



News Briefs

• **USDA Finally Sets National Organic Standards**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture last month announced the final national standards for the production, handling, and processing of organically grown products, “after a contentious decade-long debate between proponents of organic farming and the conventional food industry, which feared that an official government ‘organic’ label would unfairly stigmatize their products,” according to *The Washington Post* (December 21, 2000). The final standards detail the methods, practices, and substances that can be used in producing and handling organic crops and livestock, and establish labeling criteria. They prohibit the use of genetic engineering methods, irradiation, fertilization from sewage sludge, or production from livestock treated with antibiotics or hormones, as had been originally proposed in the standards three years ago. They also include new market incentives, flexibility for organic farmers, and standards for organic wine. Consumers will begin to see the organic labeling on products this summer, with full implementation by mid-2002. The final standards, fact sheets, and background information are available on the Internet at www.ams.usda.gov/nop.

• **U.S.-European Panel Calls for Labeling of Genetically Modified Foods**

The U.S.-European Union Biotechnology Consultative Forum last month recommended safety reviews and mandatory labeling for genetically modified foods, saying that “consumers should have the right of informed choice regarding the selection of what they want to consume.” The panel’s 19-page report said the United States should set “content-based mandatory labeling requirements” for foods that contain genetically engineered ingredients, and not allow new biotech products on the market “until they have gone through a mandatory government approval process,” according to the Associated Press (December 19, 2000). A few days before the release of the report, the European Commission “confirmed it is preparing a raft of new legislation designed to reassure consumers about the safety of food made from genetically modified crops,” according to Reuters (December 15, 2000). “The Commission pledged to finalize by the end of January an all-encompassing law to guarantee that all GMOs and products made from them could be traced and accurately labeled.”

• **Sustainable Farm Project Resolves Dispute Over Columbia River**

A dispute over the potential use of water from the Columbia River for irrigation has been resolved with an agreement to create a landmark sustainable farm project, according to Reuters (December 22, 2000). A 90,000-acre plot owned by the state of Oregon had been leased by farmers who several years ago announced plans to significantly expand their operation, drawing much more water from the river for irrigation. Environmentalists raised concerns about the plan’s potential impact on the river and other environmental factors, threatening to sue to stop the project. Last month, farm operators and environmentalists agreed to create a 40,000-acre sustainable farm on the property, “designed to conserve water, produce minimal pollution and supply methane gas from the animals to produce electricity,” according to Reuters. The farm will use about a third of the water the originally proposed farm was estimated to use. It will be among the largest in the country and will include a large dairy operation that will not export any animal wastes from the premises.

• **EPA Proposes Strict Controls to Reduce Water Pollution on Factory Farms**

The EPA last month proposed strict new controls to reduce water pollution caused by animal waste at concentrated animal feeding operations, or factory farms. The proposed regulations would apply to 39,000 factory farms and would eliminate exemptions allowed in some states, so that all large livestock operations would have to acquire permits. They would also impose pollution control requirements on large poultry operations, enact stricter permitting requirements, increase controls on waste discharges into waste storage pits and lagoons, and limit the spreading of manure on land. More information is available on the Internet at www.epa.gov/owm/afo.htm.

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• International Treaty Bans the Use of 12 Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals

Negotiators from 122 countries last month agreed on a treaty banning 12 highly toxic chemicals, including eight pesticides, at a meeting organized by the United Nations Environment Programme. The treaty will be signed in May and must be ratified by 50 countries, including the United States, which could submit it for congressional approval early this year. Production and use of nine of the 12 chemicals will be banned as soon as the treaty takes effect, which is expected to be in from four to five years. The eight pesticides covered by the treaty are aldrin, chlordane, dieldrin, DDT, endrin, heptachlor, mirex, and toxaphene. The other chemicals are polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), hexachlorobenzene, dioxins, and furans. About 25 countries will be allowed to use DDT to combat malaria in accordance with World Health Organization guidelines, pending the development of safer solutions. The treaty is a “large first step in bridging the chasm between rich and poor nations to ensure that pollutants used on one shore don’t surface on another,” according to *The Washington Post* (December 12, 2000).

• USDA Awards \$10.9 Million for Pest Management Programs

The U.S. Department of Agriculture last month awarded \$10.9 million in grants for four pest management programs. Four Regional Pest Management Centers will receive \$4.3 million to provide an information network that responds to the public’s pest management needs: the University of California-Davis, University of Florida, Michigan State University, and Pennsylvania State University. More than \$3.7 million will fund research at the University of California-Berkeley, University of Florida, Kansas State University, and Michigan State University to develop safer pest management options for crop production. More than \$1.8 million will support the discovery and implementation of pest management alternatives for commodities affected by the methyl bromide phase-out; funds will go to the University of California-Davis, University of California-Riverside, University of Florida, University of Idaho, Michigan State University, and North Carolina State University. Approximately \$1 million will support research to assess safer pest management options for at-risk crops or cropping systems; funds will go to the University of Idaho, Iowa State University, University of Massachusetts, Oklahoma State University, and Oregon State University.

• USDA Seeks Public Comments on Marketing of Biotech Crops

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is seeking public comments on steps the agency should take to facilitate the marketing of biotechnology crops and to segregate genetically modified products from non-modified products. It is particularly interested in comments on USDA involvement in accrediting, reviewing, or certifying the performance of company identity-preservation systems; the establishment of biotech-related definitions as part of USDA quality grades and standards; and the establishment of direct USDA analytical detection services and other services for product certification. Comments are due by February 28 and can be faxed to (202) 720-2459. Instructions on submitting comments electronically are available on the Internet at www.usda.gov/gipsa/biotech/anpr/anpr.htm.

• World Food Prize Invites Nominations for 2001 Award

The World Food Prize Foundation is inviting nominations for the 2001 World Food Prize, which is awarded to individuals for “their specific, tangible achievement in any field involved in enhancing food production and distribution, and increasing food availability and accessibility to those most in need, thereby reducing human suffering and improving health and nutrition.” The recipient receives \$250,000 and a sculpture, and is honored in several ceremonies. Nominations are due February 28. Guidelines are available on the Internet at www.worldfoodprize.org, or from Judith Pim, World Food Prize Foundation, 1700 Ruan Ctr., 666 Grand Ave., Des Moines, IA 50309; (515) 245-3796; e-mail jpim@worldfoodprize.org.

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Wallace Center/Winrock News

• **Wallace Center Receives Grant for Mid-Atlantic Marketing**

The Wallace Center was recently awarded a subcontract from the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension to participate in a three-year collaborative Mid-Atlantic marketing project funded under the new USDA Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems (IFAFS) grant program. Other collaborators on the project include: Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture, Future Harvest - Chesapeake Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture, Accokeek Foundation, USDA ARS Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, and Pennsylvania State University Cooperative Extension. Within the overall project, the Wallace Center will be focusing on researching and analyzing a set of agricultural marketing profiles and case studies in the Mid-Atlantic region, and will participate in funding and managing a set of marketing pilot projects in the area. For more information, contact Lydia Oberholtzer at loberholtzer@winrock.org, or (703) 525-9430 ext. 664.

• **Grant Will Fund Study of Agricultural Bargaining Associations**

The Wallace Center has received a Research on Rural Cooperative Opportunities and Problems grant from the USDA Rural Business-Cooperative Service to conduct a one-year study of agricultural bargaining associations. It had been predicted that with vertical integration and consolidation of the processing sector, farmers would find it to their advantage to engage in cooperative agricultural bargaining, but it appears that rather than increasing, the number of agricultural bargaining associations has actually been decreasing. One reason may be that weaknesses in federal legislation limit the ability of associations to engage in meaningful contract negotiations with processors. The Wallace Center's research will provide some insight into the economic and social benefits of a bargaining association with strong legal framework support on the farm sector. Apple growers in Michigan, where there is a strong state agricultural bargaining law, and New York, where there is no state law, will be compared through an analysis of price data over time and through a survey of growers. For more information, contact Liz Higgins at ehiggins@winrock.org, or (703) 525-9430 ext. 682.

• **Thompson Farm 2000 Annual Report Is Available**

"Alternatives in Agriculture," the 2000 annual report of Thompson On-Farm Research, updates all previous reports with narrative and new cost tables for the experiments conducted at the farm in Boone, Iowa. The research and publication of the report were made possible by the financial support of Mrs. Jean Wallace Douglas through the Henry A. Wallace Institute for Alternative Agriculture. The introductory chapter explains "why" the research was done, and the following chapters detail "how" they were conducted; both successes and failures are described. The report is \$10 from Thompson On-Farm Research, 2035 190th St., Boone, IA 50036-7423; (515) 432-1560.

Positions

Northeast SARE Administrative Council seeks nominations for four positions; contact the Council, (802) 656-0471; e-mail nominations by February 7 to nesare@zoo.uvm.edu.

Organic Materials Review Institute seeks a public interest representative for its Board of Directors; contact Kathleen Downey, OMRI, (541) 343-7600; e-mail kdowney@omri.org.

Berea College Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources seek an educator to teach courses in animal nutrition and reproduction; send letter, curriculum vitae, transcripts, and three references to Carolyn Orr, Chair, Agriculture and Natural Resources, CPO 2161, Berea, KY 40404.

Resources

"**Organically Produced Foods: Nutritive Content**," a bibliography, is available from Alternative Farming Systems Information Center, National Agricultural Library, 10301 Baltimore Ave. Rm. 304, Beltsville, MD 20705-2351; or on the Internet at www.nal.usda.gov/afsic.

"**Farmworker Pesticide Safety Training Resources**," a bibliography, is \$3 from Candace Falk, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, 2105 First Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55404; on the Internet at www.iatp.org/labels/.

"**Adding Value Through Environmental Marketing**," proceedings of a 1999 conference, are available from IATP or on the Internet at www.iatp.org/labels/envcommodities/.

Upcoming Events

February 9-10, 2001, "Food Is Our Commonwealth: Beyond Business as Usual," the 10th annual Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture Farming for the Future Conference, will be held in State College, PA; contact PASA, (814) 349-9856; on the Internet, www.pasafarming.org.

February 9-10, 2001, Georgia Organics Annual Conference on Sustainable Agriculture will be held in Augusta, GA; contact Georgia Organics, (770) 621-4642; e-mail georgiaorganics@pd.org.

February 13-17, 2001, "Preserving Farm Diversity to Secure Our Future," workshops and joint conference of Sustaining People through Agriculture Network and Missouri Organic Association, will be held in Columbia, MO; contact Ardie Compton, SPAN, (417) 345-4157; Terry Durham, MOA, (573) 657-1177.

February 14-16, 2001, Advanced Organic Vegetable Production Workshop for Small and Large-Scale Growers will be held in Jefferson City, MO; contact Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, (262) 642-3303; e-mail Gail Kahovic, gkahovic@mfai.org.

February 21-24, 2001, Mid-Atlantic Direct Marketing Conference and Trade Show will be held in Virginia Beach, VA; contact Cathy Belcher, (804) 786-4046; e-mail cbelcher@vdacs.state.va.us; on the Internet at www.ext.vt.edu/madmc/.

March 2, 2001, "Agricultural Forum 2001: Extreme Demands, Extraordinary Products" will be held in Ames, IA; call (515) 294-6257; on the Internet, www.agforum.org.

March 5-7, 2001, "How to Expand Composting/Recycling Programs," BioCycle's West Coast Conference, will be held in Portland, OR; contact BioCycle, 419 State Ave., Emmaus, PA 18049; (610) 967-4135; on the Internet, www.biocycle.net.

March 21-23, 2001, "Small Farms: A Renewed Opportunity" will be held in Springfield, IL; contact Debi Kelly, Missouri Alternatives Center, (573) 882-1905; e-mail kellyd@umsystem.edu.

March 27-28, 2001, "Partnerships for Sustaining California Agriculture: Profit, Environment and Community" will be held in Davis, CA; contact University of California-Davis, 1-800-752-0881; e-mail David Chaney, dechaney@ucdavis.edu; on the Internet, www.universityextension.ucdavis.edu/.

May 17-19, 2001, "All Things Organic," the Organic Trade Association's conference and trade show, will be held in Austin, TX; contact OTA, c/o Eurich Management Services, 3721 W. Michigan Ave., Ste. 200, Lansing, MI 48917; (517) 327-9207; e-mail Dale Power-Wells, eurichmgt@aol.com; or OTA, P.O. Box 547, Greenfield, MA 01302; (413) 774-7511; e-mail info@ota.com; on the Internet, www.ota.com.

July 10-12, 2001, International Occasional Symposium on Organic Grassland Farming, organized by the Universities of Gottingen and Kassel, will be held in Witzenhausen, Germany; more information is on the Internet at www.wiz.uni-kassel.de/egf2001/start0.html.

July 12-14, 2001, "Higher Education and Research for Agriculture and Food Systems in the 21st Century" will be held in San Francisco, CA; contact Global Consortium of Higher Education and Research for Agriculture, e-mail GCHERA@iastate.edu; on the Internet, www.gchera.iastate.edu/.

August 4-8, 2001, Soil and Water Conservation Society's Annual conference will be held in Myrtle Beach, SC; contact Charlie Persinger, SWCS, (515) 289-2331 ext. 12; on the Internet, www.swcs.org/f_what_calendar.htm.

October 14-18, 2001, "Optimizing Nitrogen Management in Food and Energy Production and Environmental Protection," the second annual Nitrogen Conference, will be held in Potomac, MD; contact Rhonda Kranz, Ecological Society of America, 1707 H St., NW, Ste. 400, Washington, DC 20006; (202) 833-8773 ext. 212; e-mail nitrogen@esa.org; on the Internet, esa.sdsc.edu/n2001.

August 21-27, 2002, "Cultivating Communities," the Organic World Congress of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, will be held in Victoria, British Columbia; contact IFOAM, e-mail ifoam2002@cog.ca; on the Internet, www.cog.ca/ifoam2002.



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