

NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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Cows on pasture at Riverhill Farms

FEATURED FARM: RIVERHILL FARMS

WILLISTON, VT

Owned and Operated by Cameron Clark and Patrice Maloney

History in the Making: Riverhill Farms

By Tamara Scully, NODPA News Contributing Writer

Seeped in history, Riverhill Farms in Williston, Vermont was once the home of Thomas Crittenden, who served as Vermont's first governor in 1791. Since 1835, it has been home to Cameron Clark's ancestors. The 560 acre farm includes 230 acres of tillable land,

with the remainder being forested. The tillable acres are broken down into 170 hayfield acres - 60 of which are also used for late summer pasture - and 50 acres of permanent pasture.

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Dead Set on 'Saving' Point Reyes, Environmentalists Want to Kill Its Best Stewards

Removing responsible farmers from the preserve doesn't restore nature — it neglects it.

By Albert Straus, Straus Family Creamery, Petaluma, CA

Article originally appeared in the San Francisco Standard and is reprinted with permission from the author.

Most of the dairy farms and cattle ranches at Point Reyes National Seashore will soon disappear. Though the ranchers have

been leasing the land from the National Park Service for decades, environmental groups sued the agency in 2016, alleging that agricultural pollution was disrupting local ecosystems. Earlier this year, twelve of

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Message from NODPA Co-President

Feed Those Cows

Happy almost spring everyone! It's been a long, cold, ice filled winter here in central NY. It's hard to believe we are only a couple of months away from the grazing season.

Winter has given me the time to collect and analyze data from the past year. Our farm has done the Cornell dairy farm business summary (DFBS for short) for the last 18 years as well as many years in the 90's. It's a great tool to help see on paper some of the big changes that have happened on the farm over the decades, whether that be a milk market change, a new barn and herd expansion and the corresponding milk output per labor unit, or changes to land base and cropping practices. Taking it one step farther, I joined a group of other organic farms and we do a yearly benchmarking report to see our farms strengths and weaknesses and areas for improvement. These meetings are always some of my favorites of the year and are quite informative.

One of the recent things we talked a little about and that has become a recent focus of mine on the farm: whenever a worn piece of equipment needs to be updated, can it become an upgrade

at the same time? Whether it can combine two or more pieces into one or really speed up its main use, it becomes both an update and an upgrade. This past year I traded four older pieces of tillage equipment in on one new piece (a high speed disc) that should not only speed us up quite a bit in the spring but also keep me from having to do as many repairs and as much hooking/unhooking of equipment. This spring, it's a new used spreader that can spread our farm manure but also will work with chicken litter and thus can replace both our old manure spreader and our truck mounted lime spreader. The new spreader is 50% bigger than either of the old spreaders so it will really speed up both operations.

Whatever is happening on your farm, no doubt this year's spring season will be both an update and an upgrade, mentally and environmentally. Be ready for it and enjoy the green grass when it comes.

Kirk Arnold, NODPA Co-President

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We Need a FULLY Funded and Staffed National Organic Program

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

Many organic dairy producers may not be affected by any federal actions, but organic farmers are in the unique position of having their future in the hands of a relatively small federal program at the USDA. **Organic farmers face a very basic uncertainty: Will the National Organic Program be adequately staffed and funded under this administration?** With many new hires over the last few years located across the country, many of whom fall into the category of ‘probationary’ and targeted for firing, the program cannot survive if it must follow the new policy that restricts hiring only one new employee for every 4 that have been lost once the hiring freeze has ended.

The NOP is required by law to work with the NOSB to make recommendations to the Secretary on new and updated regulations to protect the integrity of the Organic Seal and ensure compliance. The USDA announced that “**The Spring 2025 NOSB meeting is being rescheduled,**” with no explanation about next steps. The administration’s new policy is that for every **one** new regulation, **eleven** must be canceled. That does not work for organic, and, in the past, lack of regulations has severely affected organic dairy producers, regardless of how

efficient employees are or how many upgrades are made to the USDA’s electronic software.

Organic farmers make the choice to become organic, pay to be certified and agree to greater accountability in production practices. They provide a commodity that consumers increasingly want to purchase in a unique public/private partnership, which is the gold standard for certification from farm to table. Organic certification is not for everyone but for those farmers who have invested time, money and sweat equity, their income relies on a strong program administered by qualified personnel.

Now is the time for everyone to advocate to whomever you can about the need for a well-funded and staffed NOP; this includes your congressional representatives, senators, USDA agency leaders, staff, and anyone else you think can influence the process. The Plain communities, while very diverse, had an impact on the most recent elections and do have leverage with politicians, as does every farm family in the country, so please use it. ♦

USDA Halts Some Contract Payments to Farmers

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

The agriculture community is being hit hard by the confusion and uncertainty of what is happening with the federal government. Farmers are being directly impacted by not being reimbursed for cash they have laid out after signing a binding contract--cash that in many cases they do not have and have had to borrow, or ask their contractor for more credit. The multiplier effect is dramatic for rural communities. We can only hope that lenders are understanding. USDA offices and field staff are already sparse in rural communities; the proposed widespread employee cuts and office closures will only make the necessary process of working with the government more difficult and confusing. Farmers that have benefited from grant programs, some contracted for production practices over many years, are unsure what the future holds. Everyone can agree that we have confusion and uncertainty, which creates its own high level of stress to add to the built-in stress of farming. ♦



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Tariffs – Who Will They Affect?

Compiled with the experience and thoughtful insights of Mike Thresher and Klaas Martens



Photo: Shutterstock

“For the average organic dairy feed, the 25% tariff (on Canadian goods) will raise the price of a complete grain mix at least \$85/ ton. On the average farm, this could be an additional cost per cow/day of 75 cents or more” says Mike Thresher, Nutrition and Certification Manager, Morrison’s Custom Feeds, VT. Thresher estimates a 25% tariff will cost them \$10,000 a day, a cost they could not absorb. Most companies hit by this increase in price will pass it to their next level in the supply chain and finally to the consumer. Organic dairy does not have that structure in their supply chain or contracts that adjust to increased inputs, so the cost will be borne by the farmers. Even if you are not affected by the tariffs on purchased feed, everyone will have to pay more for gasoline and diesel fuel, plus essential fertilizers, equipment, parts, etc., so this will affect Grass Fed certified producers and Plain communities as well as those that feed grain. Organic poultry will also be hard hit by any tariffs.

The Northeast has long been a market for Canadian grown certified organic feed grains and beans. Many commodities are imported from Canada, including corn, soybeans, field peas, sunflower meal, flax meal, and high protein hard red organic spring wheat for bread flour. Many Canadian organic farms are closer to the Northeastern US than midwestern organic farms, so it costs less to transport grain from Canada to the Northeast than it does from the Midwest.

Morrison’s Custom Feeds, for example, purchases over 85% of their organic commodities from Canada. Producers are already faced with the need to feed higher protein grain because protein levels in conserved forage generally are lower this year. At Morrison Feeds, an average cost of a 16% organic dairy feed is \$650/ ton or \$32.50 per cwt. Mike Thresher comments that, “I have always used the comparison of milk and grain price on a per cwt basis; if milk is higher, cash flow is ok, but when milk and grain are equal, or grain is higher, this puts the farm into a negative cash flow situation. If you add the tariff increase to the grain price, \$650 is now \$735, or \$36.75/ cwt.....very similar if not higher than milk prices paid.”

What are Tariffs?

Tariffs are a tax on imported goods and are paid by the importer. Tariffs can either be focused on one commodity, for instance steel, or across all imports. The on again/off again recent bouts of tariffs with Mexico and Canada were imposed by the US on all goods, with a few exceptions. The Trump administration will also be charging reciprocal tariffs from April 2nd, 2025, on other countries’ imports that are equal to the tariffs they impose on the US, so there could be many different levels of tariffs imposed. There will also be exemptions for different goods. For example, after pressure from leading Republicans in Congress, Canadian potash was exempted from tariffs. Companies may well make unverifiable claims about

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investment in US manufacturing to gain exemptions, although these investments, if they happen at all, will take many years to have any effect.

Will tariffs encourage US organic farmers to grow more crops?

A tariff used as a political or economic tool is imposed, reduced or stopped for those same reasons. A tariff initiated to protect an emerging business, if it is part of a long-term trade agreement like the USMCA (which include restrictions on dairy exports from the US to protect Canadian dairy producers) can be useful if it is negotiated between trading partners and supported by investment and other opportunities to grow the domestic business. No business will base their expansion plans and investment based on the type of actions the administration has recently been using.

How will other countries respond?


Countries that the US has imposed tariffs on, have imposed their own on US products, either targeted to affect key US lawmakers' districts or blanket charges on all products. With the last wave of tariffs in President Trump's first administration, many grain farmers lost their markets and were not able to win them back. Similarly, countries are looking for new trade partners that can build trusted and stable relationships for future years. Canada is increasing its ties to Europe and reaching out to Mexico. Canada is already negotiating to increase trade across the Pacific with Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Australia, China, and Southeast Asian countries. American refineries depend on Canadian oil. They may not continue to get that oil if a better deal can be made with other customers.

What won't benefit anyone is a trade war. There are no winners in trade wars except for a few companies that can raise their prices or lower the quality of products because they no longer must compete with imports. Organic farmers on both sides of the borders are likely to end up paying more for what they must buy across the border and getting less for whatever they sell

across the border than they did before the tariffs. The US can't just start a trade war and not suffer reprisals. Both Canada and Mexico will retaliate by imposing their own tariffs on goods that they import from the US. That will increase prices and reduce demand for American goods. Consumers on both sides of the border lose by having to pay more for what they buy. The result will be less cross-border trade. Over time, some new markets will probably be developed, and new trade relationships will be established, but until then, higher costs and more uncertainty will be the only sure things.

The biggest risk that the US faces if the trade war intensifies and expands to other countries, is that oil may no longer be priced in US Dollars. If other countries begin using currencies other than the US dollar for pricing oil, then the dollar may begin to lose its status as the world's reserve currency. That would have huge consequences for the position of the US, relative to other countries and for the ability of the US government to borrow money.

Mike Thresher's final comments, written on 3/9/25, "While we are in another pause on the tariffs (for Mexico and Canada), we certainly hope a peaceful outcome can come soon." While we all join him in that hope, the pause didn't last and we exist, and re-evaluate, on a day-to-day basis. ♦



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Succession Stories: Learn from Others

The NODPA Field Days Keynote Presentation Panel

By Tamara Scully, NODPA Contributing Writer



Dave Johnson



Klaas Martens



Henry Perkins



Jacki Perkins



Roman Stoltzfoos

Nichols, NY: The 24th Annual NODPA Field Days took place September 26 & 27, 2024 at the Nichols Volunteer Fire Hall, where the Thursday evening keynote presentation was a panel of farmers who spoke to the stressors, the highs, the lows and the unexpected moments of clarity, understanding and acceptance that their own family farm's succession journey entailed. Attendees heard success stories from Klaas Martens - who not only passed the farm onto his family's next generation -- but helped other beginning farmers as well; stories of a succession that didn't succeed, from Henry and daughter Jacki Perkins; lessons

learned from Roman Stoltzfoos as son Dwight took over the farm's management; and insights from Dave Johnson, whose son Caleb wanted to farm, but not dairy farm. All of these very personal family stories were shared so that others could better understand the path to successfully planning for their own family farm's evolution as the reins are passed from one generation to the next.

Each panelist was given time to explain what they did or didn't do, what worked or didn't work, and why. Insight into how the process of transferring the farm to the next generation can be

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accomplished to provide opportunities to the next generation of farmers, how business planning can help make things work, and reasons why they maybe won't, were offered up by the panelists, with unique perspectives into generational farm transfer.

Succession or Sale

Prior business planning was a tool the Stoltzfoos family highly recommends others utilize to insure successful generational transition of a functional farm business.

Roman Stoltzfoos and his family worked with two business planners, beginning eight or so years ago, to develop a succession plan for Spring Wood Organic Farm, in Kinzers, Pennsylvania. The planners helped the family to get "all the pieces of the puzzle in place" so that when both Dwight - the next generation - and Roman - the current one at the time - were ready to proceed, they could move forward with confidence.

Hiring a business coach was expensive, but was critical for their successful transition to the next generation, Roman said. The coach made sure that the cost of production and return on investment were calculated and monitored, and separated out the farm's enterprises financially so they could make wise financial decisions and position the farm to be profitable and ready for succession.

"You need something to pass on, and it needs to be profitable," Roman said. Having business planners helped the farm remain financially viable while they planned a succession strategy. "We're happy the way it turned out."

Henry Perkins and family didn't experience a positive farm succession for the family's now called Bison Ridge Farm in Albion, Maine. Henry, by borrowing a lot of money, was able to purchase the farm from his father and he had felt obligated for familial reasons to farm it. But his father was not open about the farm's financial situation, and left Henry with a farm deep in debt, a job he didn't want to do, and feeling as if he was living with a "ball and chain" tethered to him. "He did not tell me that he never made any money farming!" Henry said of his father. While Henry enjoyed farming, he couldn't deal with the never-ending, twice daily milking that came

with owning cows. Over the years, Henry sold his milking herd four times, usually based on the market at the time, and because he needed a break from the daily demands of milking cows..

Unfortunately, the farm's next generational transition didn't go any smoother. In fact, it didn't happen at all. Instead, Henry sold the farm over a decade ago to the Maine Farmland Trust, receiving a "really good deal" and sold the cows to an acquaintance, which wasn't as successful a deal.



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“I think my kids are happy that I did what I did,” Henry said.

But daughter Jacki, who now works for Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) as a livestock and organic dairy specialist, also has a strong background in dairy farming. With an associate degree in dairy farm management from Vermont Technical College, she previously has artificially inseminated cows for Genex, and was a herd manager for a large Maine dairy. When her father sold the farm, Jacki wasn't fully onboard.

Jacki has had mixed feelings about the lost opportunity to take over the dairy from her dad, whom she made clear she loves very much. Jacki knew her father would be a hard act to follow, noting that despite not liking the demands of the milking routine, he is a great farmer. The farm was very profitable under her father's management, and taking over and living up to his expectations would have been a bit intimidating. But if she had been given the opportunity to work out a deal to purchase the farm from her father, she would have tried to do so.

“It (succession) didn't work because I wasn't prepared for the commitment it takes to make it happen,” she said. She was only in her 20s at the time, and was concerned about not living up to her father's standards if she had taken over the farm.

She didn't know at the time that there were advisors who could have helped her to have some tough conversations with her father, and discuss with him the possibility of a succession plan so that she could return to the family farm and take over the business. She could have used assistance managing her own expectations and those of her family.

“I know he loved farming but wasn't enjoying the daily routine,” and was anxious to stop, and was “really particular about how things were run,” Jacki said. “I did really want to milk cows. He's a really hard act to follow.”

Henry knows the succession was a failure, but also believes - from firsthand experience - that taking over the family farm can - as it did for him- come with the burden of the previous generations' mistakes or failures.

“I got enough money selling that if any of my kids wanted to buy a farm, I could give them the money to buy a farm,” he said. “And they wouldn't be saddled with the farm that I had. You have the opportunity to go buy your own farm and build it your way. You don't have to deal with someone else's frustrations.” It should be noted that Henry continues to farm, raising bison at Bison Ridge Farm in Albion, ME.

Innovating for Success

Dave Johnson considers himself a “recovering dairy farmer.” His son, Caleb, never wanted to be one. But the family farm - Provident Farms in Liberty, Pennsylvania - is a multi-generational farm, and the kids always knew that they'd be expected to carry on the family farming legacy. After leaving the farm for a few years, Caleb did return.

He wanted to farm. But he didn't want to milk cows. Changing the focus of the farm business allowed Caleb to continue the family farm by doing something he wanted to do.

Dave recommends looking outside the family traditions, and being open to change. They had experienced plenty of years when they could make more money selling crops than milking, and had stopped milking, returning to milking only when it made financial sense. Becoming a primary crop farm wasn't too far from what they already did.

Selling the cows was difficult, Dave said. Today, they've added beef cows to the mix, and it's been therapeutic for Dave to have cows back on the land.

Pay attention to markets and understand that “what you're doing today might not work five to 10 years from now, and be flexible,” Dave advised.

Klaas Martens of Lakeview Organic Grain in Penn Yan, New York, was in partnership with two of his brothers after his father died, and it was a “sinking ship,” he said. He ultimately was able to take over the



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farm from his brothers, but it was “really hard.” When it was time for the next generation to join the family farm, Klaas was looking for a better way to incorporate their vision, help them learn, and keep the farm profitable while moving them into position.

“No one wants to take over someone else’s dream,” Klaas said.

He began by having his son Peter work on the farm, without pay, during his high school years. He taught him the importance of good recordkeeping, and good farming. Eventually, Peter was able to take advantage of Farm Service Agency loans to begin his own farm enterprise, renting land from his father, to see if he could make farming work for him. During his senior year in high school, he was able to do just that.

Peter soon went to Germany to experience an organic dairy farm, and “learned a tremendous amount,” Klaas said. But Peter didn’t want to milk cows. Instead, he wanted to do custom farming, and he purchased equipment to do so. Klaas then paid him custom rates for all field operations he provided to Klaas’s own farm.

“I think it is really important for any young farmer to have their own dream, and strike out in their own direction, and not be taking over anyone else’s project,” Klaas said.

Klaas is also passing a farm along to non-family new farmers. He helped a neighbor, David, save his own family’s farm using the same deal as he had offered Peter. Peter is now hiring the

neighbor to operate machinery. With this arrangement, they all pay custom rate for field work, and the machinery is operated as a stand-alone enterprise, based on custom rates.

In another situation, Klaas purchased and then rented a farm to a nephew. However, that didn’t work out, and Klaas ended up with dairy cows. He had to go outside the family to try to find another farmer to work the farm. Zack, a non-farmer came to the farm, milked cows, and decided he loved cows, but hated machinery. He worked for Klaas, and then rented the dairy farm from him. Zack and his wife, Hannah, then received a Farm Service Agency loan, and were approved for 100 percent financing. They will be purchasing the dairy farm and the cows from Klaas.

“We’ve got a generation of families that...maybe the next generation didn’t want to be farmers. We’ve got a lot of farms open. But we’ve got a lot of people in this country who would like to be farmers,” Klaas said. “But the key to all this working is that these young farmers have to cooperate. All that Zack and Hannah are going to buy is a 40 acre pasture. We have a contract with them where we are supplying all of the rest of the feed. Those cows are being fed cover crops.”

Zack and Hannah want to manage cows, but don’t want to grow feed. Klaas is growing cover crops, which he will harvest to feed their cows. This way, everyone does what they are best at, and they all succeed together. Klaas provides cover crop clover - rocket fuel feed - at a cost of production of approximately \$150.00 per ton of dry matter for their cows.

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The true cost of pasture is about \$70.00 per dry matter on their farm, Klaas said. But you have to manage the pasture with the cows, not the cows with the pasture, in order to get high quality pasture. Having enough animals to harvest the grass efficiently while grazing high, and harvesting at exactly the right height and stage are key. Utilizing supplemental feed when the pasture needs to be rested is crucial.

“Being able to make that part of a bigger system is really important,” Klaas said of growing the supplemental feed and providing it to farmers who manage cows but don’t want to grow crops. “I tie what I charge them for the feed to how much milk their cows give. If I make lousy forage, I have a big grain bill. If I make really good forage, I make more money.”

Klaas also gets manure back from the cows, which is high-quality fertilizer for his crop fields. They now have a manure separator with a sub-surface drip irrigation system, which pumps the liquid manure underground to the field.

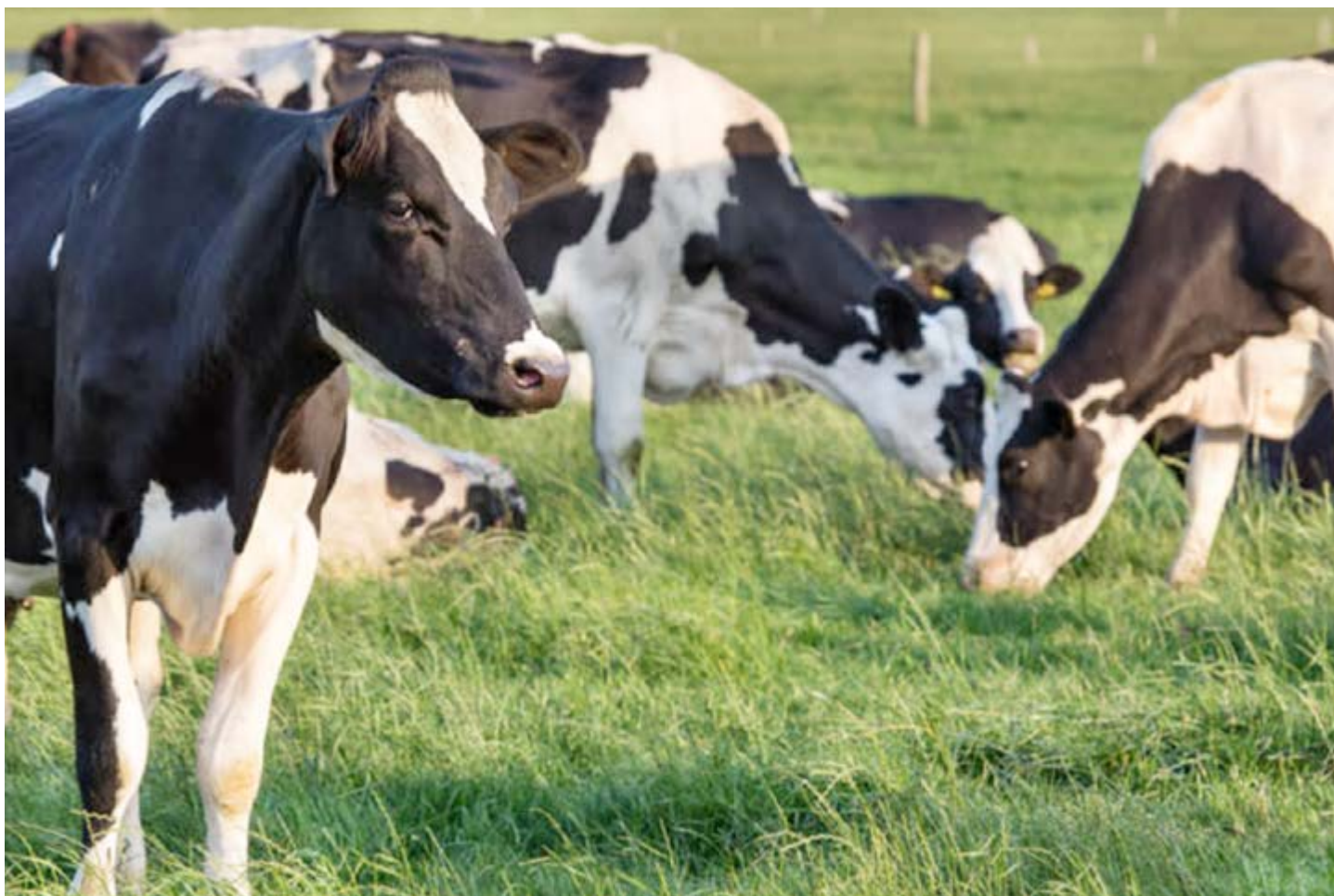
Klaas takes the solids and hauls it as they need him to. It is cheaper for them to use the irrigation system than to pay for someone to spread manure on the fields.

There are a few other farms connected to their cooperative system. Everyone involved has their own strengths, and cooperate together using them for the good of all of the farms. They have a 2000 acre land base, one that is supporting several farming families.

“This is kind of a closed system. The key to the whole thing is that all of these farms, and farmers, have to cooperate,” he said. “We’ve got economies of scale, and we have specialization. That’s how communities used to work. That is how this is working.”

Letting people pick their own enterprises helps farms to succeed, Klaas said.

While each farm family’s succession story is unique, every farm can benefit from learning their stories, and planning ahead of time for what can be a stressful and confrontational process, in order to make it a cooperative and rewarding one. Putting the farm on solid financial ground, allowing the next generation the opportunity to succeed on their own terms, and using existing professional resources to navigate the process are tools available to succeed with your farm’s succession. ♦



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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Dead Set on ‘Saving’ Point Reyes, Environmentalists Want to Kill Its Best Stewards

continued from page 1

the 14 working ranches accepted a buyout worth an estimated \$30 million from the environmental groups to end years of draining litigation.

These ranches represent a loss of 20% of the agricultural land in Marin County and a third of West Marin’s dairy farms. Their closure means that many ranch workers, most of them immigrants, will lose their jobs, with ripple effects for local schools, services, and businesses. Though the buyout money might sound like a lot, after it’s divided by twelve and legal fees are paid, most of the departing ranchers will have little prospect of opening a new operation elsewhere.

The campaign to displace the ranchers reflects a misguided vision of nature as a pristine playground suitable for postcards and tourists, with little regard for community or the planet.

While the buyout threatens our community as we’ve known it for 100-plus years, it’s still possible to keep some agriculture thriving inside Point Reyes.

When the nature preserve was created in 1962, 21,000 of its 53,000 acres were zoned as “pastoral,” allowing commercial dairies and ranches to operate. Since then, the preserve’s land area has grown, while the pastoral zone has shrunk. After the recent settlement, a general management plan eliminated most of this zone. A recent lawsuit (<https://www.kqed.org/news/12029675/niman-ranch-challenges-point-reyes-seashore-settlement-in-lawsuit-over-ranching>) filed by two ranchers could restore the commercial agriculture allowance, with new tenants and new leases.

Keeping the pastoral zoning would help prevent the community from being dismantled.

Some environmentalists argue that removing farming and ranching will restore Point Reyes to a more natural state. Among their concerns are water quality issues created by manure, lack of biodiversity, invasive species overpopulation, land deterioration, and habitat destruction. They argue that livestock agriculture is fundamentally incompatible with ecological conservation.



Albert Straus, owner, Straus Dairy Farm and executive director of Straus Family Creamery. The Straus family has been in the dairy industry since 1941.

Photo courtesy of Straus Family Creamery

But the removal of responsible farmers from Point Reyes doesn’t restore nature — it neglects it. For more than 30 years, Straus Family Creamery, which I founded, and its network of supplying organic family farms have shown that responsible farming restores ecosystems. Organic and regenerative farming practices can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, put carbon back into the soil, and foster healthy soils that help landscapes adapt to drought, flooding, and severe storms.

On my Straus Dairy Farm near Point Reyes, I have worked to implement a carbon-neutral farming model. We are working toward on-farm carbon neutrality by reducing methane emissions from animals by more than 90% while maximizing soil carbon sequestration through regenerative practices like compost application and intensive rotational grazing. Farming responsibly can provide measurable, scalable climate solutions while feeding local communities high-quality, nutritious food.

Straus Family Creamery’s supplying dairy farms are working to adopt a similar model, as were two of our supplying farmers at Point Reyes. The farms and ranches on the preserve are not industrial-scale; they are small, deeply rooted, family-run operations. The threats introduced by removing these farms include a new land-management strategy that will likely lead to excessive growth of coastal scrub brush, resulting in soil degradation and an increased risk of wildfires.

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Across California and America, dairy farms are vanishing. Farmers — the oldest workforce in the country, with a median age of 58 — are aging out of the trade and not being paid what they’re worth. Land and housing costs are unsustainable. In 1940, the United States had 4.6 million dairy farms. Today, there are around 26,000 (<https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/chart-gallery/chart-detail?chartId=109652>). With food demand projected to rise, farms are vanishing when we need them most.

The answer isn’t the removal of farmers — it is the expansion of certified organic farming models that restore the land while feeding local communities. Agriculture and nature preservation are not at odds; they are different aspects of the same vital endeavor.

For those who neither live nor work in West Marin, it may be difficult to understand why we who do are so upset about the Point Reyes decision. To accept it is to accept that our area doesn’t have a future that includes resilient landscapes, a secure food system, and agricultural workers. To preserve this essential and diverse community, we must fight for the people who enable it.

Anyone who shares this vision should contact Doug Burgum, secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior, and Jessica Bowron, acting director of the National Park Service, and demand that they reverse the general management plan to allow commercial agriculture to continue at Point Reyes. This would create security for new tenants — a next generation of farmers who can produce food and practice sustainable, regenerative agriculture on that land.

Secondly, we need Burgum and Bowron to establish an Agriculture Trust — with a board and leadership that includes farmers — to manage and maintain the preserve as a working agricultural landscape, so that farmers and ranchers can live and work in harmony with nature. The only way to support the future of our food system is to keep our farms and communities intact. ♦

Albert Straus is a second-generation farmer and environmental innovator in dairy farming who owns Straus Dairy Farm in Marshall, CA. He is the founder and executive chair of Straus Family Creamery and a life-long resident of Marshall.

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COMMITTED TO ORGANIC DAIRIES



ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Updates on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Virus (HPAIV) H5N1*By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director*

Photo by Mike van Schoonderwalt: www.pexels.com

H5N1 is here to stay, and the federal government is not doing anything different, despite continued outbreaks with both poultry, livestock and humans. The Trump administration's intention is to combat avian flu in poultry by moving away from mass culling of infected flocks and prioritizes enhanced biosecurity measures and medication to control the spread of the virus. There is nothing specific about enhanced biosecurity for poultry, which currently appears at an all-time high, but dairies need to upgrade their systems, especially to protect humans. In launching a \$1 billion, five-stage strategy aimed at curbing the spread of H5N1 to protect the U.S. poultry industry, there was no mention of any new policy or allocation of funds for dairy. The USDA's Secretary of Agriculture's suggestion is to get your own backyard chicken if you want to combat the high price of eggs. Perhaps you also need your own house cow as well!

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) recently confirmed an H5N1 detection in Idaho dairy cattle, the state's first since October. Since early 2024, APHIS has reported 977 H5N1 detections in dairy

cattle from 17 states of which 730 have been in California, where 70% of the herds have dealt with H5N1, and milk production fell by 9.3% in November. Since February 1, 2025, 36 new cases of H5N1 in dairy cows have been reported, including the first cases in Nevada and Arizona.

Human infections

The outbreak has infected dozens of people, mostly farm workers. So far, most people infected experience mild illness and eye inflammation, and the virus is not spreading between people. The first H5N1 death in the US was reported in January 2025 following exposure to infected chickens. One of the earliest strains of avian influenza isolated from a human in Texas shows a unique collection of mutations that enables it to more easily replicate in human cells, researchers from Texas Biomedical Research Institute (Texas Biomed) reported in *Emerging Microbes & Infections*. The finding highlights a key concern about the H5N1 strains of avian influenza currently circulating in the U.S., the speed at which the virus can mutate when introduced to a new host.


ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Vaccine for dairy cattle

While the USDA is not changing its policy on dairy cows infected by H5N1 or seemingly trying any new approaches, Elanco Animal Health has signed an agreement with South Dakota biotech firm Medgene to commercialize its bird flu vaccine in cattle. An Elanco press release says the Medgene vaccine is in the final stages of review for a conditional license and has met USDA's platform technology guidelines. Injecting dairy cattle with a vaccine will be far easier than with poultry and will not have any effect on exports of dairy product. Dairy organizations back vaccine use to control the virus.


The American Dairy Coalition has published the following information from their December 18, 2024 webinar about the learning curve for H5N1 in dairy:

- Cows shed the virus up to 16 days before clinical signs.
- Producers report 30 to 40% herd level milk production loss that comes back about halfway after six to eight weeks (time shaved off peak production); some next lactation impacts are emerging as the udder has receptors for the virus, and infection can cause scarring.
- Virus does not discriminate - young cows and older cows, all stages of lactation; even dry cows with collars showed the same drop in rumination minutes.
- Mortalities increased by 1.5 to 2% at the herd level.
- Longer term impacts of early culling, aborted pregnancies; other reproduction issues emerging.
- Primary spread of virus between herds comes from cattle movement, shared equipment, shared personnel.
- Mechanisms of spread within herds include direct cow-to-cow contact, milking machines, and respiratory spread.
- Some producers found that identifying sick cows early via forestripping to check for discolored milk and immediately pulling them into a separate milking group can slow the rate of spread within the herd.
- Work with your herd vet on supportive care, but producers found supportive therapies generally do not change outcomes, fever lasts 2 to 3 days.
- Balance reduction of external stress to sick cows with stress to labor. Producers found that if weather is good, it may be best to do less interaction with the cows to reduce their stress and the labor stress; let them rest in clean comfortable area; consider letting virus run its course with less interactions, except for the very sick; consider reducing milking frequency temporarily for those cows alongside the drop in milk production; consider strategic culling of already identified DNB's (do-not-breeds) if you learn your herd tested positive in bulk milk sampling.
- Bed with straw and/or provide plenty of loose hay close to sick cows in the pen as this is what they will more likely eat when rumination and intakes drop.
- Further support rumen with fresh feed, frequent pushups, and consider prebiotics and probiotics.
- Have a plan for how cows will be identified (i.e. forestripping check for discolored milk); where sick cows will be housed and treated, and have a treatment plan.
- Keep records (ELAP indemnity for milk loss), number of impacted cows per month removed or deviated, milk production records (verifies drop).
- Unaffected herds minimize risk by having a biosecurity plan; limiting herd introductions, especially lactating cows, testing before introduction; using quarantine periods; testing heifers returning from off-site; restricting traffic and visitors (parking area by office); limiting crossover of dairy workers with domestic poultry exposure; wearing gloves, washing hands, protecting eyes and face; keeping work clothing and boots onsite. ♦



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ORGANIC PRODUCTION



Ask the Vet

Dayna Locitzer, DVM

What precautions should I take with my calves when it is cold out?



Cows like to be left alone when they are calving. I was counseling an over attentive farmer who was concerned about her cow calving and I told her if she really wanted to be close by, she could hide behind a post in the barn and poke her head out every couple minutes to see how it was going. In general, cows should calve on their own and like to, but it is important to know when they need help because a cow that is having trouble calving, also known as a dystocia, is a serious situation. You won't be right 100% of the time, but hopefully this article will clarify when it is appropriate to intervene and when it's time to call the veterinarian.



Photo by Stelien Baker/www.pexels.com

First off, it is helpful to know what is normal in order to know what is abnormal. Calving is considered to have three stages. Stage one starts when the cervix dilates and ends with the rupture of the allantois (aka the water breaking). This stage takes anywhere from 4-24 hours and is marked by loosening of the ligaments around the tail, inability to settle, holding her tail up, and self-isolating. Stage two starts with the water breaking, proceeds with contractions, and ends with the delivery of the calf. This should take no more than two hours and is often where most of the trouble happens. Stage three is the expulsion of the placenta. A placenta is considered retained if it is still visible from her vulva 18 hours after calving.

The simplest way of expressing when intervention is warranted is if the cow is not making appropriate progress through the three stages of calving. During stage one, if it appears she has not made progress in over 12 hours or she made progress then stopped or if placenta is visible with no contractions or calf, these are all signs to intervene. Intervention is warranted during stage two if she is not making progress every 20 minutes (i.e. feet, then head, then

torso) or it has been over two hours from the start of visible contractions and there is no calf on the ground yet. And it is always important to intervene and check that everything is ok before leaving a calving cow for the night.

Now that you have decided to intervene, what is next? First make sure you have the supplies you need: a bucket of warm soapy water, lubrication, clean obstetric sleeves, and stainless steel chains. One of the risks of intervening is introducing bacteria into the uterus. This can be avoided with good hygiene practices. Make sure the cow is restrained, clean off her vulva, apply lube to your sleeve and

enter her vulva gently. You are going to feel for the position of the calf and the size of the cervix. The correct position is two front feet and a nose, it is also ok if you feel two back feet, but most importantly it is essential that you know if you are feeling back or front hooves.

To differentiate between the two sets of legs, check for a tail or nose for a quick answer. If you can't feel either of those parts, search for the nobbly feeling of the hock. You can also check the direction the legs bend. The first two joints of the front legs bend in the same direction. The first two joints of the rear legs bend in opposite directions. A common mistake is thinking you have back feet because you don't feel a head but actually you are feeling front feet and the head of the calf is bent backwards. Folks will then pull on those limbs thinking they are back feet and not make progress. This becomes one of the hardest calving situations to fix because now you have pulled hard and exacerbated the head back position of the calf. Do not pull on legs unless you are positive you have the head in the correct position and through the cervix or you are positive you have the back legs.

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Other common malpositions are: one or both legs stuck behind the pelvis, only a tail is palpable and both legs are extended forward (aka true breech), the calf is upside down indicating a possible uterine torsion. Correcting any of these malpositions will depend on your comfort level, but do not spend more than 20 minutes trying. If you are unsuccessful in making progress, it's time to call for help. When you confront a situation you do not feel comfortable correcting, call your veterinarian sooner rather than later.

Calling the veterinarian is a valuable tool in managing a difficult calving and when to call them will depend on your own experience level. I think I speak for many veterinarians when I say that calling the veterinarian sooner rather than later is in the cow and your best interest and is appreciated by the veterinarian. In general, situations that warrant a call to the veterinarian are: when a cow started contractions then stopped, if a torsion is suspected, if you've tried to correct the position but were unsuccessful after about 20 minutes, if the cervix is not dilated enough, if the calf's head is back, if the cow or the calf is in distress or any time you feel uncomfortable with the situation. The veterinarian will bring a different skill set to the dystocia. They can provide advice, an epidural, perform a fetotomy, and they might have tricks and tips

that you are not aware of. They also can perform a c-section; keep in mind that antibiotics will likely be needed in that situation.

I hope this article is helpful in better understanding calving and when to intervene. Knowing the normal progression of events and the normal presentation will help determine when a calving is becoming a dystocia. It is better to intervene sooner rather than later so that the cow and calf can get the appropriate help they need, but remember to stay clean and safe. In the veterinary world, we say calving is a team sport, so know when it's time to take a time out, come up with a new strategy or put in your pinch hitter. ♦

Dr. Dayna Locitzer has over 10 years of experience working with pasture-based dairies in the Northeast. She worked on organic dairy farms in the Hudson Valley of New York for six years before starting vet school. After veterinary school, Dr. Locitzer spent four years in the Brattleboro, Vermont area serving the small dairies in that region. She recently moved back to the Hudson Valley to join Columbia Veterinary Services in Hudson, NY where she works exclusively as a farm animal veterinarian.

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

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Organic Dairy News: March 2025*By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director*

Organic milk is short, and producers continue to look for improvements in their Pay Price package. There are many issues that may influence decisions about whether to stay with the buyer you know or the financial necessity of finding another that will pay a more realistic Pay Price package. I say 'package' because it is not just the dollars per cwt but also factors tied to reliability, strong business record, commitment to the region, brand ownership and governance, hauling contracts and routes, handler agreements, requirements over and above organic certification and the ability to maintain a stable market into the future. For many who perhaps have grown up on personal relationships with buyers, there is disillusionment with how they have been treated when they start the process of evaluating their current buyer. To be told that they no longer match the buyer's current business plan, so they can leave or stay but conditions will not change, is no encouragement for a future relationship. Buyers have been reported as exaggerating either the farms they have already signed or the satisfaction that other farms have with their relationship and Pay Price. If you are thinking of changing buyers, always have a conversation

with other producers and their families to verify their claims. Contracts vary and there are significant differences between a membership agreement and a contract, especially on changes in Pay Price, quota, and cancelling contracts. Your biggest asset here, apart from asking detailed questions, is talking with other producers who have experience with different buyers. Now that DFA will not provide handling services to members who change organic buyers, there is also the uncertainty of finding a handler.

NODPA can assist with help over understanding contracts and recommending legal assistance, as a 501C5 producer group, and by putting producers in touch with each other to share experiences.

Below we have a list of contacts for milk buyers who responded to our request to have their information made public or didn't respond:

- **Byrne Dairy:** Leslie Ball, Director of Dairy Programs, cell phone (315)382-2782, lball@byrne1933.com
- **CROPP Cooperative -Organic Valley brand:** No response to our inquiry but at a NOFA VT webinar they listed the following: John Cleary: john.cleary@organicvalley.coop and Michael Brown: michael.brown@organicvalley.coop.
- **Family Farmstead Dairy, NY:**
email: crystal@familyfarmsteadairy.com ;
www.familyfarmsteadairy.com ; (607) 397-4044
- **Horizon Organic LLC:** no reply to our inquiry but two known contacts from NOFA NY are Carriel Schmitt, Producer Relations Manager, NY: carriel.schmitt@horizon.com and Jacquelyn Oliver, Quality Control, Jacquelyn.oliver@horizon.com
- **Maple Hill:** Mitch Clark, SVP Supply Chain: mitch.clark@maplehillcreamery.com, 515-441-3574.
- **Origin Milk:** David Campaniello; Business Development & Product Innovation, david@originmilk.com, 718-404-6924
- **Stonyfield/Lactalis USA:** The contact information for their team is: Jason Johnson, jason.johnson@us.lactalis.com, (802) 356-0908; Erin Marlowe: erin.marlowe@us.lactalis.com, (603) 496-9499; Jeremy Russo: jeremy.russo@us.lactalis.com or (802) 236-1920
- **Upstate Niagara:** Mike Davis: General Manager, Membership Division and Bulk Sales; Office: (585) 815-6820 ext. 6441, Cell: (585) 409-1544 and mdavis@uncdairy.com

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Milk Market

In the Midwest, organic milk is reported as being sold locally and to the eastern US, for \$45+ on the spot market. Midwest Pay Price prices are averaging approximately \$32/cwt; CROPP is reportedly short on milk from their own direct supply.

For those of you who have not worked with **Byrne Dairy in NY**, it has been in operation since 1933 and in organic processing for 7+ years, with two processing plants; one in East Syracuse, New York and one in Cortlandville, New York. They process both ESL and aseptic fluid products. The organic farms that currently ship to them are in the Central New York Region, but they are open to investigating all organic milk opportunities outside of that region. They do their own hauling in the Central New York Region and contract with another hauler in Northern New York. As far as Pay Price, they say they are very competitive, with a base price plus quality premium, butterfat premium and volume premiums. They pay the same price every month of the year and are open to negotiating with producers and to discussing specifics. Leslie Ball is their contact person at: cell phone (315)382-2782 and Email: lball@byrne1933.com

After two years in the position, CROPP Cooperative/Organic Valley CEO Jeff Frank is stepping down on March 28th to join a non-competing company. Shawna Nelson, the executive vice president of membership, has been announced as the new CEO. CROPP Cooperative/Organic Valley Board members are: Arnie Trussoni, Dave Hardy (Board President), Scott Stoller, Josh Tranel, Elvin Ranck, Ernest Martin, Tim Kline. CROPP recently announced it is moving into the very competitive non-dairy creamers market with the launch of four new products: Cinnamon Spice Oat Creamer, Caramel Oat Creamer, Vanilla Oat Creamer and Oatmeal Cookie Oat Creamer. The dairy, nut and lactose-free creamers have 30 calories per serving and are made with oats sourced directly from their member farms. Not so sure that these coffee flavorings can be called creamers if they don't have any cream. I also question what this does to the viability of organic dairy farm members who need the Coop to maximize the price for

Dairy milk sales for the 52-week period ending Dec. 1, 2024 according to Chicago-based market research firm Circana.

	Dollar sales (millions)	% change vs a year ago	Unit Sales	% change vs a year ago
PRIVATE LABEL	\$9,562,182,068	1.20%	2,949,726,558	0.00%
H P HOOD INC	\$1,216,976,392	3.80%	224,295,071	2.50%
FAIRLIFE LLC	\$782,628,137	27.60%	164,605,045	21.20%
HORIZON ORGANIC DAIRY LLC	\$698,716,498	86.60%	105,105,669	57.10%
PRAIRIE FARMS DAIRY	\$337,395,531	-6.2%	92,751,120	-6.2%
ORGANIC VALLEY	\$270,475,171	16.00%	44,600,027	13.10%
HILAND DAIRY FOODS CO LLC	\$189,412,013	0.60%	53,775,517	0.00%
BORDEN DAIRY CO	\$119,125,141	19.90%	32,075,875	13.30%
KEMPS LLC	\$117,422,862	4.70%	36,482,461	7.50%
DARIGOLD INC	\$90,629,594	-2.7%	23,467,211	-2.8%
Total category*	\$15,303,741,280	1.70%	4,231,999,430	0.20%



all components of the milk they produce rather than spend time, money and consumer good will on promoting a non-dairy product in a saturated market.

Private-label Dominates Refrigerated White Milk Sales

Branded products are taking a hit as grocery food inflation is driving the private-label boom. In 2024, sales of store brands grew by \$9 billion year over year, reaching a record \$271 billion, according to new data from the Private Label Manufacturers Association (PLMA) 2025 Private Label Report, compiled by market research firm Circana. This impressive growth represents a 3.9% rise in dollar sales compared to the previous year.

In refrigerated white milk, Private Label is ranked first; HP Hood Inc. second; Fairlife LLC, third; and Horizon Organic

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Dairy LLC, is ranked fourth with \$699 million in sales, an increase of 87% Year on Year (YOY), and 105 million in unit sales, an increase of 57% YOY. CROPP/Organic Valley was ranked sixth with a 16% YOY dollar sales increase to \$270 million, while unit sales jumped 13% to \$45 million. Maple Hill had an impact on sales of Kefir where dollar sales and unit sales both picked up 36% YOY. Dollar sales came in at nearly \$3 million, with the company selling 429,188 units during the recent 52-week period.

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The Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC)

The 2018 Farm Bill authorizes the Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) program, and the American Relief Act, 2025 extended provisions of the 2018 Farm Bill and amends Section 1403 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (2014 Farm Bill) authorizing DMC for coverage year 2025. The USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) enrollment period for DMC runs from January 29 to March 31, 2025. If you are going to enroll for this year, don't leave it too long as FSA personnel may be stretched thin with all the uncertainty about those that have been fired or taken the buyout. Funding for this program appears safe and enrollment may be good risk management with the uncertainty over tariffs, which may affect dairy exports that are used to balance the conventional milk supply. USDA FSA predicts that the margin will average \$12.37 over the year with a range of \$13.84 to \$11.06. The All-Milk price has an average for the year of \$22.03/cwt and a range of \$24.09 to \$20.58/cwt. Corn never makes it out of the \$4/ bushel and Alfalfa averages around \$200/ton. It is more of a gamble for organic dairies this year than many other years but we don't know what will happen tomorrow let alone in 6 months' time! ♦



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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Save the Date! September 25 & 26, 2025

for the 25th Annual NODPA Field Days

Pompey Rod and Gun Club, 2035 Swift Road, Pompey, NY 13138

Mark your calendars for the 25th Annual NODPA Field Days. With a lot happening in the Organic Dairy industry, the NODPA Board is working to create a cutting edge education program that embraces these current trends in the field and market. More details will be featured in the May NODPA News but until then, these are some of the themes we are working on:

- In a very competitive market, what combination of production and management practices work for your operation?
- Considering grass-fed and/or a2a2 production? There will be a panel of producers and processors to share information and answer questions.
- We will look at the cost of production for 2025-2026
- Examine the opportunities, challenges, and costs of robotic milking to learn if it could work for your grazing herd.
- Identifying the new technologies that increases herd health and makes full use of available labor.
- Geo-fencing for dairy as well as beef: How could this benefit your grazing plans?



Pompey Rod and Gun Club, 2035 Swift Road, Pompey, NY 13138



Pastureland Dairy

We will visit two organic dairy farms in Manlius, NY. The Smith Family will host a tour of their **Tre-G Farms**, and The Mapstone's will host a tour of their farm, **Pastureland Dairy**.

Look for more information in May or visit the NODPA website, www.nodpa.com. If you have questions about the NODPA Field Days or are interested in sponsorship opportunities, please contact Nora Owens, NODPA Field Days Coordinator, at 413-772-0444 or noraowens@comcast.net. ◆

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.

Deadline for advertising in the May 2025 issue is April, 2025.

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FEATURED FARM

RIVERHILL FARMS

WILLISTON, VT

continued from page 1

Nestled in the flood zone of the Winooski River, the soil is “some of the best soil in the state,” Cameron, the eighth generation of the Clark family to farm this land, said.

Cameron grew up farming here and now co-owns the farm with her mother. The farm has always been a dairy farm. Cameron manages the dairy and milks the cows, does the field work including pasture rotations and haying, and works the maple woods and sugar shack during sugaring season. She farms alongside her husband, Dan O’Shaughnessy, who works full-time off farm while also doing maple sugaring, logging, fieldwork, and more.

“My best resource is my husband, who can run any piece of equipment and enjoys doing it, and fixes everything mechanical that breaks,” she said.

Her mother, Patrice, manages the horses and does the bookwork, and helps as needed with the farmwork. Patrice’s husband Mark, a retired power company lineman, also helps on the farm by fixing things, hauling hay and sap, and helping in the sugarhouse. Cameron’s 12 year-old son - the ninth generation - along with one employee, Wendy, who milks, does pasture work and helps with the maple sugaring operation, round out the crew.

Awarded the first Vermont Fantastic Farmer award in 2021, Cameron has taken the legacy of her family’s farm and improved upon it with a focus on environmental, animal and human health, implementing changes that make sense for the land, the herd, and the family’s financial and economic needs. Her decisions began with the switch to certified organic dairy farming , include the more recent move to a 100 percent grassfed dairy, and continue to the planned future expansion of the farm’s retail maple syrup sales.

Making Change

When Cameron was growing up on the farm, the cows were managed conventionally. When she left for college in 2007 to attend the dairy management program at Vermont Technical College, the family stopped milking cows. Cameron, however, kept some cows from the herd, breeding them and milking them at a nearby farm. When she graduated in 2012, she returned to the farm with 16 cows, and has grown the closed herd internally since then.

Cameron brought more than her cows back home to the farm: she brought changes to the dairy.

“I grew up farming conventionally, with milking cows confined to their barns during the winter, and during the summer months the dry cows and heifers would go out to permanent continuous grazing pasture, while milking cows would have outdoor access,” Cameron said. “Throughout those years, the health benefits of

pasture and fresh air and sunshine - to all groups of cows - were very noticeable. I decided that if I was going to continue farming and milking cows that it would be a pasture-based system where cows could just be cows, and I could work with nature as much as possible instead of against it.”

With that philosophy as her guiding mission, Cameron certified the dairy in 2012 through Vermont Organic Farmers (VOF). All of the hayland and permanent pasture was eligible to be certified immediately, and 70 acres which had been cornfields for the



Dan and Cameron in the sugarhouse.

FEATURED FARM

conventional dairy herd were transitioned into perennial grass and legume hayfields, with the last gaining organic certification in 2017.

The dairy began shipping milk to Organic Valley in 2012. By 2019, she was ready to take the herd to 100 percent grassfed, and has been under their Grassmilk® brand for the past six years. The switch to 100 percent grassfed followed naturally with another decision she had already implemented: managing the cows with Once-a-Day (OAD) milking.

Cameron was already OAD milking the later lactation cows for a few months prior to drying them off. After some further research, she opted to experiment with the entire herd. Cameron felt that OAD milking made sense for their farm, with labor constraints, natural cow behavior, and cow health considerations all being deciding factors.

“I could not find enough time to get everything done in a day, especially during haying season,” she said, as she was operating the farm alone at the time.

Another factor in the decision was the body condition struggles her first lactation cows were having during the winter months in her very cold barns. With high nutrition demands, eliminating a milking meant the cows could utilize more energy for their health, rather than put it into producing more milk.

The herd’s switch to OAD milking did lead to a 20 percent drop in production overall. Within one week, the entire herd had adjusted to the new OAD schedule. She planned the switch for the coldest part of the winter, reserving the option to go back to twice per day milking in the summer, should the cows have a need for it. They didn’t.

There were no issues after the May return to pasture grazing. Today, some of the sixth or seventh lactation cows in the herd have only ever known OAD milking.

The change to grassfed came next. Cameron had read that there would be some drop in production without grains, and that a drop in body condition could cause issues with cow health and breeding when eliminating grain. She needn’t have worried.

“Since I went OAD milking before grassfed, I saw no difference in production or cow health after switching to grassfed. I generally was only feeding less than three pounds of corn grain per cow, per day only in the parlor during milking time. I switched to alfalfa pellets in the parlor,” as a result of going grassfed, Cameron said.



Cameron raking hay.

Some cows were a bit upset, but it didn’t last long, and they are now happy. She’s seen improvements in body condition in the winter months, decreased summer heat stress, and no overall change in fertility. And the cows and the people are happier.

“At this point I don’t even consider going back to twice per day milking because OAD has been one of the best management decisions for me, my cows, and the farm as a whole. It allows us the time to make quality hay crops in the summer and work in the maple woods and the sugarhouse during the winter and spring, and have the occasional afternoon of rest or free time,” Cameron said. “Many people, including my veterinarian, the artificial insemination technician and others, have commented on how good my cows look in all season.”

Making Milk

The milking herd and the heifer group each are housed in separate 1970s freestall barns. The barns are bedded with sand, and everything is scraped out daily. There is a concrete area to stack the manure, and manure and bedding from the horse barns is commingled with that from the dairy. This mix is spread on the hay fields after mowing and baling, during both the spring and fall.

FEATURED FARM

As the cows naturally want to stay in the barn during the hot summer days, and graze in the late afternoon through early morning hours, twice a day milking was interfering with their ability to do so. With an afternoon milking at 5pm, the cows were having to graze during times of higher heat stress, and then were further stressed by having to come to the parlor to milk when they naturally wanted to graze.

“Understanding and observing cow behavior over the years and through reading about OAD milking, cows naturally want to do the majority of their grazing in the afternoon and pre-dawn/early morning hours,” Cameron said. “I now milk in the late morning. Cows come back from pasture voluntarily in the morning before milking.”

The cows are milked in an old DeLaval pit parlor, circa 1953. The old barn, where the parlor had been, burnt down, but the parlor was spared. This parlor was the second “modern” parlor built in

the state of Vermont. They updated much of the parlor’s equipment prior to 2012, and they’ve made upgrades as needed since then.

With three stalls per side, the parlor is a “true parallel parlor because the cows have individual stalls and they are parallel to the pit,” Cameron said. “It is a very old parlor, but it still works, and for my size herd it works well.”

The size of the milking herd changes with the season, and ranges between 35 and 45 head. In fall and early winter, cows are bred so they do not freshen during the coldest parts of the year, which are the months of January and February here. The cows are all descended from the Purebred Holstein herd that was dominant on the farm since the early 1900s. Cameron has crossbred her now-colorful herd, which currently consists of two, three and four-way crosses, as well as six purebred Holsteins.

“I started with Holstein/Jersey crosses, and then added Milking Shorthorn, Swedish Red and Lineback breeds. The Linebacks are my favorite, but the Holsteins will forever be special,” she said.

Annual milk production is approximately 10,500 pounds per cow. The somatic cell count runs about 130,000. The winter butterfat is at 5.2 percent, trending down to about 4.6 percent in the summer, while the proteins are at 3.6 percent and other solids at 5.5 percent.

Cameron saw a general decrease in SCC after implementing OAD milking. Overall, she has a 100 point lower SCC than prior to OAD milking, which was opposite what she expected from the literature. And, from her observations and records, milk leaking from udders does not correlate to mastitis issues or high SCC. Butterfat increased between 0.2 and 0.5 percent with the switch to OAD milking, depending on the season.

Just Rotational Grazing

Milking cows and springing heifers are grouped together on pasture, and are provided with a fresh paddock every day. In keeping with their preference for grazing later in the day, the herd is typically milked between 10 and 11 am, but the cows - and the people- are fine with some flexibility in this system. The cows are released out into the fresh pasture following the milking. Mostly, they come back on their own to the barn each morning prior to milking time.

“I call it a ‘voluntary grazing system’ because the cows make their own schedule,” Cameron said.



Cameron with one of her cows at Riverhill Farms.

FEATURED FARM

The pastures are primarily perennial grasses and some weeds, notably thistle and dock, with sedges in wetter areas. The hay fields that either have been converted to pasture, or are also used for pasture after cutting, are a mix of orchard grass, perennial rye, brome and timothy, and some red and white clovers.

“We would like to implement some pasture renovation on specific areas, but would like to do so without tilling the soil, since most of it is in the floodplain,” Cameron said. “But finding the equipment to borrow or rent, and the time to do so has been elusive.”

Riparian buffers surround the entire floodplain field area. These buffers are 80 to 100 feet wide at the minimum, and have been established for more than 80 years. Her grandfather planted trees to create the buffer, and installed riprap stone and log banks to reinforce the river banks.

With three major floods in the last two years - July 2023, December 2023 and July 2024 - the farm's fields were inaccessible for several weeks. The farmstead and barns sit on a hill above the floodplain, and have not been impacted.

“Massive trees and extensive wild undergrowth protect our fields from erosion and debris when we get the occasional flood,” Cameron said. “Riparian buffers are not used for animals or cropping purposes.”

The yearlings and younger heifers are grouped together and are rotationally grazed on pastures distinct from the milking herd. They are moved two or three times per week depending on pasture growth. This group also has some pastures which include perimeter woodlands, and they help control invasive species such as honeysuckle bush via grazing.

The summer ration for the milking herd is based on 75 - 80 percent grazing, with three pounds or less of alfalfa pellets fed per cow daily during milking. The alfalfa pellets are drizzled with a bit of molasses in the parlor “just to keep them happy while they are milking,” Cameron said. The cows also are offered free choice dry hay after milking, before returning to fresh pasture.

During the winter months, the milking herd and heifers bale graze wrapped round bales. The animals are not on pasture in the winter, in part due to the trek down the hill to the pastures, which would be difficult, if not hazardous, in the winter. There also isn't any water in the pastures in winter. Water is pumped from a hydrant on the farmstead, down the hill and into water tubs in the pastures during the grazing season.

During the winter, the milking herd and dry cows have continuous outdoor access to a concrete area near the barn, and the hay wagon is situated there. Heifers go outdoors for three or four hours during milking time. Hay is fed in the feed bunk in the heifer barn.

“I usually feed my best early first cut bales to milking cows during the coldest months of the year, and transition to my next best bales, usually second cut, during late February or early March,” Cameron said.

Breeding the Best

“We have been primarily an AI herd since as long as I can remember,” Cameron said. But a few years ago, she decided to experiment by adding a bull to compliment the artificial insemination. “I raised a herd bull and then a second one the next year, and I used them for one year each to breed my heifers and a few late cows, being careful not to inbreed. I have many beautiful calves and heifers from those bulls now, but decided not to continue with bulls because I don't have proper facilities to separate them when I don't want cows bred.”

It was also a bit difficult to keep track of when cows were bred, as this wasn't always witnessed.

Breeding selection is for midsize cows with sturdy feet and legs. Grazing ability, longevity and square, sturdy udders with no milk quality issues are also primary considerations. With the mature cows, Cameron considers cow size, breed and calving history when making breeding decisions, and tries to incorporate polled genetics whenever possible.

“All of my crossbreeds are perfectly sized and great overall cows. Holsteins always end up huge,” Cameron said.

All first calf heifers are bred to Jersey, for calving ease. Most heifer calves are kept each year, adding 16 - 18 to the herd as replacements. Any extras are sold via the local auction barn after factoring in history, temperament and breeding.

She's also begun breeding to Limousin Angus beef. Over the past five years, cows that are late to settle, or cows less suited for the herd, are bred to beef. The Limousin Angus have very good calving ease for beef-on-dairy breeding, and the calves grow well and can be sold for a good price. By incorporating beef-on-dairy breeding, she is increasing her calf retention rate, and the Limousin beef crosses are worth more at auction than non-beef breeds, Cameron said.

Animal Welfare

The primary limiting factor on the farm is calf housing. Calves are housed in an old, repurposed shed with a calving pen, and a group pen. There is another group pen in the main freestall barn which has outdoor access to a concrete pad, and calves are moved there next depending on calf numbers and weaning times.

“My biggest challenge for calves is housing space and grouping of calves, and I'm hoping to replace my old calf barn with a larger one in the next couple of years,” she said.

FEATURED FARM

Calves are weaned at three months, and for the past six years have been raised on nurse cows. The few calves that don't learn to nurse well are raised on bottles and nipple buckets. The calves have access to good quality dry hay within two weeks after birth, and they are taught to eat it by the nurse cows with no calf starter, until they are put on pasture after six months of age.

"I rarely have health issues with them," since using nurse cows, Cameron said.

Prior to going organic, Cameron raised calves on buckets, feeling a milk replacer. The health issues were constant. She switched to feeding whole milk from the cows, and calf health significantly improved. However, scours and general un-thriftiness were still concerns. She then learned that the calf sucking reflex produces natural sodium bicarbonate, which neutralizes stomach acids and bacteria.

"That was a lightbulb moment for me, and I never again trained a calf to bucket feed, using only bottles and individual and group nipple bucket feeders after that," she said. "Health and scours issues dramatically decreased when raising calves this way."

The ultimate switch to nurse cows came after she implemented OAD milking. She had always kept cows with their calves for a few days after birth, and she decided to let a few cows with high milk production into a group calf pen. It was a successful experiment, and became routine.

"I let nurse cows into the pen with their calves twice daily, for about an hour, and then put the cows back out with the herd. I will wean calves to once per day feeding at about five or six weeks old, and then wean completely at around three months old," Cameron said.

Certain cows always want to be with their calf, and volunteer to be nurse cows for a calf group. Other cows don't seem to miss their calves, and are not suited to the job.

"Since using nurse cows I have almost zero issues with scours, and growth rates and body condition are phenomenal," she said. "Another thing that is probably very taboo in the dairy industry is that I don't naval dip calves and I don't have any issues with naval infections either."



Calves in their group pen at Riverhill Farms.

FEATURED FARM

Cameron has made some changes to traditional calf health care, and no longer uses any navel dips. The nurse cows clean the navel areas regularly, and spend a lot of time grooming their calves.

If scours occurs, she always uses Crystal Creek's Calf 180® powder mixed with either milk or water, and any calves "bounce back quickly."

Calves also do not receive vaccines until they go onto pasture. Then, weaned calves and young heifers are given Vira Shield® or Triangle® respiratory vaccine, Vision 20/20® clostridium plus pink eye combination vaccine and a rabies vaccine.

"I have historically given annual booster shots to all cows, but over the last three or four years I have scaled back on boosters to second lactation plus cows because I don't believe it's necessary in a closed herd and I have had no issues," Cameron explained. "We rarely have health issues with any cows or calves, except for milk fever in fresh cows."

She administers IBA's Cal-C-Preme® calcium boluses as a preventative measure for milk fever. If a cow is down, she will start an IV to provide calcium. Mastitis tends to be due to environmental factors, and she uses Dynamint® udder rub on cows as needed when it occurs.

The farm's veterinarian, Anne Murphy of Addison County Dairy Consulting, is used primarily for pregnancy checks a few times per year, and to dehorn calves. She may be consulted during a particularly difficult calving situation.

They don't use a nutritionist, as they are a 100 percent grassfed herd, and Cameron knows the quality of the hay that is coming from each field and is confident making selections to meet cow nutritional needs.

After they mow and rake the hay, a custom baler is used in the summer and does excellent work, Cameron said. Friends often help haul round hay bales from the field to the farmstead for stacking. She stacks the bales, so she can readily locate the hay she needs when feeding.

Organic Musings

Cameron and her cows couldn't be happier about their embrace of certified organic, and grassfed dairy farming. Before embarking on the transition she did have some concerns.

"I had so many questions and worries about how I would treat diseases and issues that I had been conditioned to deal with," she said. "I toured other farms in my area and remember one older farmer who had been organic for many years. When I asked about how they dealt with various issues using organic treatments, his response was 'after a few years, they just go away.'"

Despite some skepticism, Cameron took the plunge and thirteen years later now understands that common herd health issues

which occur under conventional methods simply are eliminated with organic dairy practices. Ketosis, hoof problems, retained placenta, fertility issues, abscesses and more "were always something we just dealt with when conventional, but now are rare or non-existent," she said.

The farm's maple operation is certified organic, too, since 2022. They have expanded the taps from 400 to 3,200 over the past four years, and have the land resources to expand production to a potential of 8,000 - 10,000 taps. Opening a farm stand and a website to expand retail maple product sales is a short-term goal.

"The maple expansion on our farm has helped us make ends meet the last couple of years; it has been a big investment upfront but has long-term payoff potential," she said.

Economics and the cost of doing business are ongoing concerns. The loss of many Vermont dairy farms has led to difficulty getting milk to the processing plant, as local and regional processing capacity has been lost, and the cost of doing business increases.

"The cost of everything has gone up and affects our bottom line, making it harder to pay for improvements to farm operations when they are needed. For farmers, our biggest asset is our land. We work hard to maintain it and improve it and use our resources wisely," she said. "We are also maintaining open, working landscapes that are valued for the environmental and economic benefits they provide, but seeing less and less return on that resource."

Grants and cost-sharing are available but difficult to access, and simplifying these so that farmers - who manage a farm business, family, and land fulltime - are better able to participate should be a priority, she said. And the programs need to be worth more upfront and in long-term return value.

Deciding to transition this historic, century's old family dairy farm to certified organic production has greatly improved the lives of the cows, and of the farmers. Both Cameron and the cows are happier under the organic system than they were when the farm was conventionally managed.

"I have been farming here my whole life, and I am truly blessed to live and work here. I am truly blessed to live this life on this farm, doing what I love. Words cannot describe the sense of fulfillment of cows on pasture, a newborn calf, the smell of fresh grass being cut, hay being baled, a stack of bales at the end of the year, tapping trees in the winter and boiling maple syrup in the spring, maintaining fences during pasture season, and a bonfire and homegrown burgers off the grill while sitting on the porch during summer sunset." ♦

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Pay and Feed Prices March 2025

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has published estimated national organic retail product sales for November and December 2024, compiled with data from the Federal Milk Marketing Order. In November, the data shows a continued increase in the sales of Organic Whole Milk packaged fluid products of 15.5% over November 2023, and the December data shows sales at 17.7% over December 2023. There was a 3.5% increase in Organic Fat Reduced Milk in November 2024 over November 2023, and a 2.0% increase in December 2024 over December 2023. Year to date, November 2024, organic fluid milk sales are 6.9% higher than the same period in 2023. December sales of organic packaged milk were the highest recorded since data was first collected in January 2006, with 270 million pounds shipped by milk handlers in the month, an increase of 7.2% over 2023.

Total US sales of organic fluid milk products were 249 million pounds in November 2024, with organic Whole Milk sales at 131 million pounds, and sales of organic Fat Reduced Milk at 115 million pounds. In December 2024, total sales of organic packaged milk were 270 million pounds, with sales of organic packaged Whole Milk at 147 million pounds, and sales of organic Fat Reduce Milk at 121 million pounds.

The average retail price for organic milk is recorded by Federal Milk Order market administrators based on a survey conducted one day between the 1st and 10th of each month (excluding Fridays and weekends) in selected cities or metropolitan areas. In 2008, the average retail price was \$3.81/half gallon; the total volume of organic fluid milk shipped by handlers in 2008 as reported by FMMO was 1,681 million pounds and the Pay Price averaged \$28.38/cwt.

By 2024, the average retail price has increased by \$1 a half gallon to \$4.81/ half gallon. That \$1.00 increase is equivalent to \$23.25/cwt. The range of retail price varies from \$3.99 to \$6.28 per half gallon. Pay Price to producers has increased on average by approximately \$8/cwt from 2008 to 2024. Despite the increase in retail prices and the very modest increase in Pay Price, the

total volume of retail packaged milk for 2024 was recorded as 3,041 million pounds, an increase of 1,365 million pounds over 2008. The data over the last 16 years shows that consumer demand has not decreased with increased retail prices. The cost of organic milk to the milk buyer averages only 30% of the retail price, therefore any increase in Pay Price has only a marginal effect on buyers' profit margins and no effect on the growth and stability of the organic retail market. The profit margins of the milk buyers and brands depend on many variables including their negotiating skills and leverage with retailers, ability to meet retailers' supply needs, and their ability to control overhead.

Reports from producers are that organic milk is still short in the Northeast and across the country, with spot milk as high as \$48/cwt. Pay prices ranging from an annualized average of \$33/cwt to \$45/cwt for grain and pasture fed dairies. Grass Fed certified dairies range from \$36/cwt up to \$45/cwt, depending how much the buyer is paying, to reflect the increased costs and lower production of Grass Fed production. Reports are that the Midwest Pay Price is lower than the Northeast and slower to increase. The western states are still recovering from the widespread H5N1 virus and from the decision of Darigold NW to release all its organic farmers. Reports

- continued on page 32

Estimated Fluid Milk Products Sales Reports

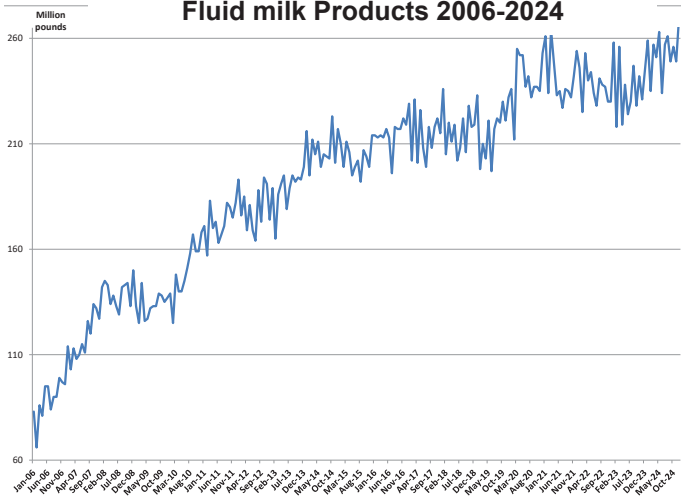
Product Name	Sales of Organic Fluid Milk		Change from	
	November 2024	2024 Year to date	Nov-2023	Year to date
	Million pounds		Percent	
Organic Whole Milk	131	1,450	10.4%	12.7%
Flavored Whole milk	1	10	104.8%	10.6%
Organic Reduced-Fat Milk (2%)	82	887	10.4%	5.6%
Organic Low-Fat Milk (1%)	19	227	-7.6%	-8.0%
Organic Fat-Free Milk Skim	11	121	-4.3%	-9.6%
Organic Flavored Fat-Reduced Milk	3	67	-34.1%	-4.1%
Other Fluid Organic Milk Products	2	6	74.5%	49.6%
Total Fat Reduced Milk	115	1,303	3.5%	0.9%
Total Organic Milk Products	249	2,769	7.7%	6.9%

Product Name	Sales of Organic Fluid Milk		Change from	
	Dec-24	2024 Year to date	Dec-23	Year to date
	Million pounds		Percent	
Organic Whole Milk	147	1,597	17.7%	13.1%
Flavored Whole milk	1	11	40.8%	12.7%
Organic Reduced-Fat Milk (2%)	87	974	7.6%	5.8%
Organic Low-Fat Milk (1%)	20	247	-5.0%	-7.7%
Organic Fat-Free Milk Skim	10	131	-6.0%	-9.3%
Organic Flavored Fat-Reduced Milk	4	71	-34.5%	-6.5%
Other Fluid Organic Milk Products	1	7	23.9%	46.6%
Total Fat Reduced Milk	121	1,424	2.0%	1%
Total Organic Milk Products	270	3,039	10.1%	7.2%

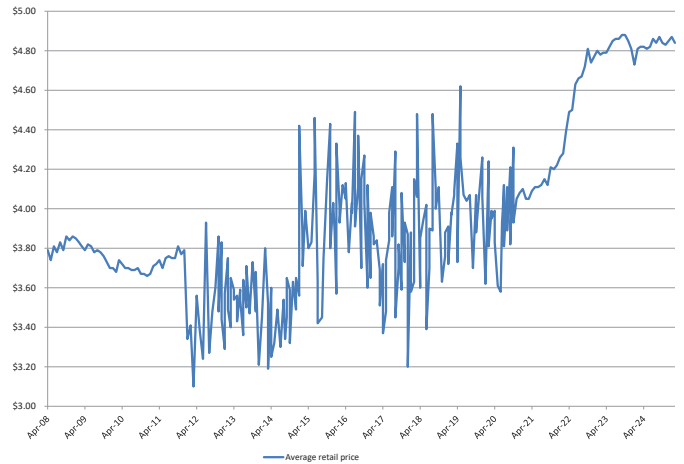
Data may not add due to rounding to the nearest million pounds

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

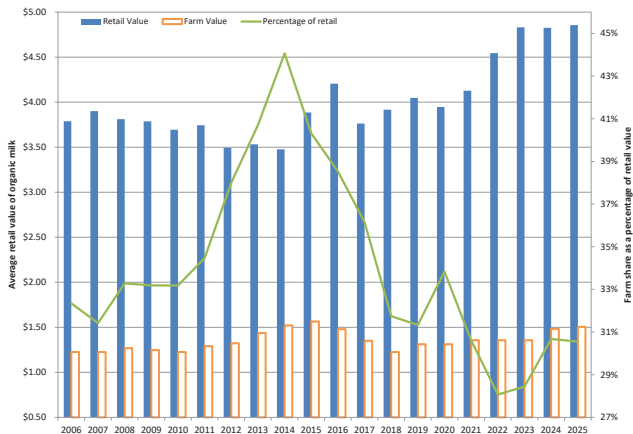
Estimated Total U.S. Sales of Organic Fluid milk Products 2006-2024



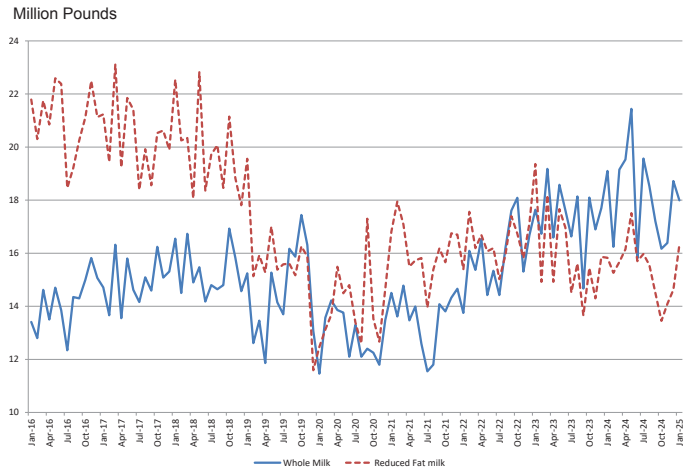
Average Organic Retail price for 1/2 gallons as reported by USDA AMS 2012-2024



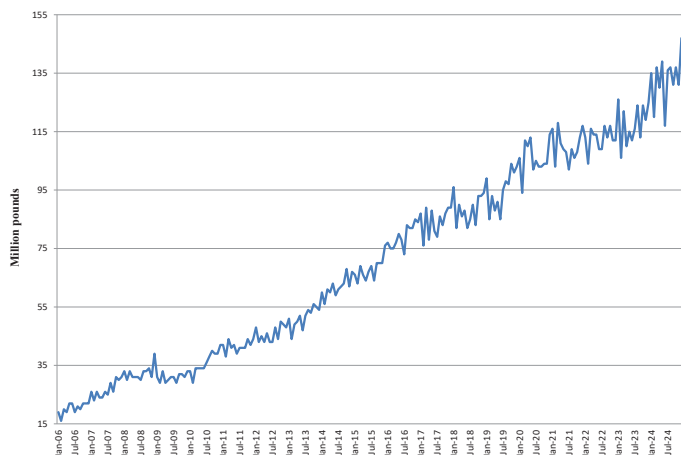
Average retail price, average farm share and percentage for half gallon of organic milk



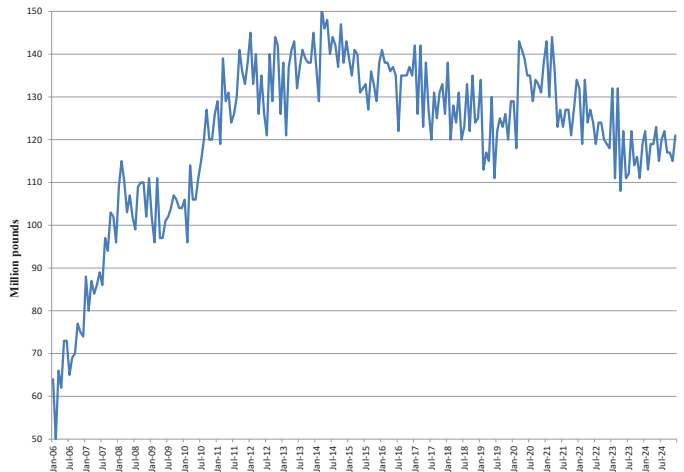
Utilization of Organic Fluid milk in FMMO 1 2016-2024 (not including fluid packaged milk processed out of order)



Organic Whole Milk Retail Sales 2006-2024



Organic Reduced-Fat retail sales 2006-2024



ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Pay and Feed Prices

continued from page 30

are that all but 2 have found alternative situations. CROPP Cooperative's recently refurbished manufacturing plant remains under-utilized as supplies are tight and the coop's presence in the Northwest has been reduced.

Federal Milk Marketing Order 1 (Order) reported that in December 2024, fluid Organic Whole Milk packaged and utilized within the Order totaled 18.72 million pounds; higher than the previous year of 17.70 million pounds. In December 2024, Organic Reduced Fat Milk packaged and utilized in the Order was 14.62 million pounds, down from 15.86 million pounds in December 2023. The total organic fluid milk packaged and utilized in the Order in December 2024 was 33.34 million pounds; no noticeable increase on the December 2023 total of 33.56 million pounds. All milk packaged outside the Order, but sold within the Order, increased by 6% or 3.05 million pounds in December 2024 over December 2023. This does include organic fluid milk packaged outside the Order but sold within the Order. Organic milk averages approximately 19% of the fluid milk packaged in the Order. In December 2024, there was 146.83 million pounds of fluid milk from plants fully or partially regulated by other Orders that was sold in the Order. Organic milk sold to Stonyfield/US Lactalis plant in New Hampshire is not included in this data.

2024 TOTAL

In 2024, the total amount of organic packaged milk handled in FO1 was 402.16 million pounds, an increase of 1% over the total for 2023 of 399.87 million pounds. This data does not include organic packaged milk that was fully or partially regulated by other FO's but consumed in FO 1.

January 2025

In January 2025, Organic Whole Milk packaged in the Order was 17.99 million pounds, a decrease from January 2024 of 19.1 million pounds. In January 2025, Organic Reduced Fat Milk packaged in the Order was 16.31 million pounds, slightly higher than the 15.83 packaged in January 2024. Total organic milk packaged in the

Month	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2025	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2024	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2023	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2022	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2021	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2020
JANUARY	34.31	34.93	37.00	29.14	31.32	23.93
FEBRUARY		31.50	31.65	33.65	31.56	26.69
MARCH		34.82	37.37	31.56	31.87	27.90
APRIL		35.68	31.51	33.23	28.97	29.35
MAY		38.95	36.24	30.49	29.72	28.25
JUNE		31.51	34.59	31.53	28.41	26.90
JULY		35.54	31.15	29.44	25.50	26.70
AUGUST		34.07	33.75	32.12	27.18	24.70
SEPTEMBER		31.72	28.32	35.00	30.26	29.70
OCTOBER		29.62	33.54	34.83	29.47	25.78
NOVEMBER		30.48	31.19	31.13	31.07	24.47
DECEMBER		33.34	33.56	33.78	31.36	28.13
ANNUAL		402.16	399.87	385.90	356.68	322.50

Month	2024	2024 in order	2024 out of order	2023	2023 in order	2023 out of order
January	56.23	6.41	49.82	55.21	6.51	48.70
February	51.88	5.77	46.12	49.11	5.49	43.63
March	53.96	5.93	46.29	52.73	5.59	45.44
April	54.13	6.04	48.09	49.18	5.64	43.53
May	51.32	5.81	45.51	48.21	5.40	42.78
June	52.56	5.51	47.04	45.20	5.57	39.63
July	52.68	5.63	47.04	48.45	5.70	42.75
August	55.63	6.26	49.37	48.47	5.63	42.85
September	50.68	5.41	45.27	48.76	5.58	43.18
October	50.36	5.89	44.47	49.73	5.65	42.48
November	48.04	5.99	42.04	49.60	5.48	44.12
December	53.98	6.73	47.21	54.17	6.08	48.10
Total	631.45	71.39	558.25	598.82	68.31	527.18

Order in January 2025 of 34.31 million pounds was level with the 34.93 million pounds packaged in January 2024.

There are 3 other FMMO's that publish reports on the volume of Class 1 organic packaged milk in their Order, two of which report how much is 'exported' to other Orders. In December 2024, of the 270 million pounds packaged and sold as Class 1 organic milk in the US, approximately 157 million pounds was packaged in 4 Orders that publish reports on organic milk packaged in their Order. That leaves over 110 million pounds of organic milk that is packaged in Orders that do not publish the data on organic milk that they collect. In December 2024, Order 32 (Central) packaged more organic milk than any other order at 53.98 million pounds. Order 51 (California) packaged 40.81 in December 2024. Order 33 (Midwest) packages less than Order 1, with 26.66 million pounds. In Order 32 (Central FO where both Aurora Dairies are located), 88.5% of the organic milk packaged in 2024 (558.25 million pounds) was 'exported' to other Orders.

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Vermont Monthly Organic Dairy Report and Pennsylvania Monthly Organic Reports

This initiative is part of a new pilot program in partnership with the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service Market News to collect organic market data for the 2023/2024 growing seasons which are reported monthly. It is difficult to draw any conclusions from this data but it does show a wide spread on Pay Price and daily production per cow.

The Vermont Report has published a year of data. While the sample size is relatively small and the sample includes Grass Fed dairies, the weighted average Pay Price is \$36.04/cwt over 12 months, with a range from \$31.39/cwt to \$41.71/cwt (does not include any deductions for hauling). The average daily production per cow averages 41.81lbs./cow. The milk buyers in Vermont are CROPP Cooperative, US Lactalis direct supply, and Upstate Niagara.

Pennsylvania Report

The data from PA has not been collected for as long as the VT data. It does show a very wide range of Pay Price from a low of \$25.05/cwt to a high of \$45.95/cwt. The average over the 6-month period is \$34.70, lower than the Pay Price shown for VT. The average daily production per cow for the 6-month period is 30.06 pounds, 10 pounds lower than the VT average.

Organic Milk Exports

Recently released data for November and December 2024 indicated organic milk exports were 11,407cwt and 8,997cwt respectively, ending the year up by 28,037 cwt compared to 2023, an increase of approximately 55% year over year. This compares to 2019 totals of 88,988 cwt and 2020 totals of 43,677 cwt in exports under this description, code #0401201000. In 2019, 71% of the exports went to North America (not including the US) and in 2024, 61% of the exports went to North America. The data suggests that COVID had a significant effect on exports under this product category which has now been corrected but I am unaware of the changes in organic dairy in Canada that would have also affected this market. What is the future of this market as supply tightens, tariffs come and go and the USMCA is up for renegotiation in 2026 with President Trump already threatening tougher negotiations on dairy?

Month	Volume(lbs.)	Ave. daily production per cow (lbs.)	Min Price	Max Price	Weighted Av Price	Ave. Butterfat	Ave. Protein	Avg Monthly Production/cow (lbs.)
Nov-23	1,155,583	39.6	\$ 27.92	\$ 43.60	\$ 37.01			
Dec-23	1,227,212	39.3	\$ 27.92	\$ 47.13	\$ 39.70			
Jan-24	1,224,497	40.2	\$ 35.00	\$ 47.38	\$ 39.97	4.21%	3.03%	1,246
Feb-24	1,073,895	41.9	\$ 36.04	\$ 46.74	\$ 39.99	4.82%	3.43%	1,299
Mar-24	1,088,144	46.4	\$ 33.68	\$ 42.87	\$ 36.59	4.64%	3.38%	1,139
Apr-24	958,104	44.5	\$ 33.08	\$ 41.85	\$ 36.10	4.59%	3.34%	1,239
May-24	1,105,985	51	\$ 32.10	\$ 39.11	\$ 34.77	4.38%	3.32%	1,580
Jun-24	860,631	50.7	\$ 31.65	\$ 39.10	\$ 34.00	4.20%	3.22%	1,541
Jul-24	1,013,388	48.4	\$ 30.70	\$ 37.06	\$ 33.00	3.99%	3.13%	1,500
Aug-24	1,169,419	47.8	\$ 31.49	\$ 38.79	\$ 33.00	4.03%	3.21%	1,482
Sep-24	1,066,596	48.3	\$ 29.50	\$ 38.75	\$ 34.39	4.09%	3.29%	1,449
Oct-24	1,066,596	46.5	\$ 29.50	\$ 38.75	\$ 34.08	4.39%	3.37%	1,443
Nov-24	1,411,221	42.69	\$ 29.50	\$ 41.06	\$ 35.90	4.45%	3.34%	1,280

Month	Volume(lbs.)	Ave. daily production per cow (lbs.)	Min Price	Max Price	Weighted Av Price	Ave. Butterfat	Ave. Protein
Jun-24	1,331,605	31.23	\$ 25.05	\$ 41.74	\$ 33.57	3.98%	3.07%
Jul-24	1,170,262	27.9	\$ 25.50	\$ 41.43	\$ 33.55	3.88%	2.99%
Aug-24	1,167,928	27.93	\$ 28.45	\$ 42.32	\$ 34.60	3.99%	3.11%
Sep-24	1,268,946	30.76	\$ 28.70	\$ 43.22	\$ 35.61	4.17%	3.30%
Oct-24	1,299,953	28.8	\$ 25.85	\$ 45.95	\$ 35.01	4.41%	3.39%
Nov-24	1,243,522	33.75	\$ 28.80	\$ 44.05	\$ 35.88	4.49%	3.40%

EXPORTS OF MILK AND CREAM, NOT CONCENTRATED NOR SWEETENED, OF A FAT CONTENT, BY WEIGHT, EXCEEDING 1% BUT NOT EXCEEDING 6%, CERTIFIED ORGANIC 2021-2024 (data in US CWT).				
	2021	2022	2023	2024
	493	2,358	3,639	2,643
February	708	2,342	2,911	5,352
March	365	4,379	3,695	2,998
April	2,421	2,896	2,249	3,093
May	2,389	2,601	3,188	3,518
June	3,368	2,832	5,975	6,360
July	2,443	3,192	5,562	11,930
August	4,114	2,424	6,919	6,604
September	4,227	3,236	3,578	6,096
October	4,260	3,275	5,691	10,538
November	4,290	3,577	3,720	11,407
December	2,595	3,051	4,373	8,997
Annual Total in cwt	31,671	36,163	51,499	79,536
Dollar value	\$ 2,865,000	\$ 1,927,000	\$ 3,006,000	\$ 3,646,000

Auction News

With USDA reports of a 70 year low in all dairy heifer replacements, reports from producers, phone calls to NODPA and from those advertising on NODPA's website and in the NODPA News, demand for organic certified cows and heifers is very strong, with prices paid equal to and exceeding conventional dairy replacements, \$2,500 per head and higher. Hoskins Livestock Auction, a NOFA-NY-certified livestock auction in New Berlin, New York, reports that organic cull cows consistently sold above conventional cows in January and

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

February 2025. The average price for conventional cull cows ranged from a low of \$97/cwt to a high of \$125 /cwt in January and February 2025. Organic certified cull cow prices ranged from \$98/cwt to \$130/ cwt. Calf prices are still strong but there is no premium for organic. Organic milking cows were selling well at an average of \$1,500-\$3,900 each in January and February 2025. In a recent report from a Pacific Northwest livestock auction, USDA stated the overall average for organic cull cow prices traded lower than the overall average for conventional cull cows. The average price for the top 10 organic cows auctioned was \$131.89 per hundredweight, compared to an average price of \$159.07 per hundredweight for the top 10 conventional cows auctioned. The average weight for the top 10 conventional cows was 15.40 cwt. compared to 13.55 cwt. for the top 10 organic cows. The overall price for organic cows auctioned was \$112.66 per hundredweight with an average weight of 11.75 cwt. pounds, while the overall price for conventional cows auctioned was \$120.35 per hundredweight with an average weight of 12.45cwt.

The USDA NOP has increased its enforcement of requirements for tracking of organic livestock either at auction or straight to slaughter to correct abuses in the system that had many non-certified animals being sold or slaughtered as organic. A reminder that organic livestock do not need to be shipped separately from non-organic when they are trucked to auction or direct to slaughter. They need to be identified clearly as organic with all the correct paperwork.

Feed

National data from USDA has organic feed corn delivered to the elevator averaging \$7.41 per bushel in January 2025 and \$7.18 per bushel in February 2025. Organic feed soybean delivered to the elevator averaged \$20.22/bu. in January 2025 and \$20.90 in February 2025. Organic feed wheat averaged \$6.88/bushel in February 2025. Soybean meal was trading at \$888/ton in January 2025 and \$895/ton in February 2025. Costs for organic Premium Alfalfa are about the same as conventional, at \$260 -\$325 per ton. ♦

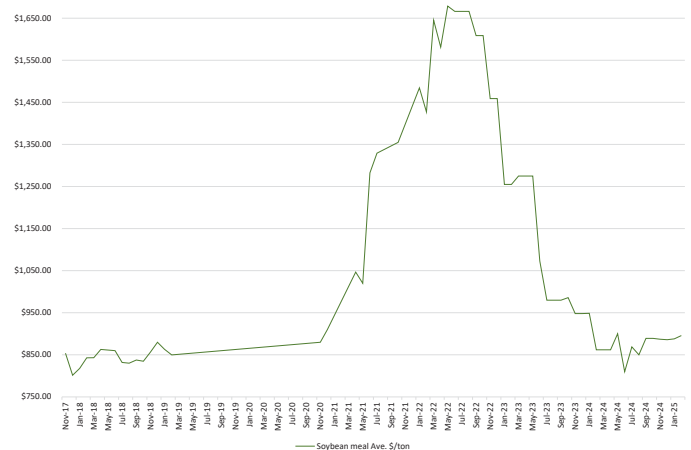
Organic Corn Price \$/bushel 2008-2024 supplied by USDA AMS FOB the Farm and FOB Elevator/Warehouse from 2023 onwards



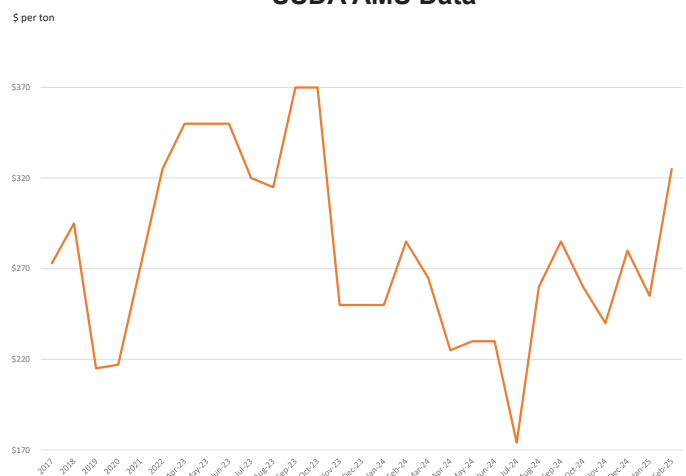
Organic Feed Soybean \$/bushel 2008-2024 - USDA Market News Data - FOB Farm and FOB Elevator/Warehouse from 2023 onwards



2017-2024 Soybean meal Ave. \$/ton delivered FOB dealer/warehouse - USDA AMS Data



Organic Hay Dollars per ton (Average/year) - USDA AMS Data



Calendar

WEBINAR SERIES

Improve Your Triple Bottom Line Through Better Grazing

Tuesday, March 25, April 1, 2025

6:30 pm until 8:00 pm

Grazing is more than simply turning livestock out onto a green pasture and hoping for the best. Sound grazing management is an economical farming practice that helps you reduce your workload, keep your animals happier and healthier, and improve the overall productivity and profitability of your farm. Well-managed grazing systems also provide greater environmental benefits and enhance habitat for many wildlife species. In this course, you'll learn the key concepts of successful grazing operations that can be adapted and successfully implemented on your own farm. The course focus will be on grazing ruminant livestock, but most of the information will be relevant to non-ruminant animals as well.

Webinar Schedule

In 2025, this course will be offered live for 6-weeks on Tuesdays from 6:30 – 8:00 PM (Eastern) from February 25 – April 1. While we encourage live attendance, so you have the opportunity to engage with presenters and ask questions, all webinars are recorded and posted in the online classroom to watch anytime. Once enrolled in this course, you will retain access to all materials indefinitely, and can return to participate in the live webinars in future offerings of the course if you wish. Join us!

Your Instructors: Betsy Hicks and Rich Taber.

Betsy Hicks is a Dairy Management Specialist with the South Central NY Dairy & Field Crops Team with Cornell Cooperative

Extension. Her background is in nutrition, and she helps both dairy and beef farmers with grazing, herd health, cow behavior, cow comfort and calf care. Betsy operates a registered Black Angus beef cow-calf operation, focusing on cattle that mother well and excel on grass.

Rich Taber is an Agriculture, Grazing, and Forestry Educator with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chenango County. He owns a 165-acre farm with his wife Wendy in nearby southern Madison County. They manage about 40 acres of rotationally grazed pasture for their beef cow calf herd of Angus-Hereford crosses. He has also been a long-time contributor to the Cornell Small Farms Quarterly.

Enroll here: <https://smallfarmcourses.com/p/bf-231-grazing-management>

Drawing the Line in New England Milkshed: Regional Zoning for Dairy Industry Preparedness

Thursday, March 27, 10:00 am until 3:00 pm, Zoom meeting

Dairy producers and industry allies are invited to a March 27, 2025 interactive workshop to weigh in on the feasibility of a regional milkshed protection zone. While bird flu (H5N1) outbreaks are affecting dairy herds in the Midwest and western United States (U.S.), a team of researchers at the University of Vermont (UVM) is focused on the impacts of foreign animal disease outbreaks on regional dairy production in the “New England milkshed.” The milkshed is defined by all sources of milk processed or manufactured into dairy products within New England, including farms in eastern New York state that ship milk into the region.

Dr. Julie Smith, veterinarian and research professor in the UVM Department of Animal and Veterinary Sciences, is leading a “regionalization” project that will collaborate with dairy farmers, dairy cooperatives, veterinarians, and federal and state regulatory officials. The goal is to define the boundaries for the milkshed that could reduce the risks of disease spread from livestock and dairy product movements.

New England milkshed producers and industry allies are invited to a one-day, interactive workshop during March 2025, to determine the feasibility and workability of establishing a regional protection zone as a foreign animal disease response strategy. At the end of the day, participants will weigh in on their willingness to see a regionalization plan move forward and develop recommendations for action.

To register for this free meeting and for more information, go to this site: <https://www.secureagriculture.org/food-supply-planning/new-england-milkshed-regional-zoning-dairy-preparedness/>

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NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

Website & E-Newsletter Advertising

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

Website Advertising

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

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

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

E-Newsletter Advertising

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

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

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

Discounted rates for commitments of 6 months or more.

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

Email: noraowens@comcast.net

Phone: 413-772-0444

Go to the following web page for more information:
www.nodpa.com/web_ads.shtml

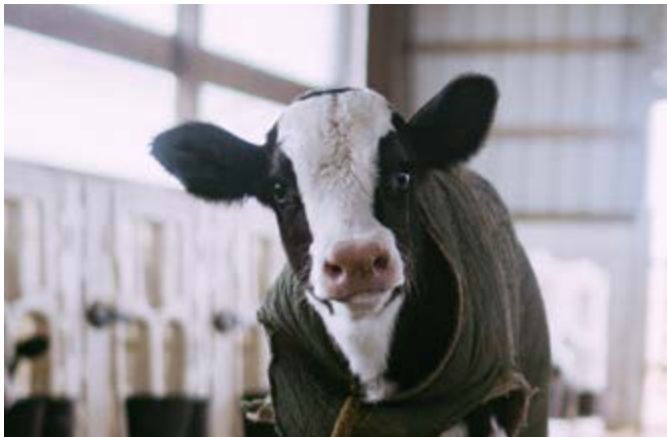


Photo: Amber Kipp, Unsplash

Calendar (continued)

NOFA-VT and MOFGA 3-Part Series FARMER CLIMATE FORUMS

This spring NOFA-VT and MOFGA are hosting a 3-part series of farmer climate forums focused on flooding, excess precipitation, and farm resilience. The series starts next Thursday (3/13) with a farmer panel exploring flooding and adaptation. Session two (3/27) covers New England climate trends and soil hydrology. And the final forum (4/10) is a conversation around climate adaptation planning for flooding and high precipitation. The forums are virtual, free to attend, and hopefully are a nice opportunity to learn from your peers and take steps toward growing our shared agricultural resilience here in New England.

New England Climate Trends, Soil Hydrology, and Managing the Effects of Soil Saturation

Thursday, March 27, 5:00 pm until 6:30 pm

Presenters: Sean Birkel, UMaine and Joshua Faulkner, UVM

Sean Birkel will review Maine's historical temperature and precipitation trends and future climate projections, and discuss impacts to the growing season. Sean will give an overview of online tools relevant to agriculture, including growing degree day and precipitation summaries, frost date estimates, and other resources. Josh Faulkner will discuss general soil and hydrology concepts that relate to drainage and water management in agriculture in the context of extreme rainfall. He will also address how saturation and soil moisture status can affect nutrient cycling and soil health factors and how those relate to farm management practices. Find more information and to register click here: <https://www.nofavt.org/node/18371>.

Climate Adaptation Planning for Flood and High Precipitation Conditions

Thursday, April 10, 5:00 pm until 6:30 pm, Online

Climate adaptation planning for flood and high precipitation conditions

Presenters: Sean Hagan, Maine Farmland Trust; Sara Keleman, American Farmland Trust

Climate Adaptation Planning is a useful tool to assess risks and identify strategies to increase resilience and mitigate the impacts of climate change. This session will discuss the process of climate adaptation planning with a focus on the impacts of flooding and high precipitation conditions, and we'll hear from a farmer who will share their experience working through this process and how it has informed their thinking. Find more information and to register click here: <https://www.nofavt.org/node/18382>.

Classified Ads

ANIMALS

COWS WANTED: Looking for organic milking cows. Will travel. Need 40 but will pick up any amount to get to that#. Contact Matt Mills, Millsfarmsupply@hotmail.com, 607-656-4186.

Location: Central New York

COWS WANTED: Looking for herd of approx. 60 certified organic dairy cows. Would consider multiple smaller herds. Needed by middle of March. Contact: Calvin Hess, calvinandhobbs1982@gmail.com, 570-485-9894

Location: Ulster, PA

FOR RENT: A2A2 Jersey Bull for rent. Proven bull for siring snug udders and high fat. \$60.00/month. Pick up at current location. Call 814-349-5675, ext. 0.

Location: Canastota, NY area

COWS WANTED: Looking for organic grass fed cows or springing heifers. Call 814-349-55675, ext. 0.

Location: Center County, PA

FEED, GRAIN, HAY

HAY FOR SALE: 4X4 wrapped round bales, early 1st cut, some dry. \$40 per, if purchasing more than 10 \$35 per. VOF certified organic. Contact: George Woodard, woodardsfarm@gmail.com, 802-244-1571.

Location: Waterbury Center, VT

FOR SALE: 2024 4x4 wrapped round baleage, 1st and 2nd cutting certified organic, trucking available. Call 1-802-380-4783 or email neros75@comcast.net.

Location: Guilford, VT

FOR SALE: CERTIFIED ORGANIC HAY (updated)

- Small square bales 1st cutting mixed grass hay at \$5 per bale
- Large square bales 3' x 3' x 7' 1st cutting mixed grass hay at \$65 per bale
- Round bales 4' x 5' twine wrapped 1st cutting mixed dry grass hay at \$35

All hay is stored under cover or wrapped. Forage tests available. We ship throughout the east coast and have multiple delivery quantities or pickup at the farm. Samples available. Call ore text: Tony Marzolino, 315-378-5180.

Location: Berkshire, NY

FOR SALE: NOFA-NY Organic 1st/2nd cut BALEAGE, 1st cut Dry Hay, and Bedding. 2024 products. All large round bales. Call 607-566-8477 or email Mitchellorganics@hotmail.com.

Location: Avoca, NY

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.

2025 Ad rates and sizes listed below.

Deadline for advertising in the
May 2025 issue is April 15, 2025.

Full Page Ad (7.5" W x 9.75" H) = \$660

1/2 Page Ad (7.5" W x 4.75" H) = \$340

1/4 Page Ad (3.625" W x 4.75" H) = \$190

1/8 Page Ad/Business Card: (3.625" 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 pay a flat rate of \$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 or pay online by credit card
at www.nodpa.com

EQUIPMENT

EQUIPMENT FOR SALE: 2021 I&J 10.5' roller-crimper. Only ran over 200 acres since we've owned it, worked awesome. Great tool for organic no-till and soil building. Asking \$3500. Brillion 4 row 30 inch S-tine cultivator set up to sidedress. 2 85 gallon tanks, electric pump. We used to side dress corn with liquid fish fertilizer. Asking \$2000. The only reason for selling, is losing a very large piece of rented land we grew organic row-crops on. Focusing on hay going forward. Contact Nathaniel Stephens, n.stephens4020@gmail.com, 973-459-2691.

Location: Sussex, NJ

EQUIPMENT FOR SALE: Lely trailer wfr broadcaster/ seeder; like-new condition; towable version; regular maintenance & operation; 550 lb. capacity. can deliver for fee. Lely videos on YouTube. Contact James Ball, balljames@yahoo.com, 315-237-1358.

Location: Locke NY

BUSINESS FOR SALE

BUSINESS FOR SALE: JoJo's Elixir, garlic tincture. OMRI approved. All inventory, customer list and equipment to make JoJo's. I have been making the best garlic tincture on the market for 18 years and now its time to retire. Asking \$20,000. Unlimited potential. Email/call JoAnn Madison, jojosexlixir@yahoo.com, 802-897-2024.

Location: Shoreham, VT

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

c/o Ed Maltby
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Deerfield, MA 01342

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