

NOFA conference 2007

by Rebecca White



33rd Annual Conference

The Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) 33rd Annual Summer Conference was held from August 10th –12th at Hampshire College in Amherst Massachusetts. It was an informative, fun event attended by a large, diverse group of people in a beautiful setting.

Since the conference comprises

I am an environmental lawyer who had just left corporate America the day before. My teenaged daughter and I attended the conference on our way up Route 91 to our new house in Vermont. We live in the Upper Valley on four acres of beautiful meadows, breathtaking views and (I hope) fertile soil. I am planning to create

food and family, food and farming education, fruits, nuts and trees, garden and greenhouse, herbs and flowers, international agriculture, land care, marketing, nutrition and healthcare, of the spirit, politics and policy, practical skills, soils and fertility, farm tours, weeds, insects and disease. The only downside was that there were so many equally interesting looking workshops held at the same time slot that I got “conference-goers ADD” where I was rushing from one event to another event – not sure if the workshop I was in was the most interesting and not fully paying attention to what was said. My main takeaway from the workshops was that, despite my love of the outdoors, I knew virtually nothing about growing crops or keeping small animals (other than my dog and cat).

The organic food served at the conference was excellent. Luckily, it was buffet style so one could eat as much as possible of one’s favorite offering. The delicious Saturday night dinner was prepared solely with locally based organic foods. It was a reminder of what our food choices could be after the oil wells run dry, war or a nuclear event grinds the “grand transcontinental food network” to a screeching halt.

I thoroughly enjoyed attending the NOFA Summer Conference and highly recommend that my fellow co-op members attend next year’s conference.

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the NOFA state chapters of Vermont, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York and New Jersey, attendees ranged from New York City residents seeking the tools to become country farmers to experienced organic farming families from rural New England. I was encouraged to see so many young people with small children at the conference. It made me rethink many of the media’s dire predictions that farming as a profession is falling by the wayside, that young people are leaving rural states in droves because agricultural work is too hard, the hours are too long and the profits too low. Organic farming seems to be a viable lifestyle choice for many of us.

a sustainable homestead by growing organic vegetables, berries, and flowers, revitalizing the old apple orchard and keeping small animals such as chicken and sheep. In terms of keeping the bills paid, I will practice law and write. The NOFA conference provided a perfect transition from Greenwich, Connecticut to Chelsea, Vermont.

The conference workshops were far ranging and fascinating. There were over two hundred workshops, presentations and demonstrations conducted by ordinary people with expertise, notes, slides and a story to tell. The categories of workshops were alternative energy and the environment, animals, crops, farm economy and management, farming and community,