



NEWS BRIEFS

Federal Court Again Strikes Down South Dakota's Anti-Corporate Farming Law

A federal appeals court last month struck down an amendment to South Dakota's constitution that bars corporations from owning farmland or engaging in farming in the state, arguing that its true intent is to prevent out-of-state companies from operating there (AP, August 20). The ruling by the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a lower court's decision in 2002 that 'Amendment E' violates a federal statute that blocks states from enacting laws that disrupt interstate commerce. It found also that supporters of Amendment E, which was adopted by state-wide ballot in 1998, had failed to show that a corporate farming ban would effectively preserve family farms or protect the environment. Dakota Rural Action, South Dakota Resources Coalition, and the state attorney general's office defended the case. The court's decision is being studied closely in other states with similar bans on corporate farming (*Des Moines Register*, Aug. 20; *Omaha World Herald*, Aug. 21).

Decline in Atmospheric Methyl Bromide Is Attributed to International Treaty

A "surprisingly large drop" in atmospheric levels of methyl bromide, a soil fumigant and pesticide that contributes significantly to the destruction of the earth's stratospheric ozone layer, has been recorded by scientists at the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (August 27, www.noaa.gov). They attributed the decline, a 13-percent drop since 1998, to mandatory curbs on the chemical under the Montreal Protocol, a United Nations treaty that has overseen a 6-year phaseout due to be completed by January 1, 2005. The study predicts a continued drop in methyl bromide in the air as long as its use on the ground continues to decline. According to the NOAA chemist who led the study, the projected declines do not take into account the possibility of continued substantial use of methyl bromide under exemptions to the treaty, which have been sought by the U.S. and 14 other nations (*New York Times*, August 16; *Greenwire*, August 18). Earlier this year, the U.S. EPA granted exemptions allowing continued use of methyl bromide by produce and tobacco farmers and other users, who say no cheap alternatives exist.

World Health Organization Urges End to Use of Growth Promoting Antibiotics in Livestock

The World Health Organization has urged nations to "phase out the widespread and controversial use of antibiotic growth promoters in animal feed"; this action will "help preserve the effectiveness of antibiotics for medicine ... without significant expense or health consequences to farm animals" (*Washington Post*, August 13). The WHO relied heavily on an international expert panel's study of the results of a 1998 voluntary ban on growth promoters in Denmark, the world's largest exporter of pork products, with industrial-style production similar to the U.S. and some other nations. While the advisory is not legally binding, it will "add to the growing movement to stop routine use of antibiotics on farms" and to the public pressure that led the McDonald's fast-food chain to announce cut backs on routine use of low-dose antibiotics. According to the *Post*, WHO's recommendation "goes well beyond" the steps taken by McDonald's last June, which directed its meat suppliers to reduce or stop the use of some growth promoters by the end of 2004.

State of Maine Supports Dairy's Labeling of Milk from rBST-Free Cows

The State of Maine, through Attorney General Steven Rowe, has officially supported Oakhurst Dairy in a lawsuit brought by Monsanto Company over the dairy's marketing of milk produced without artificial growth hormones (*Portland Press Herald*, August 28, www.pressherald.com). Rowe filed a motion arguing that the case could damage or halt Maine's 'Quality Trademark' program, which certifies Oakhurst and other dairies that do not give artificial hormones to their cows. As well as bearing the 'Quality Trademark' seal, milk sold by Oakhurst contains labels that read "Our Farmers' Pledge: No Artificial Growth Hormones." Monsanto makes rBST or Posilac, a genetically engineered growth hormone that boosts milk output by up to 15 percent (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 10, www.stltoday.com). Monsanto claims that Oakhurst's pledge slogan strays from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's guidance on rBST-labeling, and dupes consumers into thinking that milk from non-rBST-treated cows is healthier.

Wealthy Nations' Trade Policies Cost \$24 Billion in Lost Income for Developing Countries, Says Economic Study

A new report released last month quantifies the impact that protectionist trade policies and export subsidies by industrialized economies have in depressing world prices and reducing market opportunities for small farmers in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. According to economists at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), such trade-distorting measures by wealthy nations cost agriculture-dependent nations in the developing world about \$24 billion in lost income each year, and displace an additional \$40 billion in net agricultural exports. More than half of the lost exports are caused by European Union farm policies, close to a third are due to U.S. policies, and Japan and other high-income Asian countries cause about 10 percent. The new figures "are likely to fuel the growing controversy over agricultural trade policies" ahead of the upcoming World Trade Organization's ministerial meeting in Cancun, Mexico, in mid-September (BBC News, August 27, <http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk>). "How Much Does It Hurt? The Impact of Agricultural Trade Policies on Developing Countries" and related documents are online at www.ifpri.org.

Federal Court Reaffirms USDA's Mandatory Beef Checkoff Is Unconstitutional

In a case that some believe may reach the U.S. Supreme Court, the USDA's mandatory beef checkoff program has again been ruled unconstitutional because it compels individual cattle producers to support generic beef promotion and marketing programs with which they disagree (*Denver Post*, *Omaha World Herald*; July 9). The U.S. 8th Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed a lower district court's ruling last summer that cattle producers do not have to pay a \$1-per-head fee on cattle sold within the U.S. The appellate judges rejected arguments from the USDA and the Cattlemen's Beef Promotion and Research Board that the checkoff is 'government speech' and therefore immune from First Amendment scrutiny; they said that the government was not speaking through the checkoff, and rather that the program compels individual producers to pay for speech they oppose. The Western Organization of Resource Councils (www.worc.org), which joined with the Livestock Marketing Association (www.lmaweb.com/lmapress.html) in contesting the checkoff, has argued that the beef program unfairly benefits large meat packers, processors, and retailers, instead of the cattle producers who pay the fees.

Progress Made in More Humane Treatment of U.S. Farm Animals Is Detailed in News Story

Progress made in more humane treatment of farm animals in the U.S., particularly in the last 5 years, is detailed in a recent article in *USA Today* (August 12). According to the story, expanding consumer interest in improving the lives (and deaths) of food animals has helped to spur important reforms within the nation's meat, milk, and egg industries, through a variety of far-reaching initiatives by the biggest players in food retailing and the fast-food industry. Signs of progress include improved housing, slaughterhouse design that better accounts for natural animal behavior, and inspection and audit programs, including one being developed by the Food Marketing Institute and the National Council of Chain Restaurants (online at www.awaudit.org). This autumn, supermarkets will begin offering 'Certified Humane' products, a program from the nonprofit Humane Farm Animal Care, which audits producers according to some of the strictest animal welfare standards in the U.S. (online at www.certifiedhumane.com).

Strategies to Promote More Sustainable Livestock Agriculture in U.S. Are Suggested in New Analysis

Educational and outreach efforts to promote a more sustainable agriculture at the farm-level have historically relied on farmers' ability to decide how their operations are organized and managed. A new analysis that takes account of structural changes in four U.S. livestock sectors (poultry, hogs, beef, and dairy) suggests that the possibilities for promoting more sustainable practices—such as intensive pasture-based systems—become more limited as production within a given sector adopts the "feedlot model" and becomes more vertically integrated with input suppliers and off-farm processors. The findings point to several complementary strategies to promote more sustainable livestock production, including expanding efforts to develop "alternative" coordinated networks (including those relying on direct marketing and quality-oriented supply chains), pressing integrating firms to permit more sustainable practices, and working for legislation that shifts more decision-making within integrated systems towards growers. The analysis appears in the journal *Agriculture and Human Values* (Vol. 20, No. 2, 2003); for more information, contact co-author Rick Welsh, Clarkson University, Box 5750, Potsdam, NY 13699; welshjr@clarkson.edu.

RESOURCES

■ **Agribusiness Center** website, a news and information center from Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, online at www.agribusinesscenter.org, or contact Ben Lilliston, blilliston@iatp.org; and **Agribusiness Accountability Initiative**, new website from Center of Concern and National Catholic Rural Life Conference, online at www.agribusinessaccountability.org, or contact Peter O'Driscoll, (202) 635-2757 ext. 125, podriscoll@coc.org.

■ **Agricultural Restructuring and Concentration in the United States: Who Wins, Who Loses?**, 53-pg policy brief from Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy, online at www.foodfirst.org, or contact Food First, (510) 654-4400.

■ **Agriculture Policy in the Northeast States: Inventory and Innovation** (60 pgs) is \$8 plus \$2 S/H from Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, P.O. Box 608, Belchertown, MA 01007; (413) 323-4531; nesawg@smallfarm.org.

■ **Applying the Principles of Sustainable Farming** (16 pgs), **Beekeeping** (22 pgs), **Considerations for Organic Herb Production** (20 pgs), **Organic Alfalfa Production** (16 pgs), and **Sustainable Turf Care** (40 pgs) are among the new and updated publications online at www.attra.ncat.org; print copies are free from Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas, 1-800-346-9140.

■ **Conservation Security Program** factsheets and news updates, online at www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_csp.html, or contact Land

Stewardship Project, (651) 653-0618; and at www.mnproject.org/csp/, or contact Minnesota Project, mmcgrath@mnproject.org.

■ **The Curse of American Agricultural Abundance: A Sustainable Solution**, by Willard Cochrane, is \$35 plus S/H from University of Nebraska Press, 1-800-755-1105; www.nebraska.press.unl.edu/bookinfo/4423.html, or other book sellers.

■ **Have Transgenes Will Travel: Issues Raised by Gene Flow from Genetically Engineered Crops**, 15-pg brief from Pew Initiative on Food and Biotechnology, online at www.pewagbiotech.org, or contact Pew Initiative, (202) 347-9044.

■ **Integrated Pest Management: Current and Future Strategies** (246 pgs) is \$50 plus \$3 S/H from Council for Agricultural Science & Technology, 4420 W. Lincoln Way, Ames, IA 50014; (515) 292-2125; 2-pg summary is online at www.cast-science.org/cast/src/cast_top.htm.

■ **Linking Land Quality, Agricultural Productivity, and Food Security** (64 pgs, #AER823), from USDA Economic Research Service, www.ers.usda.gov/publications/aer823; a print copy is \$31.50 plus S/H from USDA Order Desk, 1-800-553-6847.

■ **The Natural and Organic Pork Market: A Sustainable Niche for Small-Scale Producers?**, 9-pg review article in *American Journal of Alternative Agriculture* (Vol. 18 No. 1, 2003), is available from W.P. Wheatley, Dept. of Applied Economics, Univ. of Minnesota, 316 Classroom-Office

Bldg., St. Paul, MN 55108; e-mail whea0025@umn.edu.

■ **A New Agricultural Policy for the United States**, 23-page report examining the evolution of national policy and alternatives, www.mnproject.org, or contact Minnesota Project, 1885 University Ave. W, Suite 315, St. Paul, MN 55104; (651) 645-6159.

■ **Proceeding of the Third National Small Farm Conference** (201 pgs) sponsored by USDA-CSREES Small Farm Program, held September 2002 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, online at www.cahe.nmsu.edu/smallfarm/SmallFarmProc.pdf; print copies will be distributed by Sustainable Agriculture Science Ctr. at Alcalde, New Mexico State University, (505) 852-4241, or contact smallfarm@reeusda.gov.

■ **Reap New Profits: Marketing Strategies for Farmers and Ranchers** (20-pg revised edition) and **2003 SARE Highlights** (17 pgs), online at www.sare.org/; full-color print copies are free from Sustainable Agriculture Network, (301) 504-5236.

■ **Silent Invaders: Pesticides, Livelihoods, and Women's Health** (288 pgs), with 30 case studies and scientific papers, from Zed Books, is £14.95 (US\$25) from Pesticide Action Network, Eurolink Centre, 49 Effa Rd., London SW2 1BZ, UK; admin@pan.uk; www.pan-uk.org.

■ **World Resources 2002-2004** (328 pgs) is \$27 plus S/H from World Resources Institute, 1-800-537-5487, www.wri.org/; 36-pg summary is online at http://pdf.wri.org/wr2002_execsumm.pdf.

CALENDAR

October

4–6, 20–21, and 22–23: 2003 workshops on composting, soil biology and chemistry, and compost tea, in Corvallis, OR; contact Soil Food Web Inc., 1128 NW 2nd St., Suite 120, Corvallis, OR 97330; (541) 752-5066; www.soilfoodweb.com.

11–13: “Bi-National Farmers Forum” to discuss farm and trade issues of common concern to Mexican and U.S. farmers, hosted by National Catholic Rural Life Conference and others, in Des Moines, IA; contact NCRLC, (515) 270-2634; nrcrlc@aol.com.

13: Proposal submission deadline for North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Extension Workshop and Conference Support grants; contact P.B. Ford, NCR SARE PDP Regional Coordinator, Kansas State Univ., (785) 532-5328; pford@oznet.ksu.edu; www.sare.org/nrcsare/cfp.htm.

13–14: Washington State Family Farm Summit, organized by Tilth Producers, WSU Small Farms Program, and others, in Wenatchee, WA; contact Kent Mullinix, (509) 682-6625; kmullinix@wvc.edu.

15–18: “Cultivating Our Way to Better Health,” 11th Annual Conference of the National Association of Farmers’ Market Nutrition Programs, in Charleston, SC; contact NAFMNP, P.O. Box 9080, Alexandria, VA 22304; (703) 837-0451; www.nafmnp.org/.

31–November 2: Maine Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association Annual Farmer-to-Farmer Conference, in Bar Harbor, ME; contact MOFGA, (207) 568-4142; www.mofga.org/news20030806.html.

November

1–5: “Growing the Movement: Opportunities and Challenges for Community Food Security,” Seventh Annual Community Food Security Conference, in Boston, MA; contact Community Food Security Coalition, (310) 822-5410; www.foodsecurity.org.

2–6: ASSA-CSSA-SSSA Annual Meetings including Organic Agriculture Symposium sponsored by Division A8 (Integrated

Agricultural Systems), and Round Table (Nov. 3) held by Consortium for Sustainable Agric. Research & Education, in Denver, CO; for general information, contact K.R. Schlesinger, (608) 273-8090 ext. 322; www.asa-cssa-sssa.org/anmeet/; for CSARE Round Table, contact Kim Leval, (541) 687-1490; kimleval@qwest.net.

6–8: 11th National Small Farm Trade Show & Conference, sponsored by Small Farm Today magazine, in Columbia, MO; contact Small Farm Today, 1-800-633-2535; smallfarm@socket.net.

7–9: Carolina Farm Stewardship’s 18th Annual Sustainable Agriculture Conference, in Rock Hill, SC; contact CFSA, (919) 542-2402; www.carolinafarmstewards.org.

7–9: “Sound Farming: Listening to the Environment,” Tilth Producers’ annual conference and trade show, including one-day symposium, “Organic Farming Principles and Practices,” in Bellingham, WA; contact Tilth Producers, (425) 788-0480; or Nancy Allen, (206) 442-7620; nancy@tilthproducers.org.

11–13: “Seeds of Prosperity: Food, Farms and Michigan’s Economic Future,” a conference on entrepreneurial agriculture, presented by Michigan Land Use Institute, in Thompsonville, MI; contact MLUI, (231) 882-4723 ext. 18; www.mlui.org.

12–14: “What the Public Values About Farmland,” workshop sponsored by Farm Foundation and USDA’s Economic Research Service, NRCS, and CSREES, in Washington, DC; contact Mary Ahearn, (202) 694-5583; mahearn@ers.usda.gov.

14: Submission deadline for abstracts on current research, for publication on “Compost in Organic Agriculture” being prepared by the editors of BioCycle magazine and Compost Science & Utilization journal; send questions or submissions to Jerry Goldstein, Compost Science & Utilization, 419 State Ave., Emmaus, PA 18049; biocycle@jgpress.com.

17: 3rd Annual Iowa Organic Conference, in Ames, IA; contact K. Delate, (515) 294-7069; www.ucs.iastate.edu/1103/organic.htm.



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