



News Briefs

• Administration Farm Policy Emphasizes Conservation, International Trade

The Bush Administration last month released a 125-page policy report calling for “a major shift away from the current farm policy, arguing for more conservation and international trade over an existing approach that it said was too generous to wealthy grain and cotton farmers,” according to *The New York Times* (September 20, 2001). The report, distributed by the USDA, calls for a “wider range of conservation policy instruments” that includes a “portfolio” approach—“employing coordinated land retirement, stewardship incentives, conservation compliance requirements, and regulatory assistance.” The report’s conservation principles also include sustaining past environmental gains, accommodating new and emerging environmental concerns, reaffirming market-oriented policies, ensuring compatibility of conservation and trade policies, and coordinating conservation and farm policies. However, the report does not directly mention sustainable agriculture, or address concentration problems, according to the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. In response to the USDA report, the Senate Democratic Policy Committee released its principles for a new farm bill that include stronger conservation measures, and rural community economic revitalization. The USDA report, *Food and Agricultural Policy: Taking Stock for the New Century*, is on the Internet at <http://www.usda.gov>; the Senate Committee report is at <http://democrats.senate.gov/~dpc/pubs/SEQ-264.html>.

• Funding and Timing of Farm Bill Remain Unknown

Because of budgetary and legislative responses to last month’s terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, both the funding level and the timing of the next farm bill are unknown, according to several news reports. “Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman said today that the Bush administration was uncertain whether there was enough money to finance the \$171 billion House farm bill,” according to *The New York Times* (September 27, 2001). “A report on long-term farm policy unveiled by Ms. Veneman last week made clear that, regardless of budget factors, the administration did not intend to support continued rising subsidies for farmers, which it said distorted the economy.” The Associated Press (September 21, 2001) said the farm bill is on the House of Representatives’ agenda for October; however, “a spokesman for Senate Majority Leader [Tom] Daschle said it is ‘too early to say’ whether the Senate will take up the farm bill this year,” citing the aftermath of the terrorist attacks as the Senate’s top priority, wrote *Congress Daily* (September 21, 2001). Veneman said it is “unlikely” the farm bill will be enacted this year, *Congress Daily* reported (September 19, 2001).

• Phosphorus Levels in Iowa Waters Are Among Highest in the World

The levels of phosphorus that now exist in Iowa waters are some of the highest in the world, John A. Downing, professor of aquatic ecology at Iowa State University, told *Successful Farming Online* (September 21, 2001). “That is neither normal nor healthy,” he said. “Abundant P generates unnaturally vigorous algal growth, or ‘algae blooms.’...When algae blooms occur, ‘eutrophic’ systems begin to break down and lose much of their value to people and to nature.” One of the negative impacts of eutrophication is the unpleasant smell of decomposing algae, impairing the recreational use of water; a benefit of good water quality, Downing estimates, is that Iowa lakes generate more than \$20,000 per lake-acre, per year.

• Fund Will Help World Trade Center “Greenmarket” Farmers

The Farmers’ Market Federation of New York has established a Fund for World Trade Center Greenmarket Farmers to help the farmers who lost their trucks, supplies, and produce in last month’s terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, where their regular Tuesday market had been set up. Insurance does not cover their losses; the Trade Center market and many others in New York are now closed, causing a significant income loss. For information, contact Fund for WTC Greenmarket Farmers, c/o Farmers’ Market Federation of NY, 2100 Park St., Syracuse, NY 13028; (315) 475-1101; on the Internet, <http://www.nyfarmersmarket.com>.

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• **New Reports Find “Negligible” Threat to Monarch Butterflies from GM Corn**

Genetically modified corn poses a “negligible” threat to monarch butterflies, according to a package of six papers published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* last month. The studies were financed by the biotech industry and the government but conducted by academic scientists. “The papers say there is little risk to monarchs from the two main types of BT corn grown because the pollen is not toxic in the concentrations that monarch larvae would encounter in the fields,” according to *The New York Times* (September 8, 2001). However, an article in the *Times* the next day said “the debate is far from ended. The earlier papers reported that many monarch caterpillars died after ingesting pollen from the genetically modified corn. The new papers say that the pollen used in those experiments appeared to be mixed with other parts of the genetically modified plants and that it was those plant parts, not the pollen, that actually killed the caterpillars.”

• **New Canadian Center Is Dedicated to Organic Agriculture**

A new, government-funded Organic Agriculture Center of Canada will be based at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College in Truro and will carry out initiatives in collaboration with colleges and universities across Canada. The center will “quench a growing thirst for knowledge in this fast emerging sector and give Canada’s producers an advantage over international competition,” according to the office of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Federal funding will be used to develop at least four Web-based courses in organic agriculture, conduct on-farm research on strategies for transition to organic production, conduct market research to identify opportunities for producers, catalog existing research, and develop a “help” desk. Canada’s organic sector currently produces \$1 billion in annual sales, and is growing at a 20 percent rate annually.

• **Beltsville Agricultural Research Center Damaged by Rare Tornado**

The rare and deadly tornado that killed two people and caused millions of dollars worth of damage at the University of Maryland may have also caused as much as \$41 million in damage to the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, the USDA’s top agricultural science center, according to *The Washington Post* (September 28, 2001). Fifteen buildings at the center were damaged, including one that lost its roof and a laboratory where the wind blew out every window and smashed chemical containers. The tornado also twisted the metal frames of several greenhouses used for research, damaged or destroyed 50 vehicles, and ripped up several 80-year-old trees. “Many researchers have lost years of work,” particularly plant scientists, according to the story. The tornado did not injure any people or livestock at the center.

• **Environmental Groups Oppose Delay on Clean Water Regulations**

More than 180 environmental and public interest organizations have urged the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) not to delay the effective date of revised clean water Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) regulations, saying that “weakening the Clean Water Act’s primary program for cleaning up our nation’s polluted waters would be a major environmental and public health setback for the American people.” A TMDL program is a prescription to clean up a body of water by indicating the amount of pollutants that may be present in the water and still meet water quality standards. The agency has proposed delaying by 18 months the effective date of the regulations, which were first proposed in July 2000. It has also proposed reconsidering and revising some aspects of the original proposal. The groups, members of the Clean Water Network, wrote in their comments to EPA that the proposed delay and changes “will only lead to confusion, delay and continued litigation over states’ and EPA’s failure to implement the clear requirements of section 303 (d) of the Clean Water Act.”

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Positions

Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems at the University of California, Santa Cruz, seeks an Education and Outreach Coordinator; send letter, curriculum vitae, writing sample, and three letters of recommendation by October 22 to Dr. Carol Shennan, Director, Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems, University of California, Santa Cruz, CA 95064.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, seeks a scholar for the Dr. John Bruhn Professorship in Rural Sociology; send curriculum vitae and names of three references to Dr. Helen Moore, Bruhn Professorship Search Committee, 715 Oldfather Hall, Department of Sociology, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE 68588-0324; (402) 472-6081; e-mail hmoore1@unl.edu.

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; e-mail farmfood@capital.net.

Resources

“The 2002 Farm Bill: Revitalizing the Farm Economy Through Renewable Energy Development,” by the Environmental and Energy Study Institute, is available on the Internet at http://www.eesi.org/publications/Farm_Bill_Policy_Paper.pdf.

“How Does H.R. 2646, The Farm Security Act of 2001, Measure Up?”, by the Soil and Water Conservation Society, is available from the Society at (515) 289-2331, or on the Internet at http://www.swcs.org/t_seeking_intro.htm.

“The New Farmers’ Market: Farm-Fresh Ideas for Producers, Managers and Communities” is \$24.95 from New World Publishing Co., Chelsea Green Publishing, White River Junction, VT; (800) 639-4099; on the Internet at <http://www.chelseagreen.com>.

“The Next Green Revolution: Essential Steps to a Healthy, Sustainable Agriculture” is \$19.96 from Haworth Press, 1-800-HAWORTH; e-mail getinfo@haworthpressinc.com; on the Internet at <http://www.haworthpressinc.com>.

“Keys to Success in Value-Added Agriculture” is available from Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas, 1-800-346-9140, or on the Internet at <http://www.attra.org/attra-pub/keystosuccess.html>.

“Discovering Profits in Unlikely Places: Agroforestry Opportunities for Added Income” is \$2.50 plus \$2 shipping/handling from University of Minnesota Distribution Center, 1-800-876-8636, or (612) 624-4900.

“Greener Fields: Signposts for Successful Eco-Labels” is \$20 from Nancy Rogerson, Rural Advancement Foundation International, P.O. Box 640, Pittsboro, NC 27312; (919) 542-1396; e-mail rogerson@rafiusa.org.

“Private Lands, Public Benefits: Principles for Advancing Working Lands Conservation” is available from Telita Campbell, National Governors’ Association Center for Best Practices, e-mail tcampbell@nga.org, or on the Internet at http://www.nga.org/center/divisions/1,1188,C_ISSUE_BRIEF^D_1519,00.html.

“The New American Farmer: Profiles of Agricultural Innovation,” a 160-page book, is \$10 from USDA’s SARE program, (301) 504-5230, or on the Internet at <http://www.sare.org/newfarmer/>.

“Conservation Tillage Systems and Management: Crop Residue Management with No-Till, Ridge-Till, Mulch-Till,” 270 pages, is \$25 from MidWest Plan Service, 1-800-562-3618; e-mail mwps@iastate.edu; on the Internet at <http://www.mwps.org/catalog.html>.

“Development at the Urban Fringe and Beyond: Impacts on Agriculture and Rural Land” is available from the USDA’s Economic Research Service at 1-800-999-6779, or on the Internet at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/aer803/>.

“2001-2002 Washington Tilth Producers Directory” is \$3 from Tilth Producers, P.O. Box 85056, Seattle, WA 98145-1056; (206) 442-7620.

“Going Against the Grain: Agricultural Crisis and Transformation in Cuba” is available from Oxfam America, (617) 728-2438; e-mail info@oxfamamerica.org; on the Internet at <http://www.oxfamamerica.org/cuba/>.

Upcoming Events

October 20, "Climate Change: Predictions for Minnesota" will be held in Staples, MN; contact Lynda Converse, Sustainable Farming Association of Central Minnesota, (320) 594-2456; e-mail converse@rea-alp.com.

October 24-26, 10th Annual Better Composting School will be held in Hanover, MD; contact Maryland Cooperative Extension, (301) 405-1198.

October 29 is the deadline for proposed presentations at "On the Road to Sustainable Agriculture," to be held in Raleigh, NC, October 23-26, 2002; information is available from the USDA Southern Region SARE program on the Internet at <http://www.griffin.peachnet.edu/sare/>.

October 29-31, "Renewable Energy From Organics Recycling" will be held in Des Moines, IA; contact BioCycle, (610) 967-4135; on the Internet, <http://www.biocycle.net>.

November 1 is the deadline to register for training for the Enterprise Facilitation approach to working with agricultural producers, sponsored by the USDA Western Region SARE program in February 2002; contact Stephanie Rittmann, Montana State University Extension Service, (406) 271-4053; e-mail rittmann@montana.edu; on the Internet, <http://managingwholes.com/sareopp.htm>.

November 1-3, American Livestock Breeds Conservancy's 2001 Annual Conference will be held in Columbia, MO; contact ALBC, (919) 542-5704; on the Internet, <http://www.albc-usa.org>.

November 1-4, "Shaping a Sustainable Future: Best Practices in Higher Education" will be held in Flagstaff, AZ; contact Second Nature, (617) 292-7771 ext. 131, e-mail workshops@secondnature.org; on the Internet, <http://www.secondnature.org>.

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 2-4, "Sustaining Life in the Urban Age," the 2001 Biodynamic Agriculture Conference, will be held in Santa Rosa, CA; contact Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association, 1-888-516-7797; e-mail biodynamic@aol.com; on the Internet, <http://www.biodynamics.com>.

November 9-11, "Tools for Effective Farming" will be held in Olympia, WA; contact Tilth Producers, P.O. Box 85056, Seattle, WA 98145-1056, (206) 442-7620.

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 12-16, "Feeding and Balancing the Soil," a short course, will be held in Valley Center, CA; contact the Center for Living in Harmony, (760) 749-9634; e-mail info@livinginharmony.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, First Annual Iowa Organic Conference will be held in Ankeny, IA; contact Margaret Smith, Practical Farmers of Iowa, (515) 294-0887.

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.

December 1 is the deadline for abstract submissions for "Setting the Pace for Conservation," the Soil and Water Conservation Society 2002 Annual Conference, to be held July 13-17, 2002, in Indianapolis, IN; information is available on the Internet at <http://www.swcs.org>.

December 7-9, Northeast Community Supported Agriculture Conference will be held in Claryville, NY; contact Robyn Van En Center for CSA Resources, Wilson College Center for Sustainable Living, 1015 Philadelphia Ave., Chambersburg, PA 17201; e-mail info@csacenter.org.

January 23-26, 2002, 22nd Annual Ecological Farming Conference will be held in Pacific Grove, CA; contact Ecological Farming Association, 406 Main St., #313, Watsonville, CA 95076; (831) 763-2111; on the Internet, <http://www.eco-farm.org>.

August 21-28, 2002, "IFOAM 2002: Organic World Congress" will be held in Victoria, BC, Canada; contact International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, c/o Building 20, 8801 East Saanich Rd., Sidney BC V8L 1H3, Canada; (250) 655-5662; e-mail ifoam2002@cog.ca; on the Internet, <http://www.cog.ca/ifoam2002>.



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