

NOFA

New Hampshire



May-June 1995

NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW HAMPSHIRE CHAPTER OF THE NORTHEAST ORGANIC FARMING ASSOCIATION

The Voice of Organic Agriculture in New Hampshire

Something for Everyone at the NOFA Summer Conference

Farmers, gardeners, activists and consumers of organic products will all find something new at the 1995 NOFA Summer Conference to be held this August 11-13 at Hampshire College in Amherst, MA. Over 140 workshops will cover a wide range of topics ranging from livestock handling to soap making, from Cuban organic agriculture to nutrition. A keynote address from Lynn Miller, Oregon horse farmer and publisher of The Small Farmer's Journal, promises to be inspiring and informative. Lots of teen and children's workshops are planned as well.

ORGANIC FARMING



Rooted in the dirt.

The Saturday afternoon country fair is fun for young and old with a variety of games, contests, exhibitions, a parade, farmers' market

continued on next page

CHANGING TECHNOLOGIES, CHANGING VALUES

On March 29th and 30th, a New England conference on Sustainable Agriculture was held for Cooperative Extension and USDA Agency personnel and growers. Approximately 250 participants gathered to look intensively at what sustainability means to our region, and how each of us can define it for ourselves in a functional way so as to begin to effect changes in our daily planning and practices.

The first keynote speaker was Fred Kirschenmann, a biodynamic grain and livestock farmer from south central North Dakota. He laid the groundwork for the group presenting two paradigms of agriculture — the industrial and the ecological. In the industrial model the grower produces a commodity as cheaply as possible, controlling nature and maximizing efficiency by means of specialization, uniformity and economies of scale. The market focus is global and the accounting focus is short term costs. In the ecological model, the grower produces nourishment, while balancing economic viability, envi-

ronmental protection and social responsibility. The market focus is regional and the accounting focus is broad, long-range cost.

The second keynote speaker was Greg Watson, who has integrated agriculture and the environment at the New Alchemy Institute, the Mass. Department of Food and Agriculture, and the Nature Conservancy. Addressing the topic of endangered species, Greg detailed the recent redirection of focus of the Nature Conservancy. The prevailing thinking in the past was to preserve sanctuaries by buying parcels of land; now that is seen as too limiting, so the focus has changed to protecting rural areas through the promotion of sustainable agriculture. Thus the principle responsibility for preserving wildlife in America falls to the farmers and their advisors.

Ten workshops were offered, to break up the immense topic into manageable parts: Improved Decision-Making through Whole Farm Analysis; Techniques for Evaluating Alternative Products and En-

Continued on next page

HOLDING THE QUALITY OF YOUR MARKET

Being able to grow quality organic produce requires a lot of skill and patience. Don't throw all that effort away in the time between harvest and sale in the market! Be as sharp in handling crops to be shipped as you were in producing them.

New Hampshire summers can be hot and sticky, and fruits and veggies can be just as affected by sun and heat as you. Here are some steps to take to preserve nutrients, flavor and overall quality.

1. Pick only in the coolest part of the day, early morning preferred (plants lost previ-

ous day's heat overnight).

2. Cool produce to remove field heat ASAP after picking; enzymes and bacteria in the fruit or greens begin spoilage if not cooled. Hydro-cooling with cold well water in an old bathtub works well, or buy a \$30,000 commercial hydro-cooler like those used on the West Coast. A soak in an ole tub for 15-20 minutes does the same thing. Keep in the shade, under wet burlap, in a cooler or cellar, until leaving the farm.

3. Wash your goods! Remove spines from cucumbers and squash, to slow dehydra-

Continued on page 3



NOFA PROFILES

Summer Conference
continued from page 1

and trick horse show. There will be lots of entertainment to choose from as well — movies, contra dancing, a rock and roll party, a coffee-house, story-telling, an organic wine tasting and a debate might make it hard to choose!

Meat eaters, vegetarians and vegans will all find lots of delicious organic food at the conference. Full meals are available throughout the weekend as well as snacks and beverages from the NOFA Nibbles concession stand. Thanks to donations of food last year, meal prices will actually go down some this year.

For registration information, call Julie Rawson at (508) 355-2853 or write to her at 411 Sheldon Rd., Barre, MA 01005. If you'd be willing to publicize the conference by putting up posters in your neighborhood, please contact Julie to obtain posters. Your help would be greatly appreciated!

—Bob German

Charlie Reid has lived in Nottingham for 20 years, having located there as a caretaker for the old Kelsey Farm. In a few years, he purchased a part of the farm to develop as an organic haven for his strong values concerning the environment, the way people eat and how they raise and feed their livestock — in particular, poultry. He built his own timber-framed house and outbuildings from lumber sawn on the property. He developed a small spring-fed trout pond, and is restoring an old apple orchard. Stone Wall Farm has several small growing plots and Charlie would like to clear more of the land for crops. He has used all of his organic chicken manure in the gardens, and earthworms “come up like spaghetti when plants are pulled.” He feels that rototilling kills many worms, so he turns his raised beds with a sod fork. There is a greenhouse constructed of pallets, pvc electrical conduit and other salvaged and scrounged goods. He has made several smaller portable wire and plastic cloches for herb and pea beds to get an early start. Charlie has a commercial aluminum and glass greenhouse off his kitchen that heats the house and hot water on sunny days. Stone Wall Farm is a NH Certified Organic

farm, and many gardening projects are in progress, along with raspberries, and blue- and blackberries. Charlie grows corn “in circles, with beans, like the Indians did”, putting compost in the middle. He adds seaweed and leaves to the hen manure — then chops it with a lawnmower.

Reid says that chickens fed organically grown grains do better, and the manure does not have any strong odors. He feels so strongly about this, that he is planning to set up a mill on the farm to grind organic grains into animal feeds. He has the milling equipment, and plans to put up a barn to store and sell the product. He has over 150 farms interested in buying his feeds, and a grower in New York (Inverness Farm) to supply Certified organic corn, oats, wheat, soy, etc. to his mill Associated Press and MOFGA have done features on Charlie's farm and poultry ideas. He supports his farming projects as a licensed auctioneer and appraiser, traveling all of New England.

He feels that groups like NOFA need to educate the public more, especially school children about organics, and its effects on life and health. Charlie Reid uses all of his 27 years of organic experience to promote that everyday.

Changing Continued from Page 1

terprises; Building Consumer Enthusiasm for Agriculture; Crop Rotations to Manage Nutrients, Pests and Markets; Diversifying Markets for Economic Survival; What Leads to Change on the Farm?; Quality of Life—How Can Farmers Get More of it?; Environmental Issues and Regulations, A Pro-Active Approach; Participatory Research—Linking Producers, Extension and Scientists; and, Managing Animals for Health.

The format was unusual. At each workshop there were two presentations, one by a farmer and another by an extension agent. These were followed by Study Circles in which 10-20 participants spoke their minds about what was presented. The explicit purpose was to promote conversation in a non-hierarchical setting, and to come up with specific action recommendations. Occasionally the discussion was heated, as people revealed their perceptions and mistrust. It quickly became apparent that many farmers mistrust environmentalists because of the rising num-

ber of regulations over farm practices. Others, both farmers and extension agents, mistrust sustainability “types” because of their use of scare tactics around the use of chemicals. The beauty of the Study Circles was that these perceptions were freely discussed and analyzed. Some of the fears were partially dispelled as people began to understand that their livelihood would not be threatened by sustainability.

For the two NOFA-NH “types” there (Rick Estes also attended), the conference provided a fascinating view of the sensitivities and conflicting values driving agriculture in this state. Seen as a process and not an end, the concept of sustainability was definitely advanced. At the same time, the gathering brought to light an incredible degree of mistrust amongst farmers, extension agents and agency personnel, environmentalists, regulators and scientists. Hey, perhaps it's time for us to start talking to each other.

—Caroline Robinson

Correction

In the last issue we listed sources for organic seeds.

The correct address for FEDCO Seeds should have been:
FEDCO Seeds
PO Box 520
Waterville, ME
04903-0520
Apologies to all for any inconvenience caused.