



NEWS BRIEFS

Support Builds for Stalled Conservation Security Program

Mainstream farming groups and lawmakers voiced their support last month for the stalled Conservation Security Program, a far-reaching 'green payments' program viewed widely as offering a new paradigm for federal farm programs. Under the 2002 Farm Bill, CSP was authorized to receive mandatory funding, putting it on par with commodity programs, and rules for its implementation were due last February. Congress is currently negotiating the final USDA spending bill for fiscal year 2004: the Senate supports CSP funding at \$53 million, while House appropriators have zeroed it out. By October 31, the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, as well as 44 House representatives and at least 11 state governors, had declared their support for CSP and urged lawmakers to seek full funding. In addition, five commodity groups and the American Farm Bureau Federation urged President Bush to oppose any efforts to reduce or delay funding, and to speed the rule-making process. CSP news updates are online from the Minnesota Project, www.mnproject.org/csp, or the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture, www.sustainableagriculture.net.

Organic Cropping Systems Excel in Tolerance to Climate Extremes, Rodale Study Finds

New research from the Rodale Institute's long-running 'Farming Systems Trial' provides further evidence that organic cropping systems perform better than conventionally managed crops during climate extremes, indicating they will be a "valuable resource in an era of climate variability." Two organic systems (one legume-based and one manure-based) outyielded the conventional system in 4 out of 5 years of moderate drought in southeastern Pennsylvania. Though all corn and soybean yields suffered in 1999 (with 5 months of severe drought followed by the wettest September on record in the Northeast), 3 of 4 crop comparisons resulted in significantly better yields in the organic systems compared to the conventional. Water harvest, important for groundwater recharge, was significantly higher over 5 years, with 16 percent and 25 percent more water retained for crop use in the organic systems. The report appeared in *American Journal of Alternative Agriculture* (Vol. 18 No. 3, 2003); for more information, contact co-author Rita Seidel, rita.seidel@rodaleinst.org.

Expanding 'Sustainable Coffee' Is Endorsed by World Bank Study

A new study led by the World Bank endorses the benefits of eco-friendly coffees that guarantee fair prices and social conditions for poor growers in developing nations. It urges further expansion of the growing market for 'sustainable coffee,' as one approach to address the record slump in world coffee prices. The market share for organic, eco-friendly, and fair trade coffees is small, ranging from 0.3 to 3.4 percent in 11 European markets and Japan, yet average sales have exceeded conventional coffee sales by 5-fold in recent years, the report found. It recommends also stricter guidelines and policies for sustainable coffees to ensure continuing advantages (in addition to price premiums) for producers and their communities, including improved natural resource management, lower production costs and health risks, and more jobs. "The State of Sustainable Coffee: A Study of Twelve Major Markets" (200 pages) is online at www.worldbank.org/sustainabledevelopment; for print availability, e-mail books@worldbank.org.

European Union Will Continue Ban on Beef Hormones, Citing Further Proof of Human Health Risks

The European Commission announced last month that EU markets will remain closed to North American beef produced with growth-promoting hormones, citing further scientific proof of health risks. The move reopens the EU's long-running dispute with the U.S. and Canada, which slapped \$125 million in trade sanctions on certain farm products from the 15-nation bloc; the World Trade Organization ruled in 1998 that the EU's ban was illegal because its case for refusing the meat did not specifically address the risks to people who consume hormone-treated meat. The beef ban, initiated in 1988, affects estradiol 17-beta (shown to be a carcinogen) and five other hormones, which are used by 95 percent of U.S. beef producers to speed growth. More information is online from London's *Guardian* (Oct. 16, www.guardian.co.uk/Archive) and EU News Release 61/03 (Oct. 15, www.eurunion.org/news/home.htm).

EPA Won't Regulate Dioxins in Land-Applied Sewage Sludge

The U.S. EPA said last month it won't regulate dioxins in sewage sludge used as farm fertilizer since "dioxins from this source do not pose a significant risk to human health or the environment" (Oct. 17, www.epa.gov/newsroom). The decision "drew sharp condemnations from environmentalists, public health advocates, and scholars, who said the administration was gambling with the public's health" (*Washington Post*, Oct. 18). Dioxins are a class of highly toxic compounds known to accumulate in fatty tissues of humans and animals, causing cancer and damage to the neurological and immune systems. EPA officials said that studies over the last 5 years show that dioxin levels in the environment have declined sharply, due primarily to regulatory controls on combustion practices, and even the most highly exposed people—farmers who apply sewage sludge to their fields and then consume meat and dairy products from their own farms—face minimal added risk. The agency estimates that 0.22 new cancer cases over a 70-year span could be expected for those with the highest exposure (and fewer cases among the general public), while non-cancer risks among farmers and others can't be assessed since "no dependable methods" are available.

Decline in Oil and Gas Reserves Will Have Greater Global Impact than Climate Change, New Forecast Suggests

World oil and gas supplies will peak soon after 2010 because global reserves are 80 percent smaller than earlier estimates, according to new research by the Association of the Study of Peak Oil and Gas (www.peakoil.net). Other studies have shown that oil and gas production will decline around 2050, allowing more time for societies to adjust. Those arguing for more imminent decline say that the resulting "production crunch"—where demand exceeds supply—will lead to explosive prices for fossil fuels, with potentially disastrous results unless people move to alternative energy sources. Kjell Aleklett of Sweden's Uppsala University, a geophysicist who helped prepare the new estimate, said the decline would affect world population more than climate change, since existing reserves are too small to create enough carbon dioxide to bring about the more extreme predictions of melting ice caps and searing temperatures. The group's conclusions were reported by CNN (Oct. 2, www.cnn.com/world) and London's *Independent* (Oct. 2, www.independent.co.uk), and the scientific debate has been covered in *New Scientist* magazine (Aug. 2, Oct. 4).

Broad Opposition Halts Plan To Allow Water Rights Trading in Georgia

Broad opposition has halted a plan moving through the Georgia legislature to allow trading of water rights and interbasin transfers, which promised to remove water rights from the land and open the door to water marketing as practiced in the drier Western states. According to news and editorial coverage in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and other sources, the concept, which gained momentum following the late-1990s drought, was part of a more comprehensive water policy bill (House Bill 237). Water trading has been pushed by large agribusinesses and land developers who claim it would allow more efficient and flexible use of water resources that are increasingly contested in the state and region. A key sponsor, State Rep. Bob Hanner, has backed off from the controversial plan, saying he won't push for water trading in the current legislative session (AJC, Oct. 1). Opposition to water sales came from the Georgia Water Coalition, a 70-member alliance of environmental and civic groups (www.georgiawater.org), as well as county commissioners, municipal leaders, and most large cities; by month's end, 37 cities and counties (excepting Atlanta) had passed resolutions affirming that water should remain a public resource.

Extensive GM Crop Trials in UK Show Mixed Impacts on Farmland Wildlife

Extensive field trials, intended to inform the debate over possible commercialization of genetically modified crops in the UK, show that three crops designed to tolerate herbicides have mixed impacts on farmland wildlife. GM oilseed rape and sugar beet reduced the numbers and diversity of weeds and insects in or near test fields, while GM corn was less damaging than the conventionally grown crop. According to Les Firbank, co-leader of the project, the 3-year study sought to determine whether the associated changes in weed management of the GM crops would harm or benefit biodiversity, including whether they would exacerbate trends showing that conventional crop management (with broad-spectrum herbicides) have led to declines in bird species that feed on weed seeds. The trials did not test whether the GM crops could co-exist safely alongside organic or conventional crops—due to be covered in an upcoming government report. Full results of the "Farm-Scale Evaluations" were published in 8 papers in *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* (Oct. 16); more information is online at www.defra.gov.uk/environment/gm/fse.

WALLACE CENTER/WINROCK NEWS

Small Farm Success Project Reports on Mid- Atlantic Farmers' Markets

A new report on producer-only farmers markets in the Mid-Atlantic area was released last month as part of the Small Farm Success Project. The study, by Lydia Oberholtzer and Shelly Grow of the Wallace Center, finds collective success as well as challenges for the region's producer-only markets—those in which goods produced by farmers are sold directly to retail customers. Based on a survey of 43 market managers in Maryland, southeastern Pennsylvania, and Washington, DC, the study examines market operations, market manager and vendor characteristics, and community and farmer benefits. The Small Farm Success Project works to expand marketing opportunities for small-scale farmers; collaborators include educators and researchers affiliated with University of Maryland Cooperative Extension, Future Harvest-CASA, Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture, USDA-ARS, Accokeek Foundation, and Penn State University. "Producer-Only Farmers' Markets in the Mid-Atlantic: A Survey of Market Managers" is online at www.winrock.org/wallace; for a print copy, phone (703) 525-9430 ext. 675.

RESOURCES

■ **Agroforestry projects** funded by USDA-SARE program are featured in Summer/Fall 2003 issue of *Inside Agroforestry*, www.unl.edu/nac, for print copy, contact National Center for Agroforestry, (402) 437-5178.

■ **Agroforestry Resources** (references and book sources for practitioners), *Overstory* #10, Part 1 of 2; <http://agroforestry.net/overstory/overstory100.html>; or contact distributor, Agroforestry Net, P.O. Box 428, Hulualoa, HI 96725; (808) 324-4427; overstory@agroforestry.net.

■ **American Grassfed Association**, founded in June 2003 to promote grassfed livestock industry, www.americangrassfed.org, or contact AGA, P.O. Box 400, Kiowa, CO 80117; (877) 774-7277; aga@americangrassfed.org.

■ **Community Culture and the Environment: A Guide to Understanding a Sense of Place** (280 pgs), tools and methods for understanding human dimension of environmental protection; single copy free from National Ctr. for Environmental Publications & Information, US EPA Publication

Clearinghouse, (513) 489-8190; ncepiwo@one.net.

■ **Cover Crop Choices for Michigan Vegetables** (6 pgs, bulletin #E-2896), <http://web2.msue.msu.edu/bulletins/>, or \$1.25 from MSU Extension Bulletin Office, (517) 353-6740.

■ **A Different Field: Innovative Entrepreneurs in Illinois Farming** (42 pgs), www.aces.uiuc.edu/~asap/; or contact Agroecology/Sustainable Agriculture Program, Univ. of Illinois, (217) 968-5512; asap@aces.uiuc.edu.

■ **Factory Farm Pollution in Pennsylvania: Watersheds and Communities at Risk** (34 pgs), <http://pa.lvw.org/wren/library.html>; print copy free from Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future, 610 Third St., Harrisburg, PA 17101, (717) 214-7920.

■ **Manifesto on the Future of Food** (16 pgs), joint effort from meetings of International Commission on the Future of Food and Agriculture in Tuscany, Italy, www.farmingsolutions.org/pdfdb/manifestoinglese.pdf, or contact Farmingsolutions, c/o Greenpeace

International, Chausseestr. 131, 10115 Berlin, Germany; info@farmingsolutions.org.

■ **A National View of Agricultural Easement Programs** (189 pgs), comprehensive look at 46 programs in 15 states, from American Farmland Trust and University of California's Agricultural Issues Center, www.aftresearch.org, or contact AFT's Center for Agriculture in the Environment, (815) 753-9347.

■ **Organic Agriculture in Wisconsin: 2003 Status Report** (24 pgs), www.wisc.edu/cias, or contact Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, University of Wisconsin, (608) 262-5200.

■ **Renewing the Countryside—Iowa** (160 pgs), 38 stories and 8 essays featuring Iowans revitalizing rural areas, from ISU's Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Iowa Rural Development Council, and Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, \$24.95 (softcover); 1-866-378-0587; <http://store.rtcmarket.org>.

CALENDAR

December 2003

1: Proposal submission deadline for plenary session presentations to "Eating as a Moral Act: Ethics and Power from Agrarianism to Consumerism," interdisciplinary symposium organized by University of New Hampshire's Office of Sustainability Programs, to be held April 25-27, 2004, in Durham, NH; contact (603) 862-4088; www.sustainableunh.unh.edu/fas/callfor_props.html.

1: "Building Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems: Philanthropy's Role in Informing Public Policy," second annual forum sponsored by Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Funders, in San Francisco, CA; contact Virginia Clarke-Laskin, (805) 687-0551; vclarke@ega.org; www.fundersnetwork.org.

12: Proposal submission deadline for 2004 "Graduate Student Grant in Sustainable Agriculture" awards, for full-time graduate students at accredited college/university in Southern Region, from USDA Southern Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program; contact Southern SARE, (770) 412-4787; www.griffin.uga.edu/sare.

12: Abstract submission deadline for presentations to Soil and Water Conservation Society 2004 Annual Conference, July 24-28, 2004, in St. Paul, MN; contact nancy.herselius@swcs.org; www.swcs.org/t_what_callforpapers04.htm.

15: Proposal submission deadline for organic research grants from Organic Farming Research Foundation; contact J. Sooby, OFRF, (831) 426-6606; www.ofrf.org/research/application.html.

15-16: "Small Farm Family Conference" for small-scale farmers, educators, and scientists, in Petersburg, VA; contact Andy Hankins, Ext. Specialist for Alternative Agriculture, (804) 524-5962; or Future Harvest-CASA, (410) 604-2861, fhcasa@friend.ly.net.

30: Submission deadline for presentations to "Role of Multi-Purpose Agriculture in Sustainable Global Environment," Agro Environ 2004 Symposium, to be held October 20-24, 2004, in

Udine, Italy; www.dpvta.uniud.it/~agroenv/.

January 2004

2-12: "People, Plants, and Profits: The Culture and Political Economy of Corn in Mexico," travel seminar sponsored by Land Stewardship Project and Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, based in Cuernavaca, Mexico; contact trip leader Karin Matchett, Dept. of History, Yale University, (203) 436-2623; karin.matchett@yale.edu; or Center for Global Education, (612) 330-1159.

7-10: National No-Tillage Conference, in Des Moines, IA; contact No-Till Farmer, (262) 782-4480; info@lesspub.com.

9-10: Practical Farmers of Iowa Annual Conference, in Des Moines, IA; contact (515) 232-5661 ext. 101; sandra@practicalfarmers.org or info@practicalfarmers.org.

9-11: "Organic Vegetable Farming for a Living: A Farmer-to-Farmer Workshop," continuing education for active commercial farmers, in Ballston Spa, NY; contact Regional Farm & Food Project, (518) 271-0744; farmfood@capital.net.

11-14: "USDA-CSREES National Water Quality Conference: Integrating Research, Education, and Extension," in Clearwater, FL; contact Thomas Obreza, Univ. of Florida/IFAS, (352) 392-1951 x243; taob@ifas.ufl.edu; <http://conference.ifas.ufl.edu/wq>.

16-17: 5th Annual Farming for Profit and Stewardship Conference, in Hagerstown, MD; contact Future Harvest-CASA, (410) 604-2681; fhcasa@friend.ly.net; www.futureharvestcasa.org/conf.html.

21-24: 24th Annual Ecological Farming Conference, in Pacific Grove, CA; contact Ecological Farming Association, (831) 763-2111; info@eco-farm.org; www.eco-farm.org.

22-25: "Practical Tools and Solutions for Sustaining Family Farms," 13th Annual Southern SAWG Conference, in Gainesville, FL; contact Southern Sustainable Agric. Working Group, (479) 587-0888; or Jean Mills, (205) 333-3504; jeanmills@aol.com.



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