

THE CULTIVATOR

NEWS FROM THE CORNUCOPIA INSTITUTE

SUMMER 2017

Impostor Imports

Cornucopia Spotlights Abuses in the Organic Marketplace

BY ANNE ROSS, JD

To understand how the surge of organic imports is affecting organic farmers in the United States, one only has to talk to farmers like Bob Joos, whose experience has become far too familiar.

The pain suffered by many of our organic farmers has become chronic and coincides with the dramatic increase of imports of organic corn and soybeans from countries such as Turkey, Ukraine, and other Eastern European nations—with plenty of imports still flowing in from China, India, and elsewhere.

Mounting evidence shows our farmers are not on an equal playing field. In a May 13 front-page story, *The Washington Post* documented cases of dubious organic certification practices originating overseas. These massive fraudulent shipments make it increasingly difficult for domestic farmers to compete.

It begs the question: Is the USDA doing all it can to protect organic farmers in the United States from impostor organic imports?

Concern about the legitimacy of imported grains gained increased attention when, last year, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and the International Organic Accreditation Service (IOAS) suspended the Turkish organic certifier ETKO for failure to comply with applicable organic standards.

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Massive shipments of fraudulent organic corn and soybeans are flooding the U.S. market, making it difficult for our farmers to compete.

I am a 57-year-old, fourth-generation farmer on a North Dakota homestead farm. I have farmed my entire life. My family has always farmed. After 15 years of no-till practices for soil conservation, I began a new chapter and decided to stop using soil applied antibiotics on my farm because of their documented negative side effects to human and soil health and conservation. It appeared that the only economic way I could afford to do that was to transition into USDA Certified Organic production. I have achieved organic certification and am now feeling financial stress. I have bins full of organic grains that the end users and processors don't want because they are now getting production cheaper than my cost of production from overseas. I have contracts that are seemingly worthless. I have companies that don't want to fulfill their contracts. If I don't get a break soon, I am contemplating selling some grain as conventional to try to stay in business one more year. The only other thing I can do is sell off machinery or land.

— Bob Joos, North Dakota

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The Aurora Dairy Plot Boils Over

Washington Post Investigation Blows the Lid Off

BY WILL FANTLE

The *Washington Post* published a scathing front-page exposé this past May 2, providing strong evidence that the largest organic milk producer in the United States has been operating illegally.

The newspaper's investigators visited Aurora Dairy's largest factory farm complex in Weld County, Colorado and found that almost all of the 15,000 cows were confined to dirt and manure-covered pens, rather than grazing out on pasture as organic law requires.

The exposure to a national audience may add pressure for badly needed enforcement activities at the USDA's National Organic Program (NOP), as well as hugely embarrass top regulators dwelling inside the D.C. bubble.

(Another NOP oversight failure is discussed in this issue's cover story.)

Consumers won't see Aurora's name on milk cartons. The company instead sells their fake "organic" milk to giant retail chains like Walmart and Costco for sale to customers under their store-brand labels.

For more than 12 years, Cornucopia has been documenting, publicizing, and sharing details on the suspect dairy livestock management practices utilized by Aurora on its multiple factory farms in Texas and Colorado.

We filed our first formal complaint to the NOP in 2005, spotlighting suspicious Aurora practices. But the USDA refused to investigate.

We filed a second complaint, and this time we succeeded in pushing the USDA to investigate. In 2007, agency enforcement officers

concluded that Aurora had "willfully" violated 14 federal organic regulations. They recommended revocation of Aurora's organic certification—the loss of their ability to engage in organic commerce for a minimum of five years.

Aurora's investor-owners pulled out all the stops and finagled a sweetheart deal with USDA regulators that resulted in a slim, one-year probation, along with a downsize to their original factory feedlot in Colorado.

While no fines were ever levied for cheating, a separate class action lawsuit on behalf of consumers did lead to a \$7.5 million payout by Aurora.

Meanwhile, attention in the organic community turned to pushing passage of the "Pasture

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Factory Farm Activist
Scio, OR

CONTACT US

P.O. Box 126
Cornucopia, WI 54827
608-625-2000
cultivate@cornucopia.org

STAFF

Mark Kastel, Codirector & Senior Farm Policy Analyst

Will Fantle, Codirector & Director of Research

Linley Dixon, PhD, Senior Scientist

Marie Burcham, JD, Farm and Food Policy Analyst

Anne Ross, JD, Farm and Food Policy Analyst

Gayle Nielsen, Membership Coordinator

Therese Laurdan, Membership Assistant

Jennifer Hayden, PhD, Communications &
Development Director

Rachel Zegerius, Communications & Development Associate

Melody Morrell, Data Analyst and Research Specialist

Jason Cole, Research Associate

Zuri Allen, Social Media Specialist

Celeste Gibson, Accountant, HR Manager

Frank Nilsen, Website Administrator

THE CULTIVATOR Rachel Zegerius, Editor

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Rule,” a more explicit iteration of requirements for the grazing of ruminant livestock—something that many organic pioneers naively assumed was understood, but was instead being ignored by factory farm operators and regulators.

Cornucopia filed another complaint with the USDA in 2009, targeting Aurora’s newest feedlot, High Plains Dairy. This is the same facility being investigated eight years later by *The Washington Post*. In 2009, Aurora described High Plains as a model pasture-based dairy.

Based on first-hand evidence we gathered and shared with the USDA, we charged that Aurora was confining their dairy cows in giant barns and pens rather than allowing them to graze on fresh forage.

Additionally, we informed the USDA that the pasture the animals did have access to was planted with substandard annual crops, like triticale, that burned up in the arid summer heat.

Real organic dairy farmers know that a perennial grass/pasture mix creates a more solid sod structure, reduces water and wind erosion, and offers more resources for beneficial soil building organisms.

So what came of the 2009 complaint to the USDA? Nothing. The Pasture Rule was finally fully implemented in 2011. Many hoped that it would cause fundamental changes to confinement feedlot operations. Yet the apparent cheating continued, albeit in a more sophisticated fashion.

Requirements that a dairy herd receive a set percentage of their diet from forage and pasturing were colored by averaging the entire herd’s consumption. This allowed the most



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productive cows to stay in the feedlot for more frequent milkings, while dry cows and young stock grazed.

A grazing season minimum of 120 days was observed rather than the actual requirement that grazing occur for the entire length of the season—which for warmer states meant additional months of potential grazing.

By 2014, Cornucopia sought another approach to expose the situation. We contracted with professional aerial photographers to fly over the growing number of organic dairy factory farms (including Aurora) and capture high-resolution images of the operations.

We presumed that seeing was believing. We released the images, along with other evidence Cornucopia had gathered, late that year. Fourteen new complaints were formally filed with the USDA regarding blatant livestock confinement practices.

The USDA made a relatively quick determination of the illustrative evidence, providing a formal determination on May 18, 2015. Matthew Michael, the NOP’s director of compliance

and enforcement, stated an “investigation is unwarranted.” He described the photographic evidence as “insufficient,” adding that the operations were “in good standing” with their certifiers.

Currently, a flood of organic milk from U.S. producers is driving down prices paid to legitimate, ethical family farmers—forcing some out of business, while others are placed on quotas.

Both consumers and family farmers are being ripped off by Aurora and the other factory farms that the USDA, through gross negligence, is allowing to operate. This is criminal.

Last month, Cornucopia sent a letter about this situation to new USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue. We asked Perdue to shake up the National Organic Program with new management and to address the agency’s indifference and willingness to cast a blind eye toward scofflaws like Aurora in the organic community.

While we await potential enforcement actions at the USDA and investigate other options, there is some good news. Engaged consumers can do their part to help protect the best organic farmers using Cornucopia’s organic dairy scorecard on our website (www.cornucopia.org).

“No matter where someone lives in this country,” observes Cornucopia Codirector Mark Kastel, “there are many wonderful brands of organic milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, and ice cream that conform to not only the letter of the law, but the spirit of what has made organics such a successful segment of our nation’s food supply. And they can find those on our organic dairy scorecard.”

Squawking About Organic Chicken

Factory Farms and Pastured Poultry Sharing the Same USDA Certified Label

BY MARIE BURCHAM, JD

During the presidential campaign of 1928, a circular published by the Republican Party claimed that if Herbert Hoover won there would be “a chicken in every pot and a car in every garage.” Hoover saw chicken as a luxury food that he wanted to make accessible to every American. President Hoover got his wish; chicken is now the most consumed meat in the United States.

Per capita consumption of chicken and turkey has increased steadily since 1965. Chicken is currently the most widely available organic meat.

Unfortunately for shoppers who want to purchase healthy and ethical organic chicken, choosing a brand is complicated.

Industrial management practices from conventional agriculture are well integrated into the organic poultry industry. By volume, the majority of organic chicken comes from industrial-scale operations.

Lax regulatory oversight by the USDA, loopholes, and loose interpretations of the standards are often employed by these producers.

The main characteristics of these loopholes are the lack of outdoor access, overcrowding, and the inability of birds to perform natural behaviors. These birds live short lives—usually only four to six weeks—during which they are restricted from behaviors like foraging, bathing, and socializing.

Breeds in these industrial operations are selected for quick weight gain, rather than health and vitality. Because of the fast growth, the birds may only see the outdoors for a few days to a week, if that.



Unfortunately for shoppers who want to purchase healthy and ethical organic chicken, choosing a brand is complicated.

This outdoor access is usually token at best: plots of bare dirt that do not offer enough space for all the chickens in the barn to be outside. These chickens have no genuine space to forage for vegetation and insects, as would be natural for them.

All organic livestock, including meat birds, must have access to the outdoors, shelter, exercise areas, fresh air, clean drinking water, shade, and direct sunlight—all suitable for the animal’s “stage of life, climate, and environment.”

Cornucopia is working on enforcement in these areas. In the meantime, even in an industrial setting, all feed must be certified organic, which means a lower pesticide load in the final product.

However, feed sourcing is also a concern for poultry. Some poultry brands feed their birds imported grains, which may be fraudulent under the organic label. For example, Purdue, an industrial producer of organic chicken, is a major importer of dubious grain.

In response to this disregard for the tenets of true, ethical organic

livestock production, there is growing momentum among both producers and consumers to push for something better.

Within the organic label, there are producers dedicated to giving their birds true outdoor access. Among the best of these producers are farmers who rotate their meat birds on pasture or silvopasture (the practice of combining forestry and grazing in a mutually beneficial way), giving them legitimate access to the outdoors, a varied diet, and the ability to perform their natural behaviors.

Chickens are omnivores. Their natural diet includes a wide variety of tender greens, insects and other invertebrates,

seeds, grains, and sometimes even small vertebrates.

Big agribusiness restricts this natural diet down to primarily grains and legumes (i.e., soy) and supplements nutrients in which the birds are deficient due to their limited diet. A pastured operation, however, gives the birds access to their natural food and encourages foraging behaviors.

Birds raised on pasture are usually healthier, and the final product is more flavorful and nutritious. Advanced welfare for the birds also means they are less prone to the diseases and behavioral issues common in factory operations.

Cornucopia continues to stay informed about the evolving organic meat bird industry and will be working on these issues in the future.

In the meantime, consumers can benefit from asking questions at their groceries, markets, and farms, and by choosing to support pasture-raised, organically fed poultry for themselves and their families.

Farmer's Footstep the Best Fertilizer

News from the Spring NOSB Meeting in Denver

BY LINLEY DIXON, PHD

With five new members of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), the debate over whether soil-less, hydroponic systems can be certified organic felt like starting over from scratch.

Those of us who have followed the workings of the NOSB for years now are beginning to feel exasperated that something so basic as the legal requirement to foster soil fertility in organic systems is up for debate.

Organic cannot be defined solely by inputs. Rather, sequestering organic matter by supporting complex biological systems in the soil is a prerequisite of organic production. For those of us involved in organics for the last 30 years, our response is.....duh!

The bigger question: Why are NOSB members complicating this issue? It is obvious to organic farmers, and many consumers, that hydroponic and large industrial "container" operations are not organic precisely because they are entirely based on the continuous supply of liquid fertilizers and inputs.

Rather, organic farms promote biodiverse communities of microorganisms in the soil by composting, cover cropping, and nutrient cycling, as is required by the Organic Food Production Act. Every true organic farmer spends a lifetime continuously improving their own systems to maximize soil health on their farm.

Fertile soil should no longer be required to feed the plant, say some NOSB members either unacquainted with the history of the word 'organic' or, more likely, bold enough to have the audacity to redefine it.

If a production plan uses all



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organic-compliant inputs, then it is organic, they say. But if that is the case, then why would these NOSB members lobby to only allow hydroponic container operations (roots are in an inert media) and not other "roots-in-water" hydroponic and aquaponic systems that also rely on all organic inputs for fertility?

The sad answer is big money and corporate influence. Driscolls, the big California berry marketer, and Wholesum Harvest, a hydroponic outfit in the desert Southwest and Mexico, are major producers of container produce.

The pure "roots-in-water" hydro and aquaponic systems do not yet have the same influence and power with the NOSB. The "container" hydroponic lobby is perfectly fine throwing the "roots-in-water" hydroponic operations under the bus, as long as their container hydroponic operations remain certifiable.

Meanwhile, a few organic champions on the NOSB continue to voice the integral role of farmers in organic land stewardship and their responsibility to leave a piece of land better than they found it—a fundamental organic principle.

NOSB farmer member Francis Thicke quoted an old proverb, "The Footstep of the Farmer is the Best Fertilizer."

In other words, through knowledgeable land stewardship and on-farm nutrient cycling, the farmer herself feeds the soil, which fertilizes the plants.

Rather than simply sourcing fertility from organic "inputs" (e.g., conventional hydrolyzed soybeans or fish emulsion), the organic farmer must use organic practices such as composting, cover cropping, and rotating animals on pasture to properly cycle nutrients on the farm.

Organic production systems have always been defined by continuous improvement. Organic farmers are expected to source more organic seed, improve on-farm biodiversity, increase the organic content of their soil, and reduce their dependency on off-farm synthetic inputs from the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances. Materials on the National List are supposed to sunset every five years precisely because the requirement for continuous improvement was written into organic law.

How is it that something as fundamental to organic farming as soil fertility and continuous improvement has been forgotten by some NOSB members? To put it quite simply (and depressingly), the USDA has appointed NOSB members with allegiance to their corporate employers rather than to the organic movement.

Keep an eye out for more coverage during the fall 2017 NOSB meeting.



Battling BPA

Controversies Over Its Use in Organic Food

BY ANNE ROSS, JD

A basic principle of organic food and farming is one of health, whether it be in promoting health in farming, processing, distribution, or consumption.

Because organic foods are synonymous with good health, consumers are often surprised to learn that the USDA currently allows the use of Bisphenol A (BPA) in cans and other packaging materials that contain organic foods.

Many consumers are familiar with BPA, a man-made chemical used to manufacture certain plastics and resins.

We are exposed to BPA through diet when it leaches out of containers into the food or liquid held therein.

Although human exposure to BPA can occur through a variety of sources, the primary cause is contact with the foods and liquids we consume.

In a recent study analyzing the urine of thousands of people of various ages and backgrounds, researchers learned that the consumption of just one BPA-lined canned food product was associated with a 24% higher BPA urinary concentration.

BPA is linked to a multitude of adverse health effects, including cancer, obesity, diabetes, neurological and behavioral problems, and reproductive issues.

The entire population is at risk for BPA-related adverse health effects. Numerous peer-reviewed studies show that BPA is an



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endocrine disrupting chemical.

Through highly complex mechanisms, the endocrine system regulates human metabolism, reproduction, and development of the body and brain.

In women, BPA accumulates in reproductive organs and, due to its structural similarity to estrogen, impairs the structure and functions of the female reproductive system, affecting puberty and ovulation. BPA is also linked to female infertility.

In men, exposure to low-dose BPA has been found to disrupt the cell duplication cycle, which is related to the development of prostate cancer. Recent research reveals that higher levels of BPA are found in prostate cancer patients than non-prostate cancer patients.

Our children are especially vulnerable to the effects of BPA. Because the human placenta does

not act as a barrier to BPA, fetuses are subject to its toxic effects.

BPA exposure during the gestational period is linked to neurological disorders and impaired behavioral development, including hyperactivity, aggression, anxiety, cognitive deficits, and learning-memory impairment in children.

Even the Type 2 diabetes epidemic might be tied, at least in part, to exposure to environmental contaminants and chemicals such as BPA.

Recent research shows that BPA is connected to the development of Type 2 diabetes, independent of factors such as age,

gender, race/ethnicity, body mass index, and serum cholesterol levels.

Given that more than one in 10 adults over 20 years old has been diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, researchers are increasing attention to dietary exposure to BPA and other chemicals.

So why does the USDA allow BPA in the packaging of organic foods? Consumption of organically grown foods protects the consumer from dietary exposure to dangerous pesticides and simultaneously provides enhanced nutritional benefits. And, of course, organic production practices protect and nurture our environment through sustainable growing techniques.

Why, then, would the USDA allow BPA in the packaging of organic foods and thereby risk compromising a commitment to both human and environmental

health, something the organic movement embraces at its core?

Some groups, like the Organic Trade Association (OTA), respond that approval of food packaging is the FDA's responsibility and that the National Organic Program (NOP) regulations do not explicitly forbid the use of BPA.

In expressing what seems to be only token opposition to the use of BPA in packaging of organic foods, some question whether banning BPA would expose us to alternative chemicals that also present health concerns.

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) is taking note of the use of BPA in the packaging of organic foods. They recently contracted with the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) to issue a technical report to assess the validity of the research related to BPA's safety and to evaluate the cost of alternatives.

OMRI's objectivity in evaluating the research related to BPA remains to be seen. Studies which do not rely on industry funding conclude that BPA does, in fact, have harmful effects on health. Industry-funded studies, such as those funded by plastics and chemical manufacturers, overwhelmingly conclude that

BPA has no harmful effects on human health.

The NOSB received comments on the use of BPA at its spring 2017 meeting. Cornucopia's comment opposed the use of BPA in the packaging of organic products, a position which finds support in the regulations.

The regulations prohibit the use of containers that compromise "organic integrity" in the handling of organically produced products.

BPA's link to serious adverse health effects more than compromises the "organic integrity" of organically produced foods. The use of BPA in organics undermines organic agriculture's commitment to health and contradicts the clear intent of the regulatory language.

Other countries have recognized the hazards of BPA, whether or not the food is organically or conventionally produced.

In October of 2016, the majority of the Members of the European Parliament called for banning the use of BPA in all food contact materials. France prohibits the import and domestic sale of any food contact materials containing BPA.

Although the United States bans the use of BPA in infant formula bottles, our laws do not go far enough.

The USDA, through the NOP, should take the lead, protect the public health, and prohibit the use of BPA in all food contact materials used in organic agriculture.

The USDA should similarly address concerns about the health effects linked to chemical alternatives as they arise. Incremental change is often necessary to institute larger-scale and necessary transformations.

Banning BPA from contact with organic food products is consistent with the foundational principles of the organic movement and reinforces the values the consumer endorses every time he or she purchases foods affixed with the USDA organic label.

The purchase is far more than a selection of a particular food product. It is an investment in the health of the individual, the public, and the environment.

Cornucopia will continue to report on the NOSB's consideration of BPA in organics, and a white paper on endocrine disrupting chemicals is forthcoming.

Welcome New Advisory Panel Members

Cornucopia is delighted to welcome Anaïs Beddard of Lady Moon Farms and Kendra Kimbirauskas of the Socially Responsible Agricultural Project (SRAP) to our formal Policy Advisory Panel. Cornucopia is grateful that these accomplished farmers and community leaders will help guide our important work defending economic justice for family-scale farms.



Kendra Kimbirauskas is an Oregon-based farmer raising heritage livestock and the CEO of the Socially Responsible Agricultural Project. She leads the national nonprofit in its grassroots advocacy and organizing to hold factory farms accountable for the pollution, public health

threats, and environmental destruction they create in rural communities across the nation.



Anaïs Beddard recently returned to the family farm after working in the California wine industry. She now helps run what has become the largest organic vegetable operation east of the Mississippi, with 2,600 acres in three states (see farmer profile on pg. 10). Beddard is passionate about continuing

her parents' highly successful legacy, pioneering workers' rights, and preserving the integrity of the organic label.

Although currently barred from issuing organic certificates under Canadian and European Union (EU) regulations, ETKO still maintains its accreditation status with the USDA.

Opportunities for the import of dubious organics into the United States continue. In 2016, the USDA started requiring import certificates for organic shipments from countries with which the United States has organic equivalency agreements to verify compliance with USDA organic regulations. Europe has long required such paperwork.

However, these organic import certificates are not required for imports from countries like Turkey, with whom the United States does not have an organic equivalency agreement. Astoundingly, between 2015 and 2016, shipments of organic corn to the United States from Turkey more than tripled, while imports of organic soybeans skyrocketed nearly 800%.

Even where organic equivalency agreements exist, questions remain as to whether source countries are truly “equivalent” in terms of applying standards designed to minimize avenues for fraud.

Later this summer, the USDA’s Office of Inspector General will release an audit of the NOP’s “International Trade Arrangements and Agreements.”

In analyzing the enforcement methods in Canada, Cornucopia has already accused the USDA of not looking after the interests of U.S. organic stakeholders.

The effectiveness of the NOP’s import certificates, and the organic equivalency agreements, in minimizing fraud remains to be seen. The United States would do well to adopt additional traceability mechanisms, such as those implemented by our EU counterparts.

Effective October 19, 2017, the EU will require that all organic imports be accompanied by an electronically generated organic import certificate to track movements of food. A comprehensive electronic database could offer additional protection in verifying the legitimacy of organic imports. An electronic system could also help identify those perpetrators who create fraudulent organic certificates.

Although measures like organic import certificates, OIG audits, and traceability measures offer promises

of improvement, this is little solace for farmers like Bob Joos who seek, and deserve, immediate relief.

Combating impostor organics requires a multi-front approach on the part of the USDA, farmers, and processors/handlers.

This is a crisis; the recent damning exposé in *The Washington Post* illustrates the dire need for action. To identify the bad actors in the international supply chain requires collaborative efforts.

The NOP needs to promptly respond to FOIA requests intended to unearth this information. Marketers/processors and consumers should ask where their organic products are grown and seek out U.S. sources to create marketplace pressure.

Cornucopia will continue to report on this issue in our efforts to protect legitimate organic farmers and consumers from fraud and to update organic stakeholders on the status of efforts to combat the flow of dubious organics into the United States.

The Cornucopia Institute also intends to publish guides, helping consumers choose brands that exclusively source from U.S. farmers.

Cornucopia Wins Antitrust Victory in Organic Dairying

Last August, Cornucopia challenged the proposed merger of Group Danone (Dannon in the U.S.) with WhiteWave Foods. The deal would have combined the world’s largest organic yogurt brand, Stonyfield, with Wallaby, a rapidly growing organic yogurt label, and the nation’s largest brand of organic milk, Horizon.

We expressed concerns to regulators about the loss of competition in the organic dairy sector, and we organized a petition drive and letter-writing campaign with organic dairy farmers, asking for a full analysis of the merger proposal. We made sure that regulators knew that organic dairy already has less competition than other agricultural sectors.

“This merger could have reduced options and raised prices for consumers without any positive impact on the quality of the products they are buying,” notes Cornucopia Codirector Mark Kastel.



Federal regulators heard the message from Cornucopia and allies like the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance. When the merger was approved on March 31, Danone was required to divest itself of Stonyfield.

“We presented some pretty compelling testimony on the possible ramifications of this deal,” Kastel added. “I am refreshingly surprised that the Department of Justice took this aggressive action. This is a rare win for U.S. organic dairy farmers.”

Book Review: Drawdown

Edited by Paul Hawken

REVIEWED BY
FREDERICK KIRSCHENMANN, PHD

The subtitle of this new book—*“The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming”*—may seem like a marketing exaggeration, but anyone who reads the powerful collection of essays, mostly written by climate scientists or on-the-ground practitioners, is likely to be convinced that it is simply an honest statement.

Each of the essays addresses a key issue we must face if we are going to “drawdown” the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere sufficiently to continue having a livable planet. The essays are grouped in eight categories: Energy, Food, Women and Girls, Buildings and Cities, Land Use, Transport, Materials, and Coming Attractions.

The selections in each category provide us with practical, innovative, and mostly economically attractive alternatives that we could begin to implement within the next decade or two. That is what makes this such an exciting and practical read.

As Hawken points out in his introduction, the “Food” section, in large part, comes down to what each of us decides to eat. The essays provide us with numerous practical examples, including farmers who have, for principled and economic reasons, already transitioned to food production systems that sequester, rather than add, greenhouse gases to the atmosphere.

In this regard, however, there is a bit of irony. Hawken buys into the notion—which has become popular in our culture—that if we transitioned to a plant-based diet, got animals out of our production system, and quit eating meat, we could have a significant positive

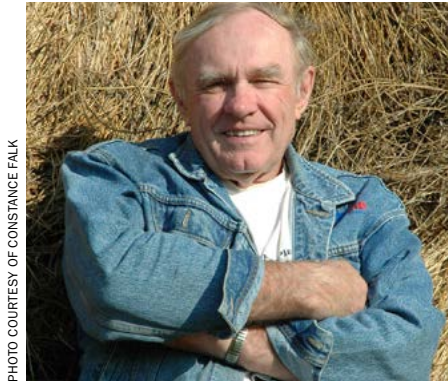
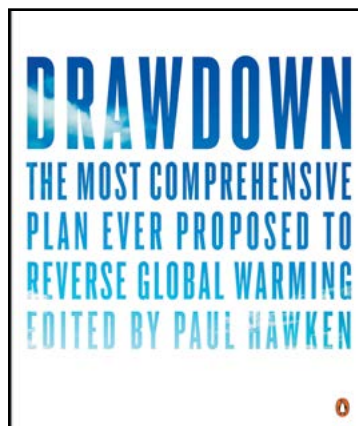


PHOTO COURTESY OF CONSTANCE FALK

Dr. Frederick Kirschenmann is a Leopold Center Distinguished Fellow, Iowa State University professor, and Board President at the Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture. He also manages his family's 1,800-acre certified organic farm in North Dakota.



effect regarding global warming. The irony is in the fact that several ideas in the book, such as “silvopasture” and “managed grazing,” are great examples of how animals can play an important role in sequestering carbon and methane.

There are numerous scientific studies emerging now which confirm that properly managed animals can play such an important role in the health of the whole, as well as drawing down or stabilizing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

A great recent example of this was published in the March/April 2016 issue of the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation*: “The Role of Ruminants in Reducing Agriculture’s Carbon Footprint in North America.”

An additional resource which helps us to better understand the positive role that animals can play, including much of the science that supports this positive role, can be found in Nicolette Hahn Niman’s book *Defending Beef*.

At the heart of all this are a couple of observations from Aldo Leopold which came to mind as I read *Drawdown*. The first is Leopold’s assertion that we humans are not “conquerors” of the land community; we are, rather, “simply plain members and citizens.” In other words, our role is not to dominate and force nature, but to recognize that we are an integral part of nature. Our responsibility is to learn from nature how we can best fit in and become part of the solution.

A second observation of Leopold’s that came to mind—based on his many years of studying nature—was that nature always abhors the “density” of any species. When any species reaches a density that puts it out of balance with nature’s self-renewing capacity, then nature will “reduce” that density, and, as he added, “If one means of reduction fails, another takes over.” Perhaps we have yet to learn that lesson with regard to our “dense” form of monoculture farming and the resistance that nature is developing to “reduce” that density!

None of my critical comments in this review are intended to detract from the importance of this great, and truly “most comprehensive” work on climate change, but rather to make it even more important for our common future.



THE CORNUCOPIA FARMER PROFILE

A Seat at the Table

Healthy Farmers Beget Healthy Food at Lady Moon Farms

BY RACHEL ZEGERIUS

Anaïs Beddard grew up at Lady Moon Farms playing in farm fields, working in the old oak grove packing shed, and cultivating genuine friendships with farm employees and their families.

Each employee is part of the family at Lady Moon Farms. With a team of nearly 300 workers, the Beddard family can't fit them all at the dinner table these days. If they could, they certainly would.

From the time Chris and Tom Beddard embarked on this journey together nearly 30 years ago, they have prioritized the lives of their farmworkers as highly as the soil.

What started as five acres and a dream is now the largest organic vegetable operation east of the Mississippi, with nine farms in three states (Pennsylvania, Georgia and Florida) and over 2,600 tillable acres.

This year, Tom will receive the Rodale Institute's esteemed 2017 Organic Pioneer Award—recognition of their successful path.

Model farmers, the Beddards have maintained a deep respect for their workers as a core guiding principle. Social justice is a pillar of the organic systems plan they use to guide every decision made at Lady Moon.

Satisfied workers are an invaluable part of their sustainable whole farm system. Employees receive annual



PHOTO COURTESY OF GREIG CRANNA

Satisfied workers are an invaluable part of a sustainable whole farm system at Lady Moon Farms.

raises, paid lunches, vacation, holidays, bonuses, and promotions. Each of the five farms is managed by a worker who was once a harvester or packer.

Lady Moon provides consistent, year-round employment. In turn, their committed employees are the farms' greatest asset—working hard and dedicating their lives to growing healthy, delicious food.

Their standards set a new precedent for an industry that too often relies on unscrupulous practices. It is common for contractors to bus in different crews of laborers daily, or seasonally, with precarious work contracts.

For Anaïs, her parents' commitment to social justice instilled a deep understanding that the life of the farm and the life of the farmworker are mutually dependent. "If we didn't have migrant labor, there simply wouldn't be any

fresh fruits and vegetables on family tables. It would be great if more people understood that," says Anaïs.

Farmworkers' rights are a large part of the Beddards' legacy, and something Anaïs is proud to uphold—carrying forward her parents' passion, while providing healthy food that is good for the planet.

But the landscape of organic farming is shifting, and Anaïs will face different obstacles than her parents did. Today's challenges include major labor shortages and

the bravado of industrial agriculture elbowing its way into the organic market.

Many large-scale organic farms in the U.S. are operated by conventional players, driven foremost by profits, at the expense of workers and the land.

Industrial farms often look like barren land, their soil and ecology weakened by high chemical and energy inputs. Lady Moon's farms stand in stark contrast. In his authoritative exposé "Tomatoland," investigative food journalist Barry Estabrook highlights the practices of Lady Moon Farms as a model alternative to exploitative and toxic agribusiness system failures.

Lady Moon started out organic, and they started out small. Strategic growth has allowed them to absorb changes in the organic market. After expanding their initial Pennsylvania-based operation to include more



farmland in Florida and eventually Georgia, their seasonal farming operation transformed into a year-round growing enterprise.

This growth earned them their wings. By minimizing gaps in production, stabilizing supply for a wholesale market, and building strong commercial partnerships, they were able to expand and stay true to their core values.

Today, all of the produce in the fields is spoken for, purchased wholesale by a small network of large distributors. Lady Moon has built a reputation for a “perfect pack,” the best looking and healthiest organic produce on the shelves.

What doesn’t get shipped to national chains, independent grocers, co-ops, and other retail outlets is donated to the local community, another sustainability directive outlined in their organic systems plan.

Lady Moon Farms believes as many people as possible should have access to healthy food. They donated a whopping one million pounds of produce to local food banks and other nonprofit organizations in 2016 alone.

Ethical growing at this scale is a challenge, but Lady Moon demonstrates that it can be done successfully and sustainably.

When asked what advice she has for farmers that want to scale up, Anaïs says, “Whether you’re fifth-generation or a new farmer, to be successful at this industry takes passion.”

Anaïs didn’t dream of being a farmer; her parents did. But after much consideration, she returned home to the farm two years ago and now works in process improvement—learning and teaching how to run the business more efficiently.

With a background in analytics and finance, she wants young farmers to know that many different kinds of knowledge, skills, and experience are needed to run a successful farm business today.

The next generation of organic farming needs all types of passionate leaders ready to carry the torch and steer the organic movement into a boldly regenerative future.

There is hope in the restorative economies, relationships, and communities being built by ethical organic farmers like the Beddards.

All farm life, from the soil microbes to the bees and workers, are supported by the decisions each of us makes to invest in the kind of authentic organic food and farming that Lady Moon provides.



Natural! No Spray! Sustainable!

If you are looking for fresh, healthy, and environmentally friendly local food, the first step is to go to your farmers market and seek out a certified organic farm.

If there are no certified organic farms in your area, you can often still find food that was produced in the spirit of organic, even if it is not certified.

Many smaller, direct-marketing farms may forgo organic certification because they are able to talk directly to their customers, explaining their production practices in person.

To help you have meaningful conversations like this at the farmers market, Cornucopia will soon be releasing a handy list of questions and an accompanying guide to help ensure that you bring home the best food for your family.

Here are the three most important questions to get you started for the market season:

1. Is it locally produced?
2. How was it grown?
3. How was it raised?

Asking detailed questions in these three categories will help you support the kind of agriculture that creates the healthiest food. It also gives the farmer a chance to share their wealth of knowledge about the land with you, creating community around shared values and good food!





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I N S T I T U T E

Fraudulent Factory-Farm 'Organic' Milk

National retailers
or distributors
marketing "private
label" brands



(or "store-brands")

frequently rely on the cheapest
source for their organic milk.

In many cases, that means the
milk is coming from Aurora Dairy
(see our page 2 story).

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where this is occurring, so together
we can push retailers using this
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Raising the Bar

Choosing the Healthiest Organic Snack Bar Brands



Snack bars are a highly profitable \$8 billion industry, posting double-digit annual growth rates. A small but growing percentage of the bars market is now USDA certified organic, but Cornucopia's new snack bars report highlights stark differences among "organic" brands, their product lines, and ingredient choices.

One concern highlighted in the report is the conventional sourcing of soy protein isolate. This ingredient is often the first or second ingredient listed and is extracted from GMO soybeans with hexane, a petroleum-based volatile solvent. Due to health and environmental concerns, the process of hexane extraction is excluded from all organic ingredients.

For example, Clif Bar makes only four product lines that are certified organic, while the vast majority of their products are "made with organic" ingredients and include additives that are illegal in organic products, such as hexane-extracted, conventional soy protein and soy lecithin.

Many companies labeling "made with organic" are also substituting cheaper conventional ingredients, like almonds, cinnamon, vanilla, natural flavors, and tocopherols, while using relatively inexpensive organic ingredients, like oats or brown rice syrup, to qualify for the "made with" label.

Luckily, there are a few stand-out companies with all of their product lines certified organic, such as Nature's Path, Simple Squares, and Bearded Brothers. These companies also choose to add whole foods with natural protein and other nutrients, such as nuts, fruit, and seeds, rather than gimmicky protein isolates.

Keep an eye out for Cornucopia's soon-to-be-released report and scorecard on the snack bar industry—knowledge is power.

— LINLEY DIXON, PHD