



# SOUTHERN SUSTAINABLE FARMING

SOUTHERN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE WORKING GROUP

## HAVING THE COURAGE TO CHANGE

by Keith Richards

At first glance, the machine shop of Northside Planting looks like any other on a big South Louisiana sugarcane farm. A jumble of pick-up trucks, tanks, wagons, machinery, and sheds nestle around its large metal frame. The sound of a diesel engine and flame of a welding torch are ever-present as half a dozen men tend purposefully to their work in the humid haze.

Yet Northside's shop sits in the center of an quiet revolution. The shop yard contains machinery to cut herbicide usage, tanks to mix fertilizer according to soil tests, and wagon bins that will haul cut cane without burning and polluting the air. Down the road in every direction are composting mountains of black "waste" waiting to be incorporated into the soil. And in the surrounding fields, wheat and soybeans are growing alongside "King Cane."

In this part of America, with traditions that run deep, anything out of the ordinary stands out like a sore thumb. Soybeans will make the neighbors raise their eyebrows, mountains draw inquisitive looks, and homemade fertilizers cause bankers to cringe. Change is only supposed to take place when the agricultural chemical companies and seed salesmen dictate the latest technology. Farmers aren't supposed to experiment on their own. Undaunted, 48-year-old Jackie Judice is leading practical, farmer-driven change at Northside Planting.

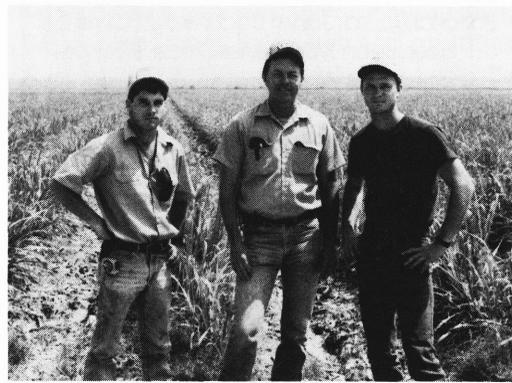
**Raising Cane 200 Years**

It's not enough for Jackie and his family to partially own and operate a 3300 acre farm, keeping their finances solvent while employing 17 full time men. With the help of his wife Rochelle, sons Clint and Chad, and daughter Brandy, Jackie is on a mission to restore the soil in his fields to full productivity and develop a system of farming that sustains them year after year.

The Judice ancestors moved to southern Louisiana—some by way of Nova Scotia— from Provence, France in the 1700s. In 1800 they began farming on some of the same land Jackie farms today, five years after the sugarcane industry in this area was born. The bumper sticker on their trucks, "Raising Cane 200 Years: 1795-1995," isn't just a Chamber of Commerce promotion, it's their history.

Despite this long history, however, Jackie is willing to question prevailing practices to ensure that sugarcane will be grown here another 200 years. Sometime in the last decade, the decreasing production of his land and profits

**Northside Planting**  
Jackie, Rochelle, Clint, Chad & Brandy Judice  
Franklin, Louisiana  
3300 acres  
Crops: sugarcane, soybeans, wheat  
Sustainable practices:  
soil nutrient balancing, rotations, compost, timed cultivation



Clint, Jackie, and Chad Judice are changing the way sugarcane is grown in south Louisiana.

## FARMER ELECTED CHAIR OF SOUTHERN SARE/ACE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Tom Trantham, a dairy farmer from Pelzor, SC was elected chairman of the Southern Region Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE)/Agriculture in Concert with the Environment (ACE) Administrative Council at a May meeting in Atlanta, GA. This is the first time a farmer has held the chairmanship of this guiding body.

"I've worked hard since 1983 to direct and change the course of agriculture to make it responsive to family farms," said Trantham. But he believes change can only really take place with farmer input at all levels of the agricultural industry, including research and education.

Along with the chairmanship, Trantham has been automatically appointed to the Executive Committee of the Operations Committee for the National SARE/ACE Program.

**Inside this Issue:**

Georgia Grown Coop .....2  
Farmers Fly to Washington .....4  
Virtual Farmers' Market .....4  
Bt Alert .....5  
Calendar of Events .....8

Judice, Continued on Page 6

**SOUTHERN SUSTAINABLE FARMING**

July 1995 • Issue Number 6

Published by the Community Farm Alliance, 200 Short St. #10, Berea, KY 40403  
Please send all editorial and advertising inquiries to:

**P.O. Box 324  
Elkins, AR 72727  
501-292-3714**

**E-Mail: HN3551@handsnet.org**

Editor: Keith Richards

Editorial Board: Janet Bachmann, Cynthia Hizer, Jean Mills, Renee Price, Michael Sligh, Hollis Watkins

**Southern Sustainable Farming** is the voice of the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, 50 member organizations working for more sustainable agriculture in 13 Southern states. The Southern SAWG assists family farmers and farm communities to prosper in a healthy environment by helping to remove technical, institutional and economic barriers to sustainability.

**SSAWG Steering Committee:**

Jean Mills, 14430 Jackson Trace Rd., Coker, AL 35452. 205-333-8504.

Skip Polson, PO Box 808, Little Rock, AR 72203. 501-376-6836 or

Jim Lukens, PO Box 3657, Fayetteville AR 72702. 501-442-9824.

Lynn Steward, RR 2, Box 786, Arcadia, FL 33824. 813-494-1095

Virgil Huston, 425 Robt Hardeman Rd, Winterville, GA 30683.

Martin Richards, 880 Brushy Run Rd, Versailles, KY 40383. 606-873-1651.

Helen Vinton, 5002 Old Jeanerette Rd., New Iberia, LA 70560. 318-367-3277.

Hollis Watkins, PO Box 10433, Jackson, MS 39289. 601-352-1500.

Marjorie Bender, 115 W. Main St., Carrboro, NC 27510. 919-968-1030.

Shawn Gralla, PO Box 538, Lexington, OK 73051. 405-527-6283.

Tom Trantham, 330 McKelvey Rd., Pelzer, SC 29669. 803-243-4801.

Bob Shine, 450 Davidson Chapel Lane, Bloomington Springs, TN 38545. 615-653-4402.

Mike Moeller, 2101 IH 35 S., Suite 428, Austin, TX 78741. 512-447-2833.

Leonard Bergey, 2221 Mt. Pleasant Rd., Chesapeake, VA 23322. 804-482-4711.

Contact the representative in your state for more information on the Southern SAWG.

Michael Sligh, SSAWG Coordinator, PO Box 727, Mauldin, SC 29662. 803-297-8562.

This publication has been made possible through the help of the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, the Nathan Cummings Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation, the Pew Charitable Trust, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the James C. Penney Foundation, and Farm Aid.

**GEORGIA GROWN COOPERATIVE**

Three years ago the Georgia Organic Growers Association (GOGA) decided to help local certified organic farmers market their premium produce. Many Georgia farmers were getting certified, and later dropping their certification because they couldn't find marketing outlets for their food.

With ten farmers, the GOGA certification director, Larry Conklin, and a marketing director, Cynthia Hizer; an informal marketing cooperative called Georgia Grown was formed. Hizer recalls, "The original name was much longer and loftier, something like "From Field to Cook, Locally Grown Certified Organic Farmers Cooperative." I found after a few dozen phone calls of explaining who and what we were, Georgia Grown became the name. It was easy to say, and immediately identified us as local."

Their goal was to market produce collectively, in an organized and professional manner, and to develop recognition for Georgia products.

**Started Marketing To Chefs**

"Our original game plan was to work with the best chefs in Atlanta for three reasons," says Hizer. "They were more savvy about organics and high quality produce. They had more money to spend than low and medium priced restaurants, and since most of them were smaller, they wouldn't overwhelm us with their needs while we were still small."

"I interviewed a dozen chefs and hand-picked five to work with the first year," says Hizer. These chefs were chosen for their commitment to organics and local farmers, and their willingness to work with the fledgling co-op. Hizer then researched the buying patterns of the restaurants for product, quantity, variety, and size of produce used.

She also educated the chefs on GOGA's certification standards. "I wanted them to understand our deep commitment and how hard we were working to bring them the best and cleanest produce possible."

Hizer felt controlled market growth was the best policy, but circumstances altered her plan. She says, "Right in the middle of controlled growth, everyone's okra and yellow squash came in, and I was scrambling for new outlets. This was difficult because I felt each new account needed the hand-holding I had given the first group, and besides, it's difficult to draw in a new customer with just okra to sell."

"We quickly added local natural food stores to our group," she adds. "While they didn't pay as much as the chefs, they bought much larger quantities." Also, the natural food stores filled the need for some growers to have their produce available for the general public, not just served in expensive restaurants. This mix of restaurants and retailers has been their target market ever since.

This year Georgia Grown also has a booth at a newly opened organic farmers market in Atlanta organized by GOGA. The co-op sells members' produce left over after sales to their regular accounts.

**Growing a Structure**

When the co-op began, the farmers would call me on Sunday night and tell me what they would have the following Tuesday and Friday," says Hizer. "This was difficult, especially for new growers who couldn't project poundage just by walking out to their fields. It caused a lot of confusion, but all the farmers are getting much better."

"With the information from the farmers, I wrote an availability sheet and faxed it to the chefs. They would call me back with their orders, and I would call the farmers and give them their orders. Tuesday and Friday mornings the

*Continued on Page 3*

*Georgia Grown, Continued from Page 2*

farmers arrived at my house, we sorted the produce in my living room, and I would deliver it in my pickup truck."

"This was clearly a mom and pop deal," says Hizer, "no air conditioning in my cabin, no cooling in my truck. It became an immediate problem. Eventually I was able to turn the deliveries over to one of our farmers, Nicolas Donck, who has a van with air conditioning. We are now in the process of buying a refrigerated delivery truck."

"In the second year, a local catering firm rented us their back dock at a low fee to accommodate all the produce in a cooled area, and gave us space in their walk-in cooler for delicate items like greens, lettuces, and edible flowers. It has helped us grow and given us a professional place to hang our hat."

"Also, in the middle of our second year," says Hizer, "I turned the marketing over to Ann Brewer, who has taken the organization further and further. She's good with numbers, organization and marketing savvy."

Brewer says co-op sales have increased from \$10,000 two years ago to \$34,000 last year. "In the first six months of 1995 we will reach what we did all of last year," she says. "And we're selling year-round; we haven't missed a delivery week."

### **Business and Membership**

"The first year we worked very informally, with an advisory board," says Hizer. "We wanted to see if the co-op ideal would even work before we launched into forming a corporation, writing by-laws, and getting official. I spoke regularly with the ACS [USDA Agricultural Cooperative Service] folks in Washington, but I felt we weren't ready to fly them down for consultation."

This year Georgia Grown finally incorporated, obtained a business license, and registered their name.

Five of the original ten members of the co-op have been joined by ten new growers to make a group of fifteen. "Some of the original members were too small and not used to growing sequentially," says Hizer. "It got frustrating when we would introduce a wonderful item, entice the chefs, give them a little bit one week, and not have it again. The chefs got frustrated and we lost credibility. And once you lose credibility, it is harder to win it back."

Now the co-op has planning meetings a couple times a year. Brewer talks to the chefs to find out what they want for the coming season, and the growers use that information to plan their plantings. They try to stagger crops so not everyone is growing tomatoes or collards at the same time, and everyone gets a shot at the action.

### **Quality Control**

"We've learned many hard lessons about how we are only as good as our last delivery," says Hizer. "We found out the hard way that when a farmer would send an item with poor quality—anything from wrong size or variety to bad appearance—it usually ruined all future sales of that item for all the growers in the co-op. In a few instances, we haven't been able

to sell those items since. All our reputations are at stake: the individual farmers', the co-op's, GOGA's, and organic produce in general."

"The co-op helps farmers with technical growing assistance. This includes telephone calls and visits to farms across the state. They also try to hook farmers up with researchers who are engaged in related work.

"We spend a lot of time working with the farmers on quality control, appearance standards, grading, post-harvest techniques, trimming, packaging, and merchandising," says Hizer. "Our president, Margo Putnam, produce buyer for Sevananda, Atlanta's largest natural food store, holds technical meetings in her store. She discusses everything on the shelves and pulls boxes out of the cooler for examples. She has been instrumental in helping improve the overall quality standards."

Georgia Grown strives to have all their produce look beautiful, since they are selling to a premium audience. Hizer says, "This has been a hard hurdle for farmers used to selling greens with holes. Our stuff is perfect, and that is the biggest reason we have flourished."

"The current growers are hardworking and have gotten good at what they do," believes Hizer. "Their quality has improved remarkably, and we're much more consistent in having produce week after week."

### **Pricing**

"The Atlanta market is much more price driven than LA, San Francisco, or New York markets," according to Hizer. "Outside of a very few, most of the Atlanta chefs will take commercial over organic unless our prices are right in line. The first year we were considerably higher; now we are matching the national organic wholesalers, and often going lower. We have had to do this to keep the natural food store accounts, which have become important to us, and also, to stay up with the commercial market." Lowering prices hasn't made some farmers happy, but more produce is selling.

In the beginning Hizer hoped to establish prices and stick with them throughout the year, without fluctuating as most produce houses do. But it didn't work. "When the prices drop elsewhere, our chefs and stores expect us to follow the trend and go down accordingly," she says.

Of course, when prices are sky high in California, those same customers think Georgia Grown's prices should be lower. Hizer sighs, "This has been one of our constant challenges."

"Also, in the beginning we gave the farmers 75 percent of the sale, the co-op keeping 25 percent (10 percent to marketing, 5 percent to accounting and payroll, 5 percent to delivery, and 5 percent to the co-op kitty)," says Hizer. "It became a problem. People wanted their produce to go to the restaurants rather than the stores because the restaurants paid more. The solution was a total change in the way things are priced. One base price is paid to the grower regardless of who it is sold to.

## Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture

### FARMERS FLY TO WASHINGTON TO EDUCATE CONGRESS

by Julie Burns

Over sixty farmers, scientists and other sustainable agriculture advocates traveled to Washington, D.C. the first week of June to educate and lobby key members of Congress on existing sustainable agriculture programs and new proposals for the 1995 Farm Bill. After the fly-in, during which 130 lobby visits took place, feedback from congressional offices suggested that many members of Congress had been swayed by the mass visit.

Participants from the Southern region who flew in on behalf of the Campaign were Ina Young (AR), Skip Polson (AR), Rose Koenig (FL), Larry Schwartz (KY), Tribby Vice (KY), Joe Judice (LA), Jackie Judice (LA), Frank Taylor (MS), Ron Flye (NC), David Harris (NC), Lawrence Kriegel (TX), Dennis Holbrook (TX), Archer Christian (VA), and Savannah Williams (VA). In addition to making visits to congressional offices, many attended meetings with USDA officials where topics such as the Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) program, conservation programs, and research and extension priorities were discussed. They also participated in a forum with national environmental groups on the subject of "Whole Farm Planning" and a "Hill briefing" on alternatives for improving the current commodity program system.

Joe Judice, a sugar cane farmer from south Louisiana who lobbied primarily on the need for continued funding for SARE and Chapter 3, as well as continuation of the sugar program, came away feeling like he had truly educated Senate and House staff about these programs. Judice said, "We told them we are sustainable farmers, have been in business for 200 years, and want to continue another 200. We want to reverse the loss of family farms and want other sugar farmers in our area to be able to survive. I never would have imagined that I'd be lobbying in Washington for my livelihood, but nobody can tell our story better than we can."

For Ron Flye, a contract poultry grower from eastern North Carolina, like many of the attendees, lobbying Congress as a group was a new experience. He remarked, "The whole trip was a thrill to me. It expands your outlook to spend time with different kinds of people and realize that everybody basically has the same problems." Flye felt congress members were impressed by citizens traveling so far to discuss their concerns. "I really think these visits mean a whole lot more than 25 letters."

On June 14, the House Ag Appropriations Subcommittee voted to continue (somewhat reduced) funding for many of the programs Southern SAWG has prioritized, including the SARE program and Chapter 3, the Water Quality Incentive Program (WQIP), the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, and the National Organic Foods Production Act. This was seen as a significant victory. Unfortunately, ATTRA and the Minority Farmers Outreach programs were not given any funding by the House committee. However, it is possible they will be funded by the Senate committee, especially if constituents keep the pressure on.

According to Margaret Krome, with the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, "In this ferocious budget climate, we've started extremely well. Now we've got to make sure we have Senate champions to hold these gains and protect the programs that got cut in the House." To do this, members of the Senate Ag Appropriations Subcommittee were targeted for calls and letters in the last half of June.

To find out how you can help in the next stage of the Campaign, contact Julie Burns, Southern Coordinator, 12 Laurel Ave, Asheville, NC 28804; 704-255-8376 or e-mail to [HN3897@handsnet.org](mailto:HN3897@handsnet.org).



*Ina Young and Skip Polson (right) meet with Congressman Ray Thornton (left) of Arkansas.*

### A "VIRTUAL" FARMER'S MARKET

A new electronic newsletter is offering small farmers, gardeners and craftspeople an alternative way to market their products. Farmer's Market Online puts farmers in contact with millions of potential customers at several locations on the Internet, including the World Wide Web. Farmers don't have to be hooked up to the Internet or even own a computer to participate.

Set up much like an open-air market, this "virtual" farmer's market has individual "Booths" where sources for fresh fruits and vegetables, herbs, meats, flowers, seeds, craft items, pets and livestock, and other items are displayed for sale, trade or barter. There's also a "Bulletin Board" with news about farming and marketing farm products and a "Shopping Lists" posting space where shoppers can identify products they are trying to find.

The service was designed especially to serve small-scale farms and ranches, or producers of specialty foods and crafts who can ship their products by common carrier. Booth spaces can be reserved for 50 weeks for \$25, which includes weekly delivery of the publication to an e-mail address. Receiving the newsletter by fax or postal mail costs extra.

Printed samples of Farmer's Market Online are available for \$2.50. Subscriptions are \$25 for 50 weeks via e-mail, 16 weeks via fax, or 10 weeks by postal mail. Contact: Outrider News Service, Box 277, Shoshone, ID 83352-0277; fax 208-886-7602 or e-mail to [mhoutrider@aol.com](mailto:mhoutrider@aol.com).

## BT CROPS MAY RENDER BT USELESS

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently gave the final approval needed for the commercialization of the first genetically engineered insecticidal crop—Bt potato developed by Monsanto. The new potato was engineered to contain an insect toxin gene from the soil bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt), which is currently used in spray form by organic and sustainable agriculture farmers to control the Colorado potato beetle. Waiting in line at EPA and the USDA for commercial approval are two additional Bt crops, corn and cotton, developed by Ciba-Geigy and Monsanto, respectively.

All sustainable farmers have an important stake in the commercialization of Bt crops. The widespread adoption of Bt crops is expected to accelerate the development of resistance to Bt as a result of continuous exposure of insects to the toxins as they feed on the engineered plants. Insects that develop resistance to Bt in the engineered crops will also be resistant to Bt sprays—thereby rendering the sprays useless to control insect pests on potato, corn, cotton, and perhaps other crops. Some scientists predict that resistance could develop within just a few growing seasons. If this happens, farmers would lose a valuable tool as an alternative to chemical insecticides.

Resistance can be delayed significantly by the deployment of management strategies. Though research has been underway for years to develop such plans, additional work is needed before detailed, proven programs are in place. Thus far, neither EPA nor the USDA has a comprehensive, enforceable strategy for retarding resistance to Bt.

### Write to the EPA and USDA

The Union of Concerned Scientists asks sustainable agriculture advocates to write to the EPA and USDA soon. Urge them to delay approvals of any additional Bt crops pending development of an effective, comprehensive plan for retarding resistance to Bt. Ask them not to squander Bt as a natural resource by premature approval of Bt crops. Tell them the importance of Bt to organic growers. Explain that Bt crops are not the way to go for long-term reductions in the use of synthetic pesticides.

Address your letters or faxes to: Dr. Lynn Goldman, Assistant Administrator Environmental Protection Agency/OPPTS, 401 M St. SW, Washington, DC 20460; fax: 202-260-1847. Dr. Lonnie King, Acting Administrator USDA/APHIS, AG-Box 3401, Room 312E, Washington, DC 20090-6464; fax: 202-720-3054.

Send a copy of your letter to: Richard Rominger, Deputy Secretary, USDA, Administration Building, Suite 202B, 14th and Independence Avenue, Washington, DC 20250.

For more information, contact Union of Concerned Scientists, 1616 P St. NW, Washington, DC 20036; 202-332-0900.

## SARE/ACE PROJECT SUMMARIES ON DISKETTE

Project summaries of the Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) and Agriculture in Concert with the Environment (ACE) Programs from 1988 to 1993 have been compiled on an InfoBase computer disk. Produced for the Sustainable Agriculture Network, this program allows users to search the projects by subject through inputting key words. A limited number of free copies of the InfoBase, on 3.5" disk for PC-type computers only, have been made available to Southern SAWG through the Southern SARE/ACE Program. If you would like a copy, contact Southern Sustainable Farming, PO Box 324, Elkins, AR 72727; 501-292-3714, or e-mail to HN3551@handsnet.org.

### *Georgia Grown, Continued from Page 3*

With only a few glitches, it has worked well. Month to month we find the grower still getting 74 to 78 percent of the sale."

### Deepening the Relationship

They found early on that sampling sells. Georgia Grown provides the chefs with plenty of produce samples to let them taste what they have to offer. Hizer says, "It's been an indispensable part of the co-op's marketing plan."

"We have also been inviting different chefs to the loading dock on Friday mornings," says Hizer. "It started when we were having some quality problems and asked our number one chef, Guenter Seeger of the Ritz Carlton Buckhead Dining Room, to come to the dock. We wanted our quality to be inspected right on the spot, not after it was at the restaurant."

This was so successful that they added Seeger to the co-op advisory board and invited other chefs out to the dock. Hizer says, "The farmers love meeting the people who are buying their produce, and the chefs love meeting the "real" farmers. Great dialogues have developed. The farmers get immediate feedback from someone they respect, and the chefs get more knowledge about our produce." She believes the farmers respect information on quality, taste and packaging more when it comes from the buyers than from the marketing person.

"Now we are inviting new chefs, prospective customers and other wholesalers who want to buy from us to the dock on Fridays to introduce them to all the produce," Hizer says.

For more information contact: Ann Brewer, Georgia Grown Cooperative, 193 Cewlor Ln., Covington, GA 30209; 404-786-1933.

### Cooperative Resource

USDA Rural Business Cooperative Development Service, Ag Box 3252, Washington, DC 20250; 202-690-0368. Formerly the USDA Agricultural Cooperative Service, they provide a wide variety of support services and consultation to beginning and existing agricultural cooperatives. Many services are free.



caused him to take stock. "I kept seeing that we were putting more and more on our land and getting less off," says Jackie. "The equipment and technology were getting better every year, but we were getting less."

"Fifty years ago, before industrialization came to cane country," he says, "farmers used mules and horses for power, so they had to grow corn and oats for feed along with cane. That led to rotations, better practices, and manure for fertilizer. With the drop in prices and increased mechanization, there was pressure to plant more. Farmers needed to buy chemicals to cut weeds so they could manage more acres, and needed chemical fertilizer to make more grow. This started a system of mining the soil."

### Bringing Soil Into Balance

Maybe Jackie's courage to change came from a military tour of Vietnam. There, he was a point man on patrols and awarded a purple heart for service. He says, "Knowing now that I got out safe, going to Vietnam was good for me because it changed my priorities. That's where I decided for sure I wanted to farm."

After several years of farming more conventionally, Jackie began talking to other farmers in an effort to solve his lowering productivity. After meeting some Mennonite farmers from Illinois at a conference, he was convinced to look at the balance of nutrients in his soil instead of focusing solely on N, P and K. He learned calcium in relation to magnesium was an important key to soil productivity. Through testing, he found out his calcium levels were very low.

To bring his soil back into balance, he quit using potassium chloride and triple super phosphate. According to Jackie, "The latter ties with the soil too quickly." He began broadcasting potassium sulfate instead.

Jackie also began creating his own fertilizer mixture on the farm. "We go strictly by soil samples for adding fertility. We don't believe those high nitrogen rate recommendations. We'll probably put on an average of 15 pounds to the acre this year." The fertilizer mix for 1995, applied all at once in April, included: 32 percent liquid nitrogen, an 11-37 phosphorous source, potassium nitrate, Bio-C (composted chicken manure with a biological package), compost tea, and one gallon of molasses per acre.

At the same time, Jackie began looking to the "waste" products around him for nutrients. He made arrangements to obtain calcium carbonate, a by-product of refined sugar, for free, although trucking costs him \$10/ton from a mill near New Orleans. He started having his local sugar mill dump their boiler ash—an ash residue from burning the bagasse after the juice is squeezed from the cane—on his farm for free. And he is trying to get a contract for composting waste from local

cities, although he lost the bid on New Iberia's waste due to political decisions. He will soon compost mountains of these products and spread them onto his land.

### Weed Control

The fields of Northside Planting flank Bayou Teche between the Atchafalaya Basin and the Gulf of Mexico. With 80 inches of rain per year, Jackie's biggest concern is getting water off the growing crop. He says, "Two weeks without rain is a drought for us."

In these conditions, johnsongrass is a major problem for farmers. According to the USDA, heavy johnsongrass infestation can cut yields of sugarcane by 25-50 percent. Jackie is tackling this problem on several fronts. In talking to his Mennonite friends in Illinois, he realized that johnsongrass is an indicator of low calcium. It is proliferating because it is trying to rebalance his soil. By bringing his calcium/magnesium ratio back into balance over time, he hopes to lessen the problem.

In the meantime, he continues to use herbicides, but has invented better equipment to apply them more accurately and timely, cutting down on aerial spraying. Recently, Jackie also invented a six row, tractor-mounted "weed-eater" that will cut the tops out of the johnsongrass, giving the cane time to shade it out before it grows back. And late in 1994 he planted winter

wheat for the first time on 270 of his acres. He hopes the wheat will help suppress the johnsongrass.

Planting any crop other than cane is a radical departure from the practices of the last 30-40 years. Traditionally, three crops of sugarcane are grown from each planting—plant cane, first stubble, and second stubble. In the fourth year, cane fields would lie fallow while farmers plowed them several times for weed control during the summer. Four years ago Jackie started planting soybeans on these formerly fallow fields. This eliminated plowing, fixed nitrogen in the soil, broke pest and disease cycles, and added a cash crop to his income. Next year he will also plant soybeans on the numerous headlands that used to sit idle.

### No More Burning

This fall, the Judices will switch to a system of harvesting that eliminates the need for burning. All ripe cane in south Louisiana used to be cut at the tops and bottoms, then piled in rows in the field. The rows were burned to get rid of trash—loose leaves that absorb sugar in the milling process—before loading the cane onto wagons. Neighbors around farms have increasingly complained about the air pollution and respiratory problems caused by this practice.



*Jackie checks the condition of boiler ash composting on his farm.*

*Judice, Continued from Page 6*

Jackie and his family have invested a considerable amount in machinery to make the switch. By harvesting their cane with a combine that cuts the crop, strips the trash off the stalk, and chops the stalks into 10" segments, they will eliminate the noxious burning. The trash is left in the field.

These are but a few of the innovations Jackie has in mind. He wants to start pasturing horses and cattle on the grassy drainage areas of the farm and raise chickens in the yards. He'd also like to begin an organic test plot of sugarcane to see what problems he would encounter.

His works don't stop at the edge of his land. Jackie cofounded the Acadiana Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (SAWG) with Helen Vinton of Southern Mutual Help

Association. He serves on the National Sustainable Agriculture Coordinating Committee (NSACC) and is very active in community organizations.

Ironically, a common criticism Jackie hears from the sustainable ag community is that he isn't changing fast enough, or going totally organic today. Jackie responds by saying, "We've got 200 years of bad habits, but we can't change overnight." Those who share his perspective know he's going at just the right speed, and making a major impact in south Louisiana along the way.

*For further information about Acadiana SAWG, contact: Jackie Judice, 140 Northside Rd., New Iberia, LA 70560; 318-365-1787 or Helen Vinton, Southern Mutual Help Association, 5002 Old Jeanerette Rd., New Iberia, LA 70560; 318-367-3277.*

## NATIONAL ORGANIC STANDARDS ONE STEP CLOSER

The major portion of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) meeting in Orlando during April was dedicated to the review of 38 processing materials and 22 crops and livestock materials. The board members, with due diligence and careful consideration, discussed and decided the fate of each of these materials. The decisions were not made casually or without regard for the principles of organic agriculture.

The age-old debate about whether organic is a non-synthetic methodology was held once again. At times during the materials review, many board members struggled with their decisions, considering the public input and expectations as well as the historical experiences of organic farmers. Many of the synthetic materials allowed for organic production have use restrictions and other covenants.

The following annotations and recommendations were approved by the NOSB:

### General Annotation For All Processing Materials

All non-agricultural ingredients used as ingredients in organic foods (which contain at least 95 percent organic ingredients) must appear on the National List. An allowed synthetic ingredient or processing aid that is compatible with organic handling principles may be used in organic foods only when an acceptable, non-synthetic ingredient is commercially unavailable.

Non-organic agricultural ingredients may be used in organic foods only when an acceptable organically produced form is commercially unavailable. Justification of use of non-organic ingredients as well as efforts to develop organic sources must be addressed within the Organic Handling Plan and record keeping requirements. All ingredients must be food grade quality as defined in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR).

### General Annotation On All Crop & Livestock Materials

There are a few non-synthetic materials which are commercially unavailable as generic crop production inputs unless combined with synthetic stabilizers or other additives. Such materials must, after identification of the specific synthetic additive materials, be evaluated as Allowed Synthetics on the National List.

### Organic Is Defined

The NOSB approved the following definition of "organic." Organic Agriculture is an ecological production management system that promotes and enhances biodiversity, biological cycles and soil biological activity. It is based on minimal use of off-farm inputs and management practices that restore, maintain and enhance ecological harmony.

"Organic" is a labeling term which denotes products produced under the requirements of the Organic Foods Production Act. The principle guidelines for organic production are to use materials and practices that enhance the ecological balance of natural systems and that integrate the parts of the farming system into an ecological whole. Organic Agriculture practices can not ensure that products are completely free of residues; however, methods are used to minimize pollution from the air, soil and water. Organic food handlers, processors and retailers adhere to standards that maintain the integrity of Organic Agriculture products. The primary goal of Organic Agriculture is to optimize the health and productivity of interdependent communities of soil life, plants, animals, and people.

*This article originally appeared in a longer version in the **Organic Report**, June 1995 published by the Organic Trade Association, PO Box 1078, Greenfield, MA 01301; 413-774-7511.*

*The next NOSB meeting will be October 30-November 3 in Austin, TX. For information, contact: Michael Sligh, PO Box 727, Mauldin, SC 29662; 803-297-8562.*

**ORGANIC RESEARCH GRANTS**

The Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) is offering funds for organic farming methods research, dissemination of research results to organic farmers and growers in transition, and consumer education on organic farming issues. Projects should involve farmers in both design and execution, and take place on working organic farms whenever possible. Proposals of \$3,000 to \$5,000 are encouraged. Deadlines for the next two funding cycles are July 31, 1995 and January 15, 1995.

To obtain the procedures for grant applications, contact: Grants Program, Organic Farming Research Foundation, PO Box 440, Santa Cruz, CA 95061; 408-426-4006.

**CLASSIFIEDS**

**IMMEDIATE OPENINGS.** Centro 16 de Septiembre Farmworkers Organic Cooperative Farm is seeking individuals to fill two positions: **Farm Director** and **Project Coordinator**. Farm Director responsibilities focus on overseeing farm operations, conducting member trainings and farm planning. Project Coordinator responsibilities focus on marketing, administrative tasks and cooperative development. Centro is an organic farm and home garden project of the United Farmworkers Union which trains farm workers in organic farming techniques and farm management with the goal of empowering members with skills necessary to manage their own farms. Contact the Co-op at PO Box 188, San Juan, TX 78589; 210-787-2233.

**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

- August 11-13: **Carolina Farm Stewardship Assoc. & Southeastern Permaculture Summer Mountain Gathering**, Burnsville, NC. Phone 919-968-1030.
- August 19: **An Introduction to Permaculture**, Virginia Assoc. for Biological Farming, Twin Oaks Community, Louisa Co., VA. Phone 804-263-4557.
- September 9: **Noah's Ark Today: The Need to Preserve Heritage Breed Animals**, American Livestock Breeds Conservancy & Virginia Assoc. for Biological Farming, Staunton, VA. Phone 804-263-4557.
- September 10: **Virginia Assoc. for Biological Farming Apple Orchard Day**, Crump's Little Orchard, Amherst Co., VA. Phone 804-263-4557.
- September 15-17: **Southern SAWG Steering Committee meeting**. Phone 501-292-3714.
- September 30: **Deadline for Southern SARE/ACE grant proposals** for both research projects and regional training projects. Contact: Southern SARE/ACE, 1109 Experiment St., Griffin, GA 30223-1797; 404-412-4788.
- October 6-7: **Eco-Fair Texas**, Convention Center, Austin, TX. Phone 512-472-2073.
- October 30 - Nov. 3: **National Organic Standards Board meeting**, Austin, TX. Phone 803-297-8562.
- November 10-12: **Sustainable Agriculture Conference**, Carolina Farm Stewardship Assoc., Black Mountain, NC. Phone 919-968-1030.
- January 19-21, 1996: **Southern SAWG Annual Conference & Trade Show**, Lexington, KY. Phone 501-292-3714 for conference info or 606-987-0215 for trade show info.

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