

## **NODPA's 2006 Annual Meeting**

### **NODPA's priorities for 2006-2007 as voted by the membership attending the meeting:**

1. Compliance/Integrity of the USDA Organic Seal
2. Standards: Last Third and Pasture
3. Maintaining Pay Price and looking at supply management
4. Grain price and supply

The members discussed the following issues:

- NODPA's work on its priorities for 2005 -2006:
  1. NODPA's work has been successful with the two main areas of work on the pasture standards and pay price.
  2. NODPA should partner and work with other organizations that share NODPA positions but maintain its own independent integrity as it represents organic dairy farmers' interest.
  3. NODPA should continue to provide balance and not necessarily align itself closely with extreme opinion. NODPA should promote positive and informed opinions.
- What areas of research would assist organic farmers?
  1. The control of weeds in pasture without tillage.
  2. What are the different nutritional benefits of pasture intake and how can these be measured?
  3. Fly control.
  4. Testing of organically certified commercially produced fertilizer and medications for their efficiency.
  5. Seeding mixtures for pasture that will work best in extreme climates.
  6. Controlling grasses and other weeds in annual grain crops.
- Concerns with compliance and the role of certifiers:
  1. Are certifiers rushing to certify operations under pressure from rapid growth of the industry?
  2. Are new entrants being advised to use certifiers who are the easiest and quickest?
  3. Everybody needs to meet the same high standards to safeguard the future integrity of the product. There is confusion: some certifiers allowing post dating, some don't; some accept affidavits, some don't; some have representative boards who review applicants, others have a checklist that is used by outside consultants.
  4. Certifiers should insist that farmers fill out the forms themselves, and should work with farmers to devise their organic farm plan.
  5. Is it favourable to rapidly increase the number of certified farms? If it is done with universally interpreted high standards it will be OK, but if the standards are lowered then any increase will destroy the organic market.
  6. Compliance is not a new issue but as the number of certified farms has increased the number of non-compliant farms and certifiers has also increased.
  7. NOP is responsible for policing and farmers need to work within their guidelines.
- Action points for NODPA:
  - a. NODPA should become an information center for the guidelines for reporting non-compliant farmers and certifiers.
  - b. NODPA mission and goals are to help and encourage transitioning farmers to assist them to become sustainable operations in the long term. NODPA should educate not police.
  - c. NODPA should work with certifiers and processors to make them aware of farmers concerns.
  - d. NODPA should partner and work with other organizations that share NODPA positions but maintain its own independent integrity as it represents organic dairy farmers' interest.
  - e. NODPA should continue to provide balance and not necessarily align itself closely with extreme opinion. NODPA should promote positive and informed opinions.
- Outreach and working with the media.
  1. NODPA should become pro-active in approach farms that are considering transitioning and be the first point of contact.
  2. NODPA should continue to issue press releases and act as an information source for the media.
  3. NODPA should work with lobbyists to push its priorities.
- Supply management:
  1. Will maintaining the integrity of organic certification be enough to regulate supply?
  2. Will increased supply lower pay price?
  3. Will producers revert to conventional production if over-supply lowers price?
  4. Will the availability of grain reduce the growth of supply or encourage imports from China, India and South America?
  5. Prediction of a flush of milk next spring: will this threaten the viability of smaller processors/cooperatives?
  6. Many different predictions as to how quickly supply will increase and how demand from processors and manufacturers will respond with new products and increased competition for fluid milk sales.