



News Briefs

• **Farmers Join Opposition to GM Crops, Reports *The New York Times***

Concern about genetically engineered crops “is now coming not only from environmental and consumer groups but from farmers, who have generally supported such crops,” according to an article in *The New York Times* (March 24, 2001). A North Dakota bill to ban the planting of genetically modified wheat for two years has the backing of the state’s farmers, who “fear losing the ability to export their crops to Europe, Japan, and other places where consumers are shunning such food and where governments strictly regulate it.” Though many farmers continue to grow genetically modified soybeans and corn, crops such as wheat “are having a harder time catching on because farmers and food companies fear they will not be able to sell them.” According to supporters of the North Dakota bill, “If even a few farmers were to plant genetically modified wheat, they say, the state’s whole crop could become contaminated and exports jeopardized, particularly if competitors like Canada were to grow only non-modified wheat.” There have been 77 bills related to genetically engineered farming introduced in 27 states this year, of which eight bills in six states would ban or put a moratorium on the planting of genetically engineered crops. There were 50 bills introduced in 16 states last year, and only 12 bills in 1999.

• **Almost One-Third of Pesticides in Developing Countries Don’t Meet Accepted Standards**

About 30 percent of pesticides marketed in developing countries do not meet internationally accepted quality standards, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). The low quality of pesticides can be due to both poor production and formulation, and the inadequate selection of chemicals, according to the WHO. The pesticides may be contaminated with toxic substances or impurities, or contain active ingredient concentrations that are higher than internationally accepted tolerance limits. “These poor-quality pesticides frequently contain hazardous substances and impurities that have already been banned or severely restricted elsewhere,” said Gero Vaagt of the FAO Pesticide Management Group. The two agencies urged all governments to adopt the world-wide accepted FAO/WHO pesticide specifications, which are voluntary, to ensure good quality products.

• **Britain’s Soil Association Thinks the “Time is Ripe” for Committing to Organic Agriculture**

“The time is ripe” for the United Kingdom government “to match the progress being made elsewhere in Europe by committing itself to an action plan for organic food and farming,” according to the Soil Association of Britain, quoted in a story by Reuters (March 26, 2001). That story reports that “a string of food scares and farm crises, including mad cow disease, E-coli and the current foot-and-mouth disease, have prompted an increasingly scared UK population to examine what they eat, and many have started buying organically grown produce.” Organic food sales have increased 55 percent in the last year, according to a recent Soil Association report. Because of “this dynamic growth in the market . . . consumers want the politicians to deliver a new and sustainable vision for British agriculture,” according to Patrick Holden, the Association’s director. Currently only three percent of all farmland in Britain is organically farmed.

• **Use of Conservation Tillage Has Increased 10 Percent in Last Decade, According to USDA**

Conservation tillage, including no-till, ridge-till, and mulch-till, has increased by 10 percent since 1990, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Crop Residue Management Survey, which was reported on in *Agricultural Outlook* (March 2001). Conservation tillage was used on 109 million acres in 2000, or 36 percent of U.S. cropland, compared to 26 percent of U.S. cropland in 1990. Accounting for most of the growth was no-till, which is now being used on 52 million acres, or 17.5 percent of all cropland — a threefold increase since 1990. Ridge-till and mulch-till acreage remained stable through 1998. The *Agricultural Outlook* article is available on the Internet at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/AgOutlook/Mar2001/AO279c.pdf>.

News Briefs (continued from page 1)

• **U.S. Land Grant Research Institutions All But Ignore Organic Research, Says OFRF**

Only .02 percent of the country's land grant agricultural research acreage is devoted to certified organic research, according to a new report by the Organic Farming Research Foundation. Of the country's 885,863 available research acres in the land grant system, only 151 acres deal in organic farming, the report found. *State of the States: Organic Farming Systems Research at Land Grant Institutions 2000-2001* also spotlights pioneering organic research programs in North Carolina, Ohio, Iowa, West Virginia, and Minnesota. The report is available on the Internet at <http://www.ofrf.org>, or from OFRF, (831) 426-6606.

• **Poll Finds 75 Percent of Americans Want to Know If Food Contains Genetically Modified Ingredients**

Seventy-five percent of Americans polled by the new Pew Initiative on Food and Biotechnology want to know whether their food contains genetically engineered ingredients, according to a poll conducted in January and released last month. Of those polled, 46 percent did not know what to think about the safety of genetically modified food; of those who had an opinion, half believed genetically modified foods are safe, and half believed they are unsafe. The Pew Initiative will provide policy recommendations, research, and education about agricultural biotechnology to the public, media, and policymakers. Full survey results are available on the Internet at <http://pewagbiotech.org/>.

• **Farm Groups, Environmentalists Sue Smithfield Foods over Water Pollution**

A coalition of farm groups and environmentalists has sued Smithfield Foods Inc. for alleged violations of the Clean Water Act by allowing hog manure from its facilities to pollute rivers in North Carolina, according to *The Wall Street Journal* (March 1, 2001). "The groups are preparing a series of similar lawsuits," the article said. "Smithfield is the coalition's first target because it became the nation's biggest pork processor in large part by perfecting large-scale animal farming." North Carolina, which became the second largest hog-producing state in the 1990s, now has a moratorium on the construction of new hog facilities.

• **Iowa State University Launches New Graduate Program in Sustainable Agriculture**

Iowa State University has announced its new Graduate Program in Sustainable Agriculture, supported by the Office of the Henry A. Wallace Endowed Chair for Sustainable Agriculture, the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, and the ISU College of Agriculture. The program, constituted by an interdisciplinary group of 50 faculty members from 10 departments, represents the largest group of faculty working on agricultural sustainability. More information is available by e-mail from the program at gpsa@iastate.edu, or on the Internet at <http://www.sust.ag.iastate.edu/gpsa/>.

• **Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems Accepting Proposals**

The USDA's Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems is accepting proposals for two of its programs. Project proposals and proposals for Multi-disciplinary Graduate Education Traineeship Grants must be received by April 23. Critical or Emerging Issues proposals must be received by June 1. The program supports research, extension, and education grants addressing key issues of national and regional importance to agriculture, forestry, and related topics; its grants funding will total \$113 million. Information on application criteria, eligibility, and proposal details is available from Rodney Foil, (202) 720-4423; or on the Internet at <http://www.reeusda.gov/ifafs/>.

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Positions

“Sustainable Farming Internships and Apprenticeships,” a 90-page list of farms, educational training centers, and organizations offering internships in organic farming and sustainable agriculture in 2001, is available from Katherine Adams, Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas, P.O. Box 3657, Fayetteville, AR 72702, (800) 346-9140; e-mail kadam@attra.org; or on the Internet, <http://www.attra.org/attra-rl/intern.html>, or <http://www.attra.org/attra-rl/internlist.pdf>.

Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems, University of California, Santa Cruz, seeks a coordinator for the Farm and Garden Apprenticeship Program; full job description is available from CASFS, (831) 459-2321; e-mail alindsey@cats.ucsc.edu; or on the Internet, <http://www.ucsc.edu/public/>.

Resources

“Soil and Water Conservation Policies and Programs: Successes and Failures,” a 656-page hard-cover book based on an international conference in Prague, is \$63 plus \$9.50 shipping/handling from Soil and Water Conservation Society, 7515 NE Ankeny Rd., Ankeny, IA 50021; (515) 289-2331; more description is available on the Internet at <http://www.swca.org>.

“Vertical Coordination of Agriculture in Farming-Dependent Areas” is \$25 from the Council for Agricultural Science and Technology, 4420 W Lincoln Way, Ames, IA 50014-3447; (515) 292-2125; e-mail cast@cast-science.org.

“Agri-Environmental Policy at the Crossroads: Guideposts on a Changing Landscape,” published by the USDA’s Economic Research Service, is available on the Internet at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/aer794/>, or call (800) 999-6779 and order # ERS-AER-794.

“Building Better Rural Places,” published by the Michael Fields Agricultural Institute and the SARE program, is available at no cost from Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas, 1-800-346-9140; on the Internet at <http://attra.ncat.org/guide/index.htm>; or contact Margaret Krome at MFAI, (608) 238-1440; e-mail mkrome@inxpress.net.

Organic Materials Review Institute’s “Generic Materials List” and “Brand Name Product List” are available from OMRI, P.O. Box 11558, Eugene, OR 97440; (541) 343-7600; e-mail info@omri.org; on the Internet at <http://www.omri.org>.

“Six Case Studies of Environmental Regulation of Biotechnology,” conducted by the U.S. Office of Science and Technology and the Council on Environmental Quality, are available on the Internet at <http://www.ostp.gov/html/012201.html>.

“Consolidation in Food Retailing and Dairy: Implications for Farmers and Consumers in a Global Food System,” a report by the University of Missouri Department of Sociology for the National Farmers Union, is available on the Internet at <http://www.nfu.org/images/heffernan.pdf>.

“State of the World 2001” is available from Worldwatch Institute, 1776 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20036; (202) 452-1999; e-mail worldwatch@worldwatch.org; on the Internet at <http://www.worldwatch.org>.

“Sustainable Agriculture . . . Continuing to Grow,” the proceedings of the “Farming and Ranching for Profit, Stewardship, and Community” conference in March 2000, is available from Sustainable Northwest, 620 SW Main, Ste. 112, Portland, OR 97205-3037; (503) 221-6911; e-mail sustnw@teleport.com; on the Internet at <http://www.sustainablenorthwest.org>.

“Reap New Profits: Marketing Strategies for Farmers and Ranchers,” a PowerPoint presentation on CD-ROM made by USDA’s Sustainable Agriculture Network for educators, can be previewed on the Internet at <http://www.sare.org/market99/slideshow/>; to order, contact SAN, (301) 504-6422; e-mail san@nal.usda.gov.

“Food Biotechnology in the United States: Science, Regulation, and Issues,” a report by the Congressional Research Service for Congress, is available on the Internet through the National Library for the Environment, Code RL30198 at http://www.cnie.org/nle/crs_main.html.

“A Green and Permanent Land: Ecology and Agriculture in the Twentieth Century,” a 232-page book, is \$23.96 plus \$3.50 shipping from University Press of Kansas, 2501 W 15th St., Lawrence, KS 66049-3905; (785) 864-4155; e-mail mail@newpress.upress.ukans.edu.

Upcoming Events

April 26-28 and May 10-12, Free-Range Poultry Short Course will be held at Locust Grove Research Farm, Ohio; contact Locust Grove Farm, (740) 596-4379; e-mail locustgrove@ohiohills.com.

May 1 is the deadline for articles for "Agricultural Biotechnology at a Crossroad?," a special issue of the *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*; contact Richard P. Haynes at the *Journal*, P.O. Box 118545, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-8545; e-mail rhaynes@phil.ufl.edu.

May 14-17, Second National Conference on Nonpoint Source Pollution Information and Education Programs will be held in Chicago, IL; contact Bob Kirschner, Chicago Botanic Garden, (847) 835-6837; e-mail bkirschn@chicagobotanic.org.

May 18-20, "Beyond Pesticides: Healthy Ecosystems, Healthy Children," the 19th National Pesticide Forum, will be held in Boulder, CO; contact National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides, (202) 543-5450; on the Internet, <http://www.beyondpesticides.org>.

July 23-25, USDA's Risk Management Agency National Outreach Conference will be held in Memphis, TN; contact Marie Buchanan, USDA, (202) 690-2686; e-mail civil_rights_outreach@wdc.usda.gov; on the Internet, <http://www.rma.usda.gov/calendar/2001/july.html#memphis>.

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

August 10-12, "Growing Community," the Northeast Organic Farming Association's 27th Annual Summer Conference and Celebration of Rural Life, will be held in Amherst, MA; contact Julie Rawson, NOFA, (978) 355-2853; e-mail jackkitt@aol.com.

August 13-24, International Short Course on Agroecology will be held at the University of California Santa Cruz; contact Joji Muramoto, (831) 459-2506; e-mail shortcourse@agroecology.org; on the Internet, <http://www.agroecology.org/shortcourse/2001/announce.htm>.

August 23-25, "Ecological Sustainability of the Global Market Economy," the fourth biennial conference of the Canadian Society for Ecological Economics, will be held at McGill School of Environment, Montreal, Quebec; contact Joanne Horan at McGill, (514) 398-5826; on the Internet, <http://www.mcgill.ca/mse/canseel/>.

August 31 is the deadline for abstracts for the 2002 International Symposium on Composting and Compost Utilization, to be held May 6-8, 2002, in Columbus, Ohio; **November 15** is the deadline for posters for original research; contact Composting 2002, Ohio State University, (330) 263-3848; e-mail symposium@composting2002.org.

October 1-5, "First Worldwide Congress on Conservation Agriculture: A Worldwide Challenge" will be held in Madrid, Spain; contact UN Food and Agriculture Organization by e-mail at conservation.agriculture@ecaf.org.

October 8-20, International Short Course on Tropical Agroecology and Agroforestry will be held in Turrialba, Costa Rica; contact Ernesto Mendez; e-mail vemendez@cats.ucsc.edu; on the Internet, http://www.agroecology.org/espanol/cursocorto_cr.htm.

October 14-18, "Optimizing Nitrogen Management in Food and Energy Production and Environmental Protection" 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, <http://esa.sdsc.edu/n2001/>.

October 31-November 4, IFOAM Asia Conference and General Assembly will be held in Hangzhou, China; contact IFOAM by e-mail at trichina@mail.hz.zj.cn.

November 29-30, "The Future of Our Food and Farms Summit" will be held near Philadelphia, PA; contact Maria van Hekken, Farmers' Market Trust, 1201 Chestnut St., 4th Fl., Philadelphia, PA 19107; (610) 530-2584; e-mail mariavhm@aol.com.

August 21-27, 2002, IFOAM's 14th Organic World Congress will be held in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada; contact IFOAM by e-mail at ifoam2002@cog.ca.



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