



News Briefs

• **Farm Groups Work to Block Dorr Nomination to Key USDA Post**

More than 160 family farm, labor, environmental, civil rights, and consumer groups have launched a campaign to block the nomination of Thomas C. Dorr to be the USDA's Undersecretary for Rural Development "because he has advocated a farm system that favors huge corporate agri-businesses at the expense of family farms," according to *The Washington Post* (June 15, 2001). A statement by the National Farm Action Campaign said, "Dorr's nomination represents the most extreme extension of the current 'Freedom to Farm' policy that consolidates farming, land, and profits into the hands of a few corporations at the expense of millions of rural residents and consumers." Other groups opposing the nomination include the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture, National Catholic Rural Life Conference, Farm Aid, and United Farm Workers of America. All the groups have petitioned Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA), Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, to block Dorr's confirmation. The date of those hearings has not yet been set.

• **Genetically Modified Crops, Spreading Inadvertently, Are Getting Harder to Avoid**

Genetically modified crops are "turning up where people least expect them: in countries where they are banned but a black market has developed; in food supplies where they are forbidden or shunned, like organic products; even in fields that farmers believe are completely free of genetically modified crops," according to a front-page story in *The New York Times* (June 10, 2001). "Wind-blown pollen, commingled seeds, and black-market plantings have further extended these products of biotechnology into the far corners of the global food supply—perhaps irreversibly, according to food experts." Because even organic crops are revealing genetically modified ingredients when tested, organic growers are considering a class-action lawsuit against the biotech industry, seeking damages for the contamination, according to the article.

• **Maine Passes Law Requiring Instructions to Avoid Cross-Pollination of GM Seeds, Plants**

The state of Maine has signed into law a bill requiring manufacturers or seed dealers of genetically modified plants, plant parts, or seeds to provide written instructions to all growers on how to plant, grow, and harvest the crops to minimize potential cross-contamination of non-genetically modified crops or wild plant populations. Copies of the instructions must be filed with the Maine Commissioner of Agriculture at least 20 days in advance of any sale of genetically engineered plants in Maine. Manufacturers or seed dealers must also identify and maintain a list of the names and addresses of all Maine growers of their genetically modified plants; failure to comply with the law's requirements may result in fines, or a loss or suspension of a license to do business in Maine. More information is available from the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association's Web site at <http://www.mofga.org>.

• **Unlikely Coalition Unites to Lobby for Strong Conservation Measures in Farm Bill**

An unlikely coalition of environmentalists, farm groups, and hunters has united to turn the next farm bill "into the major conservation act of this Congress," according to *The New York Times* (June 18, 2001). From the Sierra Club to the National Rifle Association, the groups are focusing on the bill "as their best bet for recovering millions of acres of wetlands, prairies, grassland, and forests, and protecting the wildlife that live on the land." The farm bill offers not only \$79 billion in new financing during the next five years, but also the assurance that it will become law. "Conservation and hunting groups support payments to farmers for returning some of their acreage to a natural state because it not only helps sustain wildlife, but also helps farmers hold on to their property. In addition, it slows the encroachment of suburbs into the countryside," the article said. Rep. Larry Combest (R-TX), Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, has said he will introduce a new farm bill in the House by the end of this month, nearly a year in advance of the Senate.

News Briefs (continued from page 1)

• **CDC Concludes Genetically Engineered Food Did Not Cause Allergic Reactions**

An investigation by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found no evidence that food accidentally made with StarLink genetically modified corn caused allergic reactions in 28 people. Those people last year had reported severe reactions after eating corn tacos and tortillas which may have been contaminated by StarLink corn. Blood tests failed to find any signs of antibodies to the protein in the genetically engineered corn, indicating none of those tested had experienced an allergic reaction, according to *The Washington Post* (June 14, 2001). "The difficulties of this investigation highlight the importance of evaluating the allergic potential of genetically modified foods before they become available for human consumption," the CDC report concluded. The report is available on the Internet at <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehhe/Cry9cReport/executivesummary.htm>.

• **New USDA Programs Have \$30 Million for Conservation, Sustainable Ag Assistance**

Two new USDA programs are making \$30 million available for conservation assistance to farmers and ranchers. Through the Agricultural Management Assistance program, producers can be paid for conservation practices such as erosion control, integrated pest management, or transitioning to organic farming. Funding is available in 15 states: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming. The new Soil and Water Conservation Assistance program will help landowners comply with federal and state environmental laws, and make beneficial changes to cropping systems, grazing management, nutrient management, and irrigation. It is available in areas that are not part of designated or national priority areas for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Wetlands Reserve Program, or Conservation Resource Program. More information is available on the Internet at <http://www.nhq.nrcs.usda.gov/PROGRAMS/COD/codindex.htm>.

• **Size of Family Farms Is Factor in Profitability, According to ERS Report**

Large and very large family farms, which produced 53 percent of the value of agricultural production in 1998, were viable economic businesses, while most small farms did not report adequate income to cover expenses in 1998, according to a new USDA Economic Research Service analysis of the structure of family farms. "Although small family farms are often unprofitable, they still are important to U.S. agriculture," the report said. "Because of their sheer numbers (91 percent of all farms), they also accounted for a large share of assets owned by farms (69 percent) including land (68 percent). As custodians and managers of the bulk of farm assets, small farms play a major role in natural resource and environmental policy. Retirement farms alone accounted for 29 percent of the land in the Conservation Reserve Program in 1998." *Structural and Financial Characteristics of U.S. Farms: 2001 Family Farm Report* is available on the Internet at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/aib768/>.

• **NE SARE Seeks Farmer Educators; Southern Region Seeks Administrative Council Member**

The Northeast SARE is seeking applicants for its new Sustainable Farmer Educator grant program, in which three farmers will receive a grant to share their knowledge about sustainable agriculture at meetings, workshops, seminars, and field days, and by phone and e-mail. In 2002, a Sustainable Farmer Educator will be chosen from the areas of grazing management for dairy cows, horticultural crops, and agronomic crops. Applications must be received by September 28. For more information, call Northeast SARE at (802) 656-0471; on the Internet, <http://www.uvm.edu/~nesare/>. The Administrative Council of the Southern Region SARE is seeking a member to serve a three-year term beginning in 2002. For full application, contact Dr. Jeffrey Jordan, Professor and Director, Southern Region SARE Program, (770) 412-4788; e-mail jjordan@gaes.griffin.peachnet.edu.

Alternative Agriculture News (ISSN 8755-4941) is published monthly by the Henry A. Wallace Center for Agricultural & Environmental Policy at Winrock International, formerly the Henry A. Wallace Institute for Alternative Agriculture, established in 1983 and supported by publications sales, donations, and grants from foundations, corporations, and individuals. Subscription rates for individuals in the United States are \$16 a year; contact the Wallace Center for additional rate categories. All materials in the newsletter may be used without permission, provided credit is given. Financial contributions to the Wallace Center are tax-deductible.

Wallace Center/Winrock News

• **Jonathan Winsten Joins Wallace Center as Agricultural Economist**

Jon Winsten has joined the Wallace Center as an agricultural economist after recently completing his Ph.D. at Pennsylvania State University. He has been working on issues related to sustainable livestock production systems, in the United States and overseas, since 1986. As a consultant, he has completed several projects that analyze the profitability of alternative dairy production systems. He has also worked with farmers on various projects in the Caribbean, Latin America, and Central Asia. Winsten's work with the Wallace Center will focus on policy issues related to agriculture and the environment. His work will seek to discover least-cost solutions to agricultural non-point source pollution problems, as well as to document the ecological services provided by sustainable production systems and develop the required policy tools to enhance their adoption.

• **New AJAA Examines Economics of Traditional and Conventional Ag Systems**

An economic comparison of traditional and conventional agricultural systems at a county level is featured in the new issue of *American Journal of Alternative Agriculture* (Volume 16, Number 1), the Wallace Center's quarterly, peer-reviewed journal of research on alternative agriculture. The issue also has articles about integrated crop management, the use of soil tests among organic farmers in New England, and using economic indicators to measure farm sustainability. A commentary examines "Agriculture's Mission: Finding a Partner." For U.S. subscribers of *AJAA*, one volume (four issues) costs US\$36 for individuals, US\$70 for libraries, and US\$18 for students; foreign rates are also available. For more information, contact the Wallace Center, Winrock International, 1621 N. Kent St., Ste. 1200, Arlington, VA 22209-2134; (703) 525-9430 ext. 675; e-mail wallacecenter@winrock.org.

Positions

North Carolina State University seeks a graduate student assistant for its two-year project at the Center for Environmental Farming Systems in Goldsboro; for information, contact Dr. Noah Ranells, (919) 515-7597; e-mail noah_ranells@ncsu.edu.

Community Food Systems and Sustainable Agriculture Program, University of Missouri, seeks a Research Outreach Coordinator; for information, contact Ana Montoya, (573) 882-3776; e-mail MontoyaA@missouri.edu.

Pennsylvania State University, Department of Entomology, seeks an Assistant Professor of Entomology, Tenure Track; for information, contact Ed Rajotte, (814) 863-4641; e-mail egrajotte@psu.edu.

Resources

"**State of the States: Organic Farming Systems Research at Land Grant Institutions 2000-2001**" is available from the Organic Farming Research Foundation; for information, contact OFRF, (831) 426-6606; on the Internet, <http://www.ofrf.org>.

"**Sustainable Agriculture: Making Money, Making Sense**," published by Fires of Hope and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, is available on the Internet at <http://www.firesofhope.org>, or <http://www.iatp.org>.

The Better Board of Trade is a Web-based bulletin board of agricultural markets for buyers and sellers of raw or processed, sustainable or certified organic products; funded by SARE, it is available at <http://www.mybbot.com>.

"**Agroecosystems: Pilot Analysis of Global Ecosystems**," published by International Food Policy Research Institute and World Resources Institute, is available from WRI Publications, 1-800-822-0504, or on the Internet at <http://www.wri.org/wr2000/> or <http://www.ifpri.org>.

"**The New Ranch Handbook: A Guide to Restoring Western Rangelands**" is \$10 plus \$3.50 postage from The Quivera Coalition, 551 Cordova Rd., # 423, Santa Fe, NM 87501.

"**Organic Field Crop Handbook**" is \$40 plus \$4 postage from Canadian Organic Growers, Box 6408, Station J, Ottawa, ON, K2A 3Y6, Canada; full description is available on the Internet at <http://www.cog.ca/ofch.htm>.

"**The New Farmers' Market: Farm-Fresh Ideas for Producers, Managers, and Communities**," is \$24.95 plus \$4.50 shipping/handling from New World Publishing, 11543 Quartz Dr. # 1, Auburn, CA 95602; (530) 823-3886, or 1-888-281-5170.

Upcoming Events

July-September, Farm Field Days and Community Days will be held throughout Iowa; for full schedule, contact Practical Farmers of Iowa, 2035 190th St., Boone, IA 50036-7423; contact Robert Karp, Executive Director, (515) 233-3622; e-mail rkarp@isunet.net; on the Internet, <http://www.pfi.iastate.edu>.

July-October, 19th Annual Farm and Market Tour Series of 13 farms in Ohio will be sponsored by Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association; contact OEFFA, (614) 421-2022; on the Internet, <http://www.oeffa.com>.

July 29-31, "Promoting Organic in a Post-Rule Marketplace," the 5th Biennial Organic Business and Regulatory Conference, will be held in Berkeley, CA; contact Organic Farming Research Foundation, (831) 426-6606; on the Internet, <http://www.ofrf.org>.

August 10-12, "Rachel Carson and the Conservation Movement: Past, Present and Future," sponsored by the National Conservation Training Center, will be held in Shepherdstown, WV; register on the Internet at <http://www.nctc.fws.gov/history/carson2001.html>.

August 27-29, "Composting and Organics Recycling—The Soil and Water Connections" will be held in Atlanta, GA; contact BioCycle, (610) 967-4135, ext. 21; on the Internet, <http://www.biocycle.net>.

September 21-23, 2001 Common Ground Country Fair will be held in Unity, ME; contact Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners, P.O. Box 170, Unity, ME; (207) 568-4142; e-mail cgcg@mofga.org; register on the Internet at <http://www.mofga.org>.

September 29-30, Prairie Festival and Celebration of The Land Institute's 25th Anniversary will be held in Salina, KS; contact the Institute at (785) 823-5376; e-mail theland@landinstitute.org.

October 14, Permaculture Design Course Online begins, sponsored by Elfin Permaculture; program is available on the Internet at <http://www.permaculture.net/~EPTA/Hemenway.htm>.

October 21-25, the Annual Meetings of the American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, and Soil Science Society of America will be held in Charlotte, NC; contact Keith Schlesinger, ASA-CSSA-SSSA Headquarters, (608) 273-8090 ext. 322; e-mail kschlesinger@agronomy.org.

November 2-4, "Grow Biointensive Sustainable Mini-Farming Workshop" will be held in Willits, CA; contact Ecology Action, 5798 Ridgewood Rd., Willits, CA 95490; (707) 459-0150; on the Internet, <http://www.growbiointensive.org>.

February 4-6, 2002, New York State Farmers' Direct Marketing Conference will be held in Auburn, NY; contact Diane Eggert, (314) 475-1101; e-mail diane99@dreamscape.com.

February 12, 2002, is the submission deadline for papers for "The City in a Garden: Producing and Consuming Food in the New Millennium," sponsored by the Association for the Study of Food and Society, and the Agriculture, Food, and Human Values Society, to be held in June 2002; contact Daniel Block, Chicago State University, e-mail D-Block@csu.edu; or Richard Haynes, University of Florida, e-mail rhaynes@phil.ufl.edu.

February 14-17, 2002, "BioFach 2002," the World Organic Trade Fair, will be held in Nuremberg, Germany; contact NurnbergMesse GmbH, e-mail info@biofach.de; on the Internet, <http://www.nuernbergmesse.de>.

 HENRY A. WALLACE CENTER FOR
AGRICULTURAL & ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY
AT WINROCK INTERNATIONAL

1621 N Kent St Ste 1200
Arlington VA 22209-2134
USA