



NEWS BRIEFS

CAFO Rule Fails to Promote Environmentally Sound Animal Production, Says Coalition

The Sustainable Agriculture Coalition has strongly criticized the revised Clean Water Act regulation for concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), issued by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in mid-December, charging that it “squanders an opportunity to promote and encourage environmentally sound animal production.” The new ‘CAFO Rule’ targets the nation’s 15,500 largest livestock facilities that produce about 60 percent of waste runoff (*Washington Post*, December 17), requiring them to apply for a permit, submit an annual report, and devise a plan for handling manure and wastewater. The revised standards will “hinder rather than help rural residents and communities in their struggle to deal with water pollution from animal factory operations,” the Coalition stated. Most importantly, the rule lacks enforceable federal measures to prevent animal factory waste from running off the land where it is applied; the group also cited its failure to adequately address potential catastrophic spills of millions of gallons of manure from lagoon storage systems, and said it relieves large meat and poultry processing corporations of financial liability for dealing with the waste, passing the costs on to their contract farmers and the public. More information is available from the Coalition’s Martha Noble at (202) 547-5754; the EPA’s December 16 statement on the CAFO Rule is online at www.epa.gov/epahome/newsroom.htm.

Better Monitoring of Air Pollution from Livestock Operations Urged by National Academies

A report issued last month by the National Academies’ National Research Council (NRC) warns of potential threats to air quality from livestock operations and recommends better ways to monitor their emissions. Farm groups pressured the U.S. EPA to commission the study after the agency cited a poultry farm in Ohio and a hog farm in Missouri for violating the federal Clean Air Act (*Columbus Dispatch*, December 18). In a statement accompanying the 225-page report, the authors cited odor and particulate matter as serious concerns at the local level, while ammonia, nitrous oxide, and methane emissions can have regional and wider impacts, contributing to soil and water pollution, smog, and global climate change. The NRC’s report urges EPA and USDA to replace current methods for monitoring airborne emissions with a “systems approach” that considers both on-farm and off-farm inputs and outputs of animal feeding operations (AFOs), and despite a lack of precise data on pollutant levels, recommends immediate implementation of affordable remedies. “Air Emissions from Animal Feeding Operations: Current Knowledge, Future Needs, Final Report” is online at www.nap.edu; for print availability, contact National Academies Press, 1-800-624-6242; zjones@nas.edu.

Pollination Services from Native Bees Decline with Increasing Agricultural Intensification

Native bee populations decline, along with the valuable pollination services they provide, as intensive, industrial-scale farming increases, according to a report last month in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (PNAS Online, December 16). In a two-year study on organic and conventional farms in California, a team of ecologists found that the wild bee community, consisting of around 20 different species each year, could fully pollinate watermelon, a highly pollination-dependent crop. Native bee abundance and diversity, and total pollen deposition, dropped off severely on the farms that were distant from natural habitats and used chemical pesticides. Suppressing native bee diversity may be risky, the researchers wrote, given many farmers’ dependence on very few species of managed bees. Conserving and restoring native bee habitat could provide U.S. farmers with net economic benefit and an “insurance policy” (December 12, www.nationalgeographic.com) against further declines of the imported honeybee—currently threatened by disease, heavy pesticide use, and other factors—and serve broader conservation goals as well, they concluded. For a reprint of the journal article, contact lead author Claire Kremen, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ 08544; ckremen@princeton.edu.

USDA Research Should Address Social and Environmental Concerns, National Academies Report Concludes

While noting the USDA's success in fostering higher agricultural productivity, a National Academies panel report released last month concludes that the agency should redirect more of its \$2 billion annual research budget to emerging issues, as agriculture is shaped increasingly by globalization and more liberalized trade, shifting market structures and public concerns, new scientific advances, and expanding private sector research. "Worldwide changes have shifted agriculture's focus beyond food and fiber production towards goals of improving public health, social well-being, and the environment," the report says. It points to five areas of opportunity for public research, extension, and education: globalization of the food economy, emerging pathogens and hazards in the food chain, nutrition and human health, environmentally sound farming methods, and quality of life in rural communities. "Frontiers in Agricultural Research: Food, Health, Environment, Communities" (240 pgs) is online at www.nap.edu; a print copy is \$39 from National Academies Press, 1-800-624-6242.

United Nations Launches \$26 Million Initiative to Identify New Soil Organisms

The United Nations Environment Programme has launched a \$26 million, 5-year project to discover new species of soil organisms—"the last great catalogue of undiscovered life on Earth," according to London's *Independent* (November 29, www.independent.co.uk). Biologists will hunt for and classify soil bacteria, fungi, insects, mites, and worms in seven countries: Brazil, Mexico, Ivory Coast, Uganda, Kenya, Indonesia, and India. Scientists increasingly view soil biodiversity as the key to sustainable agriculture because soil-dwelling species play essential roles in soil fertility and nutrient cycling to plants, the article said; the discoveries are expected also to lead to new drugs and industrial applications. Several media stories on the new UN-led program cited important gains from prior studies of soil organisms, including three-fold higher crop yields made possible by introducing soil-mixing earthworms to degraded tea plantations in India; the use of certain termite species to improve rock-hard soils in Africa and Australia; and the use of nitrogen-fixing soil bacteria in place of nitrogen fertilizers in Brazil, which has saved a billion dollars annually for the nation's agriculture. A news release from Britain's University of Exeter, where Professor Jo Anderson heads the project's technical advisory group, is online at www.ex.ac.uk/newsun.htm.

U.S. Ranks Last Among 147 Nations in Water Use Efficiency in New Water Poverty Index

A newly developed Water Poverty Index intended "to promote equitable and sustainable water management" ranks the U.S. as the most wasteful user of water, and 32nd overall, among 147 nations. Researchers from Britain's Center for Ecology and Hydrology and the World Water Council (WWC) used five different criteria, including resources, access, use, capacity, and environment, to highlight the linkages among water availability and management, environmental integrity, poverty, health, and other social conditions in water-rich and water-poor nations. The top five nations overall were Finland, Canada, Iceland, Norway, and Guyana. Though highly ranked by several measures, the U.S., with the world's highest per capita water consumption, has a relatively low position in the index because of wasteful or inefficient water use for domestic, industrial, and agricultural purposes. More information, including a 12-page summary (December 11) of the index results, is available online from the WWC at www.worldwatercouncil.org.

Rural, Family Farm Issues Receive Little Attention from State Lawmakers, Kellogg Survey Finds

A national survey of state lawmakers by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation has found a broad consensus on the problems facing rural America, although rural initiatives take a "back seat" to more pressing priorities including state budget woes and urban and suburban concerns (*Omaha World-Herald*, December 2). Lack of opportunity for young people is the biggest problem facing rural communities, followed in order by decline of the family farm, lack of access to health care, low-wage jobs, poor quality of education, and over-development and sprawl, according to 1,030 state legislators responding to the survey. Commenting on the report, Kellogg's Rick Foster cited the growing realization that "federal farm aid has failed to foster rural-community survival." Comprising 80 percent of the land base and serving a vitally important stewardship role, rural America needs its own policy and economic framework, he added. The 9-page report, "Perceptions of Rural America: National State Legislator Survey," is available online at www.wkkf.org/pubs/FoodRur/Pub3782.pdf; for a print copy, contact the Kellogg Foundation, (269) 968-1611.

RESOURCES

- **Ammonia in the UK**, a 90-pg report on environmentally damaging ammonia emissions from agriculture, is online at www.defra.gov.uk/environment/airquality/ammonia/index.htm; a print copy is free from AEQ Division, DEFRA, 4/D11 Ashdown House, 123 Victoria St., London SW1E 6DE UK; e-mail airquality@defra.gsi.gov.uk.
- **Bringing the Food Economy Home: Local Alternatives to Global Agribusiness** (160 pgs) by Helena Norberg-Hodge and others, from International Society for Ecology and Culture, is \$18.95 from Kumarian Press (1-800-289-2664, kpbooks@kpbooks.com) or other book sellers.
- **Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Guidelines** developed by Wine Institute of California and California Association of Winegrape Growers; for 490-pg workbook and program details, (415) 512-0151; www.wineinstitute.org.
- **Compost Quality Seal of Approval** program from Woods End Laboratories and Rodale Organic Gardening; for details contact Woods End, 1-800-451-0337, info@woodsand.org; or www.organicgardening.com/compostseal.
- **Digging for Alternatives: An Analysis of Potato Pest Management Research at Two Northwest Land Grant Universities** (23 pgs) is online at www.pesticide.org; a print copy is \$7 from Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides, P.O. Box 1393, Eugene, OR 97440; (541) 344-5044; info@pesticide.org.
- **Down on the Farm**, a 6-part series (December 2002) on livestock megafarm trends, environmental impacts, and state-level regulations, is online from *Dayton Daily News* at www.activedayton.com/ddn/project/farm/index.html.
- **Engineering the Farm: The Social and Ethical Aspects of Agricultural Biotechnology** (200 pgs), edited by Britt Bailey and Marc Lappe, is \$25 from Island Press (1-800-828-1302, www.islandpress.com) or other book sellers.
- **Environmental Impacts of Livestock on U.S. Grazing Lands** (16 pgs) is online at www.cast-science.org; a print copy is \$5 from Council for Agricultural Science and Technology, (515) 292-2125; cast@cast-science.org.
- **Environmental Laws Affecting Agriculture**, a federal guide and 29 state guides completed to date, are online at www.nasda-hq.org/nasda/nasda/Foundation/state/states.htm; or contact NASDA Research Foundation, (202) 296-9680; nasda@patriot.net.
- **Home Grown: The Case for Local Food in a Global Market** (83 pgs) is \$5 plus S/H from Worldwatch Institute, 1776 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20036; (570) 320-2076; wwpub@worldwatch.org.
- **Living Planet Report 2002** (39 pgs), a periodic update from World Wildlife Fund International on the state of the world's ecosystems, is online at www.panda.org/livingplanet/lpr02/index.cfm.
- **The New Farm website**, building on *The New Farm* magazine's legacy of "farmer-to-farmer know-how from the Rodale Institute," is in development at www.newfarm.org; or contact Greg Bowman, editor, (610) 683-1470.
- **Northeast Farms to Food: Understanding Our Region's Food System** (80 pgs) is \$10 plus \$2 S/H from Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, (413) 323-4531; nesawg@smallfarm.org.
- **Organic Grain: Cropping System and Marketing** manual is \$10 and CD-ROM is \$5, plus \$4 S/H for both, from Rodale Press, (610) 683-6009; ribooks@fast.net.
- **Organic Farm Certification and the National Organic Program; Organic Pumpkin and Winter Squash Production; Sustainable Farming Internships and Apprenticeships; and Stored Grain Pest Management** are among the new publications available in print or online from ATTRA, 1-800-346-9140; www.attra.ncat.org/attra-pub.
- **Outbreak Alert 2002: Closing the Gaps in Our Federal Food-Safety Net** (64 pgs), updated summary report on foodborne-illness outbreaks, is online at www.cspinet.org; a print copy is \$15 from Center for Science in the Public Interest, (202) 332-9110; cspi@cspinet.org.
- **Starting & Strengthening Farmers' Markets in Pennsylvania** (35 pgs), 2nd edition, is free from Center for Rural Pennsylvania, 200 North 3rd St., Ste. 600, Harrisburg, PA 17101; (717) 787-9555; www.ruralpa.org.
- **Water, Grass & Livestock: An Annotated Bibliography of Riparian Grazing Publications** (36 pgs) is online at www.landstewardshipproject.org; a print copy is \$5 from Land Stewardship Project, (651) 653-0618; lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org.

CALENDAR

February

1: Abstract submission deadline for papers for "2nd National Conference on Grazing Lands" hosted by Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, December 7-10, 2003, in Nashville, TN; contact J.W. Peterson, (703) 455-6886; www.glci.org/2NCGL.htm.

2-4: "The Urban-Ag Interface and the Future of Agriculture," Association of Applied IPM Ecologists 2003 Annual Conference, in San Luis Obispo, CA; contact AAIE, phone/fax (707) 265-9349; director@aaie.net; www.aaie.net.

3: Abstract submission deadline for poster presentations at "Sustainable Land Application Conference" on applying waste materials to soils, January 4-8, 2004, in Orlando, FL; contact University of Florida/IFAS Office of Conferences & Institutes, (352) 392-5930; www.conference.ifas.ufl.edu/landapp.

3-10: Annual North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association Conference, in Charlotte, NC; contact NAFDMA, 1-888-884-9270; nafdma@map.com; www.nafdma.com.

7-8: 9th Annual Kansas Sustainable Agriculture Round-up, in Manhattan, KS; contact Jerry Jost, (785) 865-2555; jjost@grapevine.net; or Kansas Rural Center, (785) 873-3431.

7-8: "Local Food Systems, Local Decisions: In Search of True Security," 12th Annual Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture Conference, in State College, PA; contact PASA, (814) 349-9856; info@pasafarming.org; www.pasafarming.org.

7-8: New Mexico Organic Farming & Marketing Expo, in Glorieta, NM; contact Joan Quinn, (505) 266-9849; joan.quinn@state.nm.us.

9-11: "Conservation: Imagine the Future," National Association of Conservation Districts 57th Annual Meeting and Conservation Expo, in Orlando, FL; contact Trindal Stanke, (202) 547-6223; Trindal-Stanke@nacdn.net; www.nacdn.net/2003/expo/.

10-11: "Going Organic" Conference and Trade Show, in Red Deer,

Alberta, Canada; contact Doris Smallwood, Alberta Organic Association, #12 18104-102 Ave., Edmonton, Alberta, T5H 1S7 Canada; 1-866-262-9907 or (780) 930-7051; altaorg@telus.net.

16-18: Wisconsin Grazing Conference, in Stevens Point, WI; contact Paul Nehring, Grassworks, (715) 261-6009.

19-22: Mid-Atlantic Direct Marketing Conference, in Timonium, MD; contact Jo-Ann Weber, Maryland Direct Farm Market Association, (301) 405-2436; www.madmc.com.

20-21: USDA's 79th Agricultural Outlook Forum, in Arlington, VA; (202) 720-3050; www.usda.gov/oce/waob/agforum.htm.

20-22, Wisconsin School for Beginning Market Growers, in Hudson, WI; contact John Hendrickson, (608) 265-3704; jhendric@facstaff.wisc.edu; www.wisc.edu/cias/schools/mktgardn.html.

21: Abstract/proposal submission deadline for 2003 Agriculture, Food & Human Values Society and Association for the Study of Food & Society joint annual meetings, June 12-15, 2003, in Austin, TX; contact A. Bonanno, Sam Houston State Univ., (936) 294-1488; www.clas.ufl.edu/users/rhaynes/afhvs/NextMeeting.html.

27-March 1: 14th Annual Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference, in LaCrosse, WI; contact Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service, (715) 772-3153; moses@wwt.net.

March

3-5: BioCycle West Coast Conference 2003 on composting, organics recycling and bioenergy, in Los Angeles, CA; contact BioCycle, (610) 967-4135 ext. 21; biocycle@jgpress.com; www.biocycle.net.

8-9: Annual Ohio Ecological Food & Farming Association Conference, in Johnstown, OH; contact OEFFA, (614) 421-2022; info@oeffa.org; www.oeffa.org.

10-12: "Farming on the Edge: Finding the Balance," American Farmland Trust National Conference 2003, in Pacific Grove, CA; contact AFT, (202) 331-7300; www.farmland.org/conference_2003.



Henry A. Wallace Center for Agricultural & Environmental Policy at Winrock International

1621 North Kent Street, Suite 1200
Arlington VA 22209-2134
USA