



News Briefs

- **“Unintended Consequences” of Farm Subsidy Programs Detailed in News Stories**

Funneling more money to fewer farms is one of the “unintended consequences” of the federal farm subsidy program, according to stories in *The New York Times* (January 22, 2002) and *The Washington Post* (January 24, 2002). *The New York Times* profiled a region in Arkansas, home to three of the top five recipients of U.S. farm subsidies, where “nearly every problem of the federal farm program is magnified,” it said. “Overproduction, fueled by the subsidies, has pushed crop prices below the levels of more than a decade ago, even while the cost of farming has skyrocketed....Because large farmers receive the largest subsidies, they are buying out smaller farmers, leading to what the Agriculture Department calls a ‘rapid decline’ of family farms under 100 acres and the rise of old-fashioned tenant farming.” *The Washington Post* wrote that “crop payments have mushroomed into a \$21 billion-a-year entitlement program that almost everyone agrees is broken but that no one can agree how to fix.” Global recession and oversupply of food have lowered crop prices, and “farm subsidies have made matters worse, encouraging farmers to grow more crops without regard to market demand.”

- **Contentious Issues Will Fuel Farm Bill Debate**

When the farm bill debate resumes in the U.S. Senate this month, many contentious issues will be awaiting resolution. Three drawing a lot of attention are commodity payment limitations, conservation payments to “factory farms,” and ownership within the competition title. First, many farm and environmental organizations are calling for lower limits on farm commodity program payments, removal of major loopholes in the system, and tightening the current requirement that recipients be actively engaged in agriculture. Second, in its current committee version, the farm bill eliminates the prohibition on large confined animal feeding confinement operations, or factory farms, from receiving clean-up funds under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP); farm and environmental groups are seeking to reverse this provision. Third, within the competition title, an amendment was previously passed to ban packer ownership of livestock for more than 14 days before slaughter; industry is expected to press for reconsideration of this vote. Amendments on all three issues either have been introduced and are awaiting votes, or will be introduced when the Senate resumes debate.

- **Canadian Organic Farmers Sue Monsanto, Aventis Over Genetically Modified Crop Drift**

A group of Canadian organic farmers sued the Monsanto and Aventis Companies last month, seeking compensation for damages caused by genetically modified canola they say is blowing onto their fields, according to Environmental News Network (January 11, 2002). The class-action suit by the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate is on behalf of the province’s 1,000 organic growers, whose farms represent one million acres. About 60 percent of the canola grown in Saskatchewan is genetically modified; organic producers say that pollen from the genetically modified canola is contaminating their crops and seed supply when it blows onto their fields, driving away premium-paying customers who want to purchase certified organic crops. The lawsuit is aimed also at halting plans to introduce genetically modified wheat in the region.

- **Rural Communities Thrive More in States That Limit Corporate Farm Ownership**

Agricultural counties fare better in states that have laws that restrict corporate involvement in agriculture—protecting family farming, according to a study by Rick Welsh of Clarkson University and Thomas Lyson of Cornell University. Those counties have fewer families in poverty, lower unemployment, and higher percentages of farms realizing cash gains. “Counties appear to require some agricultural industrialization to prosper, but suffer when this type of agriculture crowds out less industrialized forms,” the study concluded. For more information, contact Rick Welsh at welshjr@clarkson.edu; for a copy of the report, contact Friends of the Constitution, 1813 250th St., Elmwood, NE 68349 (a donation to defray postage costs is requested).

News Briefs (continued from page 1)

- **Small Farm Spending by National Research Initiative Falls Short, Study Finds**

Spending by the National Research Initiative is failing to meet its promise to better serve small farms, spending just six-tenths of one percent of its \$100 million budget on research relevant to small farms in 1998, according to an assessment released last month by the Center for Rural Affairs. The Center's assessment of 59 proposals funded in 1998 and 1999 found that small farm spending in 1998 fell \$2.9 million short of the \$3.5 million promised by USDA; that just 13 of the proposals addressed issues specific to small farms; and that only \$1.87 million of the \$120 million spent in 1999 was relevant to small farms. An Executive Summary of the analysis, *Public Promises Made—Public Promises Broken*, is available from the Center at (402) 846-5428, or on the Internet at www.cfra.org/resources/Public_Exec.htm.

- **New Resource Conservation and Development Areas Will Receive Technical Assistance**

The USDA has designated 20 areas in 17 states to receive technical assistance for conservation and environmental enhancement as part of its Resource Conservation and Development Program. Projects in the program provide solutions in rural areas for community and economic development, land and resource conservation, environmental enhancement, and water management. A USDA coordinator will work with a grassroots council in each area to address local issues and areas of need. The list of new areas is available at www.usda.gov/news/releases/2002/01/0008.htm.

- **Applicants Sought for Organic Herb Research, Pest Management/Organic Transition Grants**

The Organic Farming Research Foundation and the USDA are seeking applicants for research grants that will be available in 2002. A special call for proposals to do organic herb research has been issued by the Organic Farming Research Foundation because of increasing consumer demand; for guidelines, contact OFRF, P.O. Box 440, Santa Cruz, CA 95061; (831) 426-6606; e-mail research@ofrf.org; on the Internet, www.ofrf.org. The USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service is requesting applications for Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants, including the Organic Transitions Program; applications must be received by February 20. Application guidelines and details are available on the Internet at www.reeusda.gov/integrated/pestmgmt.doc.

- **Nominations Sought for Three Agriculture Awards**

Nominations are being sought for three agricultural awards in 2002. The World Food Prize seeks nominations by February 28; information is available at www.worldfoodprize.org. The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture seeks applications for the Spencer Award for Sustainable Agriculture by March 30; information is available from Laura Miller at the Center, (515) 294-5272; e-mail lwmiller@iastate.edu. The Center for Rural Affairs and the Consortium for Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education seek nominations for the Seventh Generation Research Award; information is available from Kim Leval, (541) 687-1490; e-mail centerwest@qwest.net; or on the Internet at www.cfra.org, or www.csare.org.

- **Growers' Association, Utility Partner To Slow Global Warming Through Farming Practices**

The Pacific Northwest Direct Seed Association, a nonprofit growers' organization based in Pasco, Washington, and the Entergy Corporation have launched a cooperative effort to reduce global warming through environmentally beneficial farming practices. Entergy, a global energy company, will seek to receive credit for carbon dioxide emission reductions through direct seed practices by participating growers, which will offset carbon dioxide emissions by more than 30,000 tons during 10 years, according to the utility. Direct seed techniques involve cultivation and fertilization using no-till methods, sequestering the carbon in the soil.

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Wallace Center/Winrock News

- **AJAA Features Analysis of Sustainable Cropping System in Pacific Northwest**

The development of a sustainable cropping system of perennial wheat in the U.S. Pacific Northwest is explored in the latest issue of *American Journal of Alternative Agriculture* (Volume 16, No. 4), the final issue of the peer-reviewed research journal to be published by the Wallace Center. Other articles examine the effect of tillage and farming system on AM fungus populations, mycorrhizal formation, and nutrient uptake by winter wheat in a high-P soil; integrated nutrient management for resource-poor farming systems—a case study of adaptive research and technology dissemination in Uganda; factors affecting farmers' crop diversity decisions; IPM adoption in the northeastern U.S.; multifamily farms and America's farm structure; and commentary on research and development in organic fruit production in Switzerland. For information about this issue, contact the Wallace Center, Winrock International, 1621 N. Kent St., Suite 1200, Arlington, VA 22209-2134; (703) 525-9430, ext. 675. CABI Publishing takes over the AJAA with Volume 17; for further information, including subscription rates, contact CABI Publishing, North American Office, 10 E. 40th St., Suite 3203, New York, NY 10016; 1-800-528-4841; e-mail cabi-nao@cabi.org; on the Internet, www.cabi-publishing.org.

Resources

“Attracting Consumers with Locally Grown Products,” a consumer survey from the North Central Initiative for Small Farm Profitability, is available on the Internet at www.farmprofitability.org; or from Food Processing Center, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, (402) 472-2832.

“Eco-Economy: Building an Economy for the Earth,” by Lester Brown of the Earth Policy Institute, is free on the Internet at www.earth-policy.org/Books/index.htm, or for \$16 from Manager of Publications, (202) 496-9325.

“Family Farm Survey,” preliminary results from the National Farm Action Campaign, is available on the Internet at www.worc.org, or from Missouri Rural Crisis Center, (573) 449-1336; e-mail morural@coin.org.

“Genetic Engineering of Crop Plants: What Farmers Need to Know about Transgenic Crops” is available on the Internet at www.attra.org, or from Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas, P.O. Box 3657, Fayetteville, AR 72702; 1-800-346-9140 or (501) 442-9842.

“GMO Liability Threats for Farmers,” the first in a series of briefing papers from the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, and Genetically Engineered Food Alert, is on the Internet at www.iatp.org.

“Growing Communities Curriculum: Community Building and Organizational Development through Community Gardening” is available from American Community Gardening Association National Office, c/o Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, 100 N. 20th St., 5th Flr., Philadelphia, PA 19103-1495; (215) 988-8785.

“Multiple Benefits of Agriculture Analysis: An Economic, Environmental & Social Analysis” is available on the Internet at www.landstewardshipproject.org, or from Land Stewardship Project, (651) 653-0618; e-mail lsqwbl@landstewardshipproject.org.

“Partnerships for Sustaining California Agriculture: Profit, Environment, and Community,” proceedings from a March 2001 conference, is \$10 from University of California Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program, (530) 752-7556; e-mail sarep@ucdavis.edu.

“Realizing the Promise of Conservation Buffer Technology,” a report from the National Conservation Buffer Workshop in June 2001, is available on the Internet at www.swcs.org, or from Soil and Water Conservation Society, (515) 289-2331 ext. 10; e-mail pubs@swcs.org.

“State of the World 2002” is \$15.95 plus \$4 S&H from Worldwatch Institute, 1776 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20036-1094; 1-888-544-2303; on the Internet, www.worldwatch.org.

“Upper Midwest Organic Resource Directory,” November 2001 update, is available on the Internet at www.mosesorganic.org, or from Midwest Organic & Sustainable Education Services, P.O. Box 339, Spring Valley, WI 54767; (715) 772-3153; e-mail moses@wwt.net.

“What's Eating You About What You Eat? A Survey of Madison Residents' Likes and Dislikes,” a 74-page report from the Madison Food System Project, is available on the Internet at www.wisc.edu/mfsp, or from Dept. of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Wisconsin, (608) 262-1004.

Upcoming Events

February 28-March 2, "The Heart of Organics," the 13th Annual Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference, will be held in La Crosse, WI; contact Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Services, (715) 772-6819; e-mail moses@wwt.net.

March 1, "Agricultural Direct Marketing Strategies for Successful Businesses and Communities," sponsored by University of California Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program and others, will be held in Davis, CA; contact UC SAREP office, (530) 752-7556, or David Chaney, (530) 754-8551, e-mail dechaney@ucdavis.edu.

March 6-7, Pennsylvania Grazing and Forage Conference, sponsored by Pennsylvania Forage and Grassland Council and PSU Grazing Research and Education Center, will be held in Grantville, PA; contact Marvin Hall, Dept. of Crop & Soil Science, (814) 863-1019; e-mail mhh2@psu.edu; or Les Vough, (301) 405-1322, e-mail lv14@umail.umd.edu.

March 6-10, "Growing Organically: From Beets to Beef," Acorn Organic Agri-Food Conference & Trade Show, will be held in Moncton, New Brunswick; contact Atlantic Canadian Organic Regional Network, RR1, Belfast, PEI C0A 1A0 Canada; 1-866-32-ACORN; e-mail kjeffrey@isn.net; on the Internet, www.acornorganic.org.

March 7-10, Natural Products Expo West will be held in Anaheim, CA; contact New Hope Natural Media, 1-866-458-4935, on the Internet, www.expowest.com.

March 9, "From the Field to the Table: Value-Added Agriculture," Sustainable Farming Association of Central Minnesota Annual Meeting, will be held in Alexandria, MN; contact Lynda Converse, (320)-594-2456, e-mail converse@rea-alp.com.

March 9-10, "Farms of Tomorrow...Food for Today," Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association's 23rd Annual Conference, will be held in Johnstown, OH; contact Sean McGovern, OEFFA, P.O. Box 82234, Columbus, OH 43202; (614) 421-2022; e-mail seanmcgovern@oeffa.com; on the Internet, www.oeffa.com.

March 22-23, "Pastured Poultry Conference," will be held in Nampa, ID; contact Mandi Thompson, Idaho Dept. of Agriculture, P.O. Box 790, Boise, ID 83701; (208) 332-8535; e-mail mthompson@agri.state.id.us; on the Internet, www.agri.state.id.us.

March 22-23, "Sustainable Greenhouse Design and Year-Round Food Production Workshop" will be held in York, PA; contact Steve Moore, Harmony Essentials, 1522 Lefever Lane, Spring Grove, PA 17362; (717) 225-2489; e-mail sandcmoore@juno.com.

March 26-28, "UK Organic Research 2002: Research in Context" will be held in Aberystwyth, Wales; contact Organic Centre Wales, phone 01970 622 238; e-mail UK-Organic2002@aber.ac.uk; on the Internet, www.organic.aber.ac.uk/COR.shtml.

April 8-11, "Local Identities and Globalisation," the 5th International Farming Systems Association European Symposium, will be held in Florence, Italy; information is available on the Internet at www.unifi.it/unifi/deeaf/ifsa.

April 22-23, 24th Annual National Food Policy Conference will be held in Washington, DC; contact Consumer Federation of America, 1464 16th St., NW, Suite 604, Washington, DC 20036; (202) 387-6121; on the Internet, www.consumerfed.org.

April 26-28, "From Streams to Schools: Finding Alternatives to Pesticides," the 20th National Pesticide Forum, will be held in Seattle, WA; contact Beyond Pesticides, (202) 543-5450; e-mail info@beyondpesticides.org.



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