



News Briefs

• **Additional Funding for Next Farm Bill Could Be In Jeopardy**

An additional \$66 billion for the next multi-year farm bill could be in jeopardy because the latest federal budget projection “virtually wipes out the surplus that was to be used for agricultural spending,” according to an online *Successful Farming* story (August 23, 2001). The overall surplus has decreased 45 percent in four months, according to a Congressional Budget Office report released late last month. The \$66 billion would be spent between the federal fiscal years 2003 and 2011. Reacting to a budget review of government spending and tax receipts by the White House Office of Management and Budget, a Senate staffer said, “That entire \$66 billion in additional money for the next farm bill is now completely up in the air.” According to the story, “The bottom line, says the Senate staffer, is that there would be no extra money for the ‘counter-cyclical’ payments the House Agriculture Committee has approved, and there would be no extra money for the new Conservation Security Act payments that Senate Agriculture Committee chair Tom Harkin would like to add into the next farm bill.”

• **Organic Farming Likely to Continue Fast Growth, Says New USDA Report**

Strong market signals for organic agricultural products, along with increasing public and private support for organic farming systems, “make it likely that organic farming will remain a fast-growing segment of U.S. agriculture,” according to a report released last month by the USDA’s Economic Research Service. Certified organic farming systems were used on 1.35 million acres of cropland and pasture in 49 states in 1997, representing a doubling of organic acreage since 1992; the egg and dairy sectors grew even faster, according to the report. Obstacles to organic farming include “large managerial costs and risks of shifting to a new way of farming, limited awareness of organic farming systems, lack of marketing and technical infrastructure, and inability to capture marketing economies,” the report concluded. *U.S. Organic Farming Emerges in the 1990s: Adoption of Certified Systems* is available on the Internet at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/aib770/aib770.pdf>.

• **Conservation Subsidies Help Prairie Pothole Farmers, Says *New York Times***

The Prairie Pothole region, where conservation subsidies have created acres of waterfowl habitat, is “Exhibit A for lawmakers promoting more subsidies for conservation and less for traditional crops like wheat and corn,” according to a front-page article in *The New York Times* (August 27, 2001). “North Dakota is a prime venue for viewing the unrecognized side of the debate over the \$171 billion farm bill: spending to conserve the open spaces, fields, ranges and pastures....The subsidies help families hold onto small farms and allow young farmers to establish themselves.” In North Dakota, where farmers are more dependent on traditional subsidies than those in any other state, “farms in several counties have stunned lawmakers by embracing conservation and dedicating one-fourth of their cropland to the conservation reserve program,” according to the story. Many large U.S. farmers, “backed by powerful agribusiness lobbies, oppose increases in conservation spending, presaging a big fight in the coming weeks as the House and Senate debate their different approaches.”

• **USDA, Iowa to Spend \$40 Million for Water Quality Program**

The USDA and the state of Iowa have launched a new \$40 million, 15-year program to improve water quality problems related to excess nitrogen in 37 counties in north central Iowa. The goal of the new Iowa Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program is to significantly reduce the amount of nitrogen, sediment, and pesticides that enters streams and rivers, while improving wildlife habitat. The program, which will target 9,000 acres, will provide financial assistance to producers to restore wetlands and install riparian buffer practices. The wetlands portion of the program is designed to take tile and surface drain water and treat it in a wetland; the wetlands will reduce nitrogen loading of water by 40 to 90 percent, or 6 to 12 million pounds, and improve wildlife habitat in the project area, according to the USDA.

News Briefs (continued from page 1)

• **Conservation Takes “Center Stage” in Farm Bill Debate; Factory Farms May Get a Break**

Conservation is taking “center stage” in the farm bill debate, where one of the biggest battles will be shifting money from the traditional crop subsidies that dominate the bill, according to Reuters (August 13, 2001). Another battle could be looming about the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), under which the House Agriculture Committee recently approved a change that would allow large hog farms to receive federal financial assistance for environmental projects, according to *The Washington Post* (August 17, 2001). The Reuters story reported that “new voices are assuming ascendancy in the debate over U.S. farm subsidies, with urban and suburban lawmakers pushing hard for significant increases in conservation at the expense of crop funding.” It continued, “skeptics seek justification for why a large portion of agricultural funding is spent on subsidies for row-crop growers,” while there are “million-dollar backlogs” for wetlands and manure-contract programs. Two-thirds of farm subsidies go to 10 percent of operators, chiefly in a dozen states.

The House Agriculture Committee has approved a measure that “would lift the cap on the size of livestock operators eligible for a U.S. Department of Agriculture program that helps both crop and livestock producers pay for environmental projects.” EQIP currently restricts its livestock assistance to smaller producers, including hog farms with 2,500 or fewer animals. “If approved by the Senate and signed into law, the legislation will mean that any livestock producer—including the largest and most profitable ones—will be eligible for up to \$50,000 in assistance per year, or a total of \$200,000 over 10 years,” according to *The Washington Post*. Advocates of small farms and environmentalists say that “because the EQIP program gives priority to the biggest environmental challenges, lifting the size cap will divert resources from small operations to large ones, hastening the demise of the family farm.” The House is expected to debate the farm bill this month.

• **Bush Administration Pressuring Europe to Drop GM Food Restrictions**

Senior Bush Administration officials are pressuring the European Union to “abandon new restrictions on genetically modified foods that they say could cost U.S. companies \$4 billion a year and disrupt efforts to launch a new round of global trade talks,” according to a front-page story in *The Washington Post* (August 26, 2001). U.S. officials have argued that the European regulations discriminate against U.S. products in violation of World Trade Organization requirements, the story said. Europe’s decision to require the labeling of genetically engineered products “reflects a European anxiety about food safety that is far more profound than in the United States, the world leader in agricultural biotechnology. This is a divide that threatens to further aggravate U.S. relations with Europe, already roiled by differences over global warming, arms control and other trade issues.”

• **“Roundup Ready” Soybeans Include Some Unknown DNA**

“Roundup Ready” soybeans, which are genetically engineered with a bacterium to withstand Monsanto’s Roundup herbicide, include “some unexpected” and “mysterious” DNA, according to a story in *The New York Times* (August 16, 2001). Belgian government and university scientists discovered the DNA and published their findings in a paper last month in *European Food Research and Technology*. “Products made from Roundup Ready soybeans have been eaten by people and animals for five years with no reports of health problems,” the story said. “Still, the findings could cause some embarrassment for Monsanto and the agricultural biotech industry because they raise questions about how well the molecular makeup of the products is characterized.” The Belgian scientists “suggested that this unknown DNA is probably the plant’s own DNA but that it was somehow rearranged, or scrambled, at the time the bacterial gene was inserted.”

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.

Henry A. Wallace Center for Agricultural & Environmental Policy at Winrock International
1621 North Kent Street, Suite 1200, Arlington, Virginia 22209-2134 USA
Phone: (703) 525-9430; Fax: (703) 525-9505
E-mail: wallacecenter@winrock.org; Web site: <http://www.winrock.org/wallace/>

Wallace Center/Winrock News

• **Assessment of SARE-Funded Research in North Central U.S. Included in New AJAA Issue**

An assessment of SARE-funded farmer research on sustainable agriculture in the north central United States is included in the new issue (Volume 16, No. 2) of the *American Journal of Alternative Agriculture*, the Wallace Center's quarterly, peer-reviewed journal of research on alternative agriculture. Other articles in the issue examine the performance of a Swedish deep-bedded feeder pig production system in Iowa, the potential to improve N fixation by cowpea in Ghanaian soils, small grain winter cover crops for conservation of residual soil nitrogen in the Mid-Atlantic Coastal Plain, farmer support for publicly funded sustainable agriculture research, and challenges in designing ecological agriculture education from a Nordic perspective. 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, 1621 N. Kent St., Ste. 1200, Arlington, VA 22209-2134; (703) 525-9430 ext. 675; e-mail wallacecenter@winrock.org.

Positions

USDA's Agricultural Research Service is seeking an agricultural economist at the Beltsville, MD, Agricultural Research Center; send resumé with three letters of reference and cover letter to Dr. Yao-chi Lu, Rm. 12, Bldg. 007, BARC-West ARS/USDA, Beltsville, MD 20705; (301) 504-5821; e-mail ylu@asrr.arsusda.gov.

Regional Farm and Food Project seeks an Education Director; for inquiries and applications, contact Tracy Frisch, Regional Farm and Food Project, 148 Central Ave., 2nd Fl., Albany, NY 12206; (518) 426-9331 or 427-6537.

Resources

"Growing Carbon: A New Crop that Helps Agricultural Producers and the Climate Too" is available from the Soil and Water Conservation Society at 1-888-526-3227; e-mail landcare@swcs.org; or on the Internet at <http://www.swcs.org>.

"The Biobased Economy of the Twenty-First Century: Agriculture Expanding into Health, Energy, Chemicals, and Materials" is \$5 from National Agricultural Biotechnology Council, Boyce Thompson Institute, Rm. 419, Tower Rd., Ithaca, NY 14853; e-mail NABC@cornell.edu.

"Statistical Analysis of California Agriculture: 1995-1998" is available for \$10 from the Agricultural Issues Center, University of California, Davis, CA 95616; (530) 752-2320; e-mail kmklonsky@ucdavis.edu or agissues@ucdavis.edu.

"2001 Center Progress Report" and **"Food, Fuel, and Freeways: An Iowa Perspective on How Far Food Travels, Fuel Usage, and Greenhouse Gas Emissions"** are both available from the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, 209 Curtiss Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011-1050; (515) 294-3711; e-mail leopold@iastate.edu; on the Internet, <http://www.leopold.iastate.edu>.

"Organic Certification Organizations and Programs" is available from Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas, P.O. Box 3657, Fayetteville, AR 72702; 1-800-346-9140 or (501) 442-9842; or on the Internet at <http://www.attra.org/attra-pub/orgcert.html>, or <http://www.attra.org/attra-pub/PDF/organicorgs.pdf>.

"IFOAM/IOIA International Organic Inspection Manual" is available from Independent Organic Inspectors Association, P.O. Box 6, Broadus, MT 59317-0006; (406) 436-2031; e-mail ioia@ioia.net; or from International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, Germany, phone 49-6853-919890; e-mail HeadOffice@ifoam.org.

"List of Alternative Crops and Enterprises for Small Farm Diversification" is available on the Internet from the Alternative Farming Systems Information Center at http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/AFSIC_pubs/altlist.htm; or from AFSIC, (301) 504-6559; e-mail mgold@nal.usda.gov.

"Organic Foods Sourcebook," 221 pages, is \$15.95 at book stores or through McGraw-Hill Publishers at 1-800-722-4726.

"Farmers and Their Ecological Sweet Corn Production Practices," a 42-minute video, is \$15 from Northeast SARE Program, Hills Bldg., University of Vermont, Burlington, VT 05405; (802) 656-5459.

Upcoming Events

September 18, “Niche and Value-Added Marketing: What’s In It for You?” will be held in Ames, Iowa; contact the Iowa Pork Industry Center, 109 Kidee, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011-3150.

September 29, Eighth Annual Country Living Field Day will be held in Carroll County, Ohio; contact Carroll County Extension Office, (330) 627-4310.

October 2-4, “Northeast Agroforestry and Carbon Conference” will be held in Binghamton, NY; contact Mark Grennan, (518) 828-4385, e-mail mark.grennan@ny.usda.gov; or Phillip Metzger, (607) 334-3231, e-mail phil.metzger@ny.usda.gov; on the Internet, <http://www.syrmeetings.com/agro/>.

October 8-10, “2001 Agribusiness Forum” will be held in Washington, DC; contact Robyn Heine, Hickman Associates, (317) 816-9760.

October 11-14, Natural Products Expo East will be held in Washington, DC; contact Natural Products Expo East, toll-free 1-866-458-4935; on the Internet, <http://www.naturalproductsexpo.com>.

October 15-17, “Sustainable Livestock Production Conference” will be held in Fayetteville, AR; contact Ron Morrow, National Center for Appropriate Technology/Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas, (501) 442-9824, e-mail ronm@ncatark.uark.edu.

October 16, “Bringing in the Sheaves: A Symposium on Hunger, Farming and the Fairness of the American Food System” will be held at the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Poteau, OK; contact the Center, (918) 647-9123; e-mail eampeake@kerrcenter.com; on the Internet, <http://www.kerrcenter.com>.

October 19-21, the 12th Annual Bioneers Conference will be held in San Rafael, CA; **October 23-24**, “Wisdom at the End of a Hoe Workshop: The Soil Food Web” will be held in Santa Cruz, CA; for both events, contact the Collective Heritage Institute, 1-877-246-6337; e-mail info@bioneers.org.

October 29 is the deadline for proposals for “On the Road to Sustainable Agriculture,” sponsored by the Southern SARE Region, to be held October 23-26, 2002; “Call for Presentations” form is available on the Internet at <http://www.griffin.peachnet.edu/sare/>.

November 1-3, 2001 National Small Farm Trade Show and Conference will be held in Columbia, MO; contact Small Farm Today, 1-800-633-2535.

November 2-4, “Biodynamic Agriculture—Sustaining Life in the Urban Age” will be held in Santa Rosa, CA; contact the Biodynamics Association, P.O. Box 550, Kimberton, PA 19442; 1-888-516-7797; e-mail biodynamics@aol.com.

November 2-4, the 16th Annual Sustainable Agriculture Conference will be held in Rock Hill, SC; contact Carolina Farm Stewardship Association, 13 Hillsboro St., P.O. Box 448, Pittsboro, NC 27312; (919) 542-2402; e-mail ED@carolinafarmstewards.org.

November 4-5, Second Assembly of the Scientific Congress on Organic Agricultural Research will be held in Rock Hill, SC; contact Organic Farming Research Foundation, P.O. Box 440, Santa Cruz, CA 95061; (831) 426-6606; e-mail scoar@ofrf.org; on the Internet, <http://www.ofrf.org/scoar/>.

November 12-14, “Farming on the Edge: Conservation, Community and Commerce” will be held in St. Charles, IL; contact Eileen West, American Farmland Trust, One Short St., Northampton, MA 01060; (413) 586-9330 ext. 27; e-mail ewest@farmland.org; information is available on the Internet at <http://www.farmland.org>.

November 18-20, “The Soul of Agriculture: New Movement in New England Food and Farming” will be held in Durham, NH; contact Office of Sustainability Programs, University of New Hampshire, (603) 862-2640; e-mail Elhafiz@aol.com.

November 29-30, “Spreading the Bounty, Safeguarding the Future,” the Third Annual Future of Our Food and Farms Summit will be held in Philadelphia, PA; contact Meredith Stone, Farmers’ Market Trust, 1201 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, PA 19107; (215) 568-0830; e-mail fmtrust@libertynet.org.

September 17-20, 2002, the Third National Small Farm Conference will be held in Albuquerque, NM; for speaker recommendations and questions, contact Denis Ebodaghe, CSREES/USDA, (202) 205-0467, or Nelson Escobar, (202) 401-4900.



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

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