdrinkman@hotmail.com

Become a Member of MODPA!

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Certified Organic Dairy? Yes No # of cows: _____

Transitioning: _____

I wish to support MODPA (check whatever applies):

___ By becoming a state rep or director.

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

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

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

About MODPA

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

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

MODPA Board

Wisconsin

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zimbadairy@tband.net
Phone: 989-872-2680

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

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Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

Classified Ads

continued from page 33

Sustainable Agriculture Conference, including the conference scholarship, workshare, and volunteer programs. Our 2020 Conference takes place February 5–8 in Lancaster, PA. The Conference Registration Technician will report to the Conference Manager and will receive additional support and training from the Systems Analyst. This position can be remote, but will require some trips for in-person meetings (approximately once a month). It is estimated that this position will require 5 to 8 hours per week through October, then increase to 20 hours per week

from October to mid-November, with some weeks requiring more hours. From mid-November to late February, hours would increase to approximately 30 per week—during this time, the Conference Registration Technician will be required to maintain regular hours for registration assistance by phone. Attendance at the 2020 Conference is required from Monday, February 3rd through Sunday, February 9th, with several 12+ hours per day during that time. For more information, and to apply click on this link: <https://pasafarming.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/conference-registration-tech.pdf>