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From the Editor
By Nicole Belanger, NOFA/Mass Public Relations Coordinator

We at NOFA/Mass were recently approached by a reporter from the Emerson College radio station, WERS. The reporter was doing a story on the Government shut-down and how people, specifically homesteaders, are working to be more self-sufficient. In order to be more self-sufficient, you learn oftentimes to do it yourself. But, as has always been the case with small farmers, gardeners, and the like, we accomplish more when we do it together. That’s how the grassroots work.

This sense of shared purpose and work exists not only in sharing seeds, tools, and experience, but also in the organizational connections that we at NOFA/Mass try to foster. As a state-wide, region-wide, and yes, even nation-wide organization we try to make the most impact with the resources we have. That means figuring out ways to collaborate.

Whether it’s finding like-minded organizations and farms to offer and host workshops, getting volunteers to attend events in different corners of the state (so our Outreach Coordinator Sharon can keep her carbon footprint small), partnering up seasoned farmers with beginning farmers (like in our Beginning Farmer Program) the people to people connections are crucial.

But there’s a step beyond even that; there are some great ways we can work together as a food movement and alongside other communities to understand and disseminate information about national and local policy. In this issue, you’ll find a guest article by Brian Snyder, Executive Director of Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA) on some contradictions in the proposed Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)-the comment period for which ends on November 15th.

NOFA/Mass Policy Director Jack Kittredge writes about about our recent partnership w/ MassPIRG, MA Right to Know GMOs, and MoveOn.org at the Massachusetts State House for the September 25th GMO Labeling Education Day where 30-40 people met with and educated their state legislators on the GMO labeling issue.

As we gear up for this year’s big Winter Conference, and even begin (believe it or not) to plan to next year’s 40th NOFA Summer Conference, there are some exciting collaborations in the works. Think there’s a way we can work together? Get in touch. We love hearing from you.

Nicole
**NOFA/Mass Membership: A Great Gift**

A very affordable gift for the Christmas season that can reap real benefits for the recipient is a membership in NOFA/Mass. We are now 1100 strong, and each time we add a new member to our roles we are able to speak with a larger voice to oppose genetically modified organisms in our food supply and environment.

Members of NOFA/Mass automatically receive the Natural Farmer newspaper on a quarterly basis. This award-winning journal spans a myriad of topics. Over the past year it featured an intensive look into Beginning Farmers, Biodiversity on the Organic Farm, Food Safety and Organic Farms, and Food Preservation.

Members receive a 20% discount on all NOFA/Mass events and some events in other NOFA chapters. In 2013 we will have held close to 50 separate events, including our advanced grower seminars, winter conference, and the NOFA region-wide summer conference.

Membership also gives access to the annual bulk order, the electronic newsletter and action alerts, and access to the Beginning Farmer Program. Most importantly, perhaps, is the connection for folks who want to live in a positive relationship with our world, our neighbors, and our food consumption and production.

To purchase a gift membership, visit our website here. You can download the printable form, note the gift membership, and fill-in with the recipient’s contact information. We will include acknowledgement of your gift in the “Welcome to NOFA/Mass” letter we send out. Feel free to contact Rebecca at Rebecca@nofamass.org with any questions.

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**Spring Bulk Order Opens Jan 1, Start Planning Now**

*By Cathleen O’Keefe, NOFA/Mass Bulk Order Coordinator*

Do you buy cover crop seed, fertilizers, mineral amendments, compost, potting soil, potato and allium seed? Would you like to save money on those items? If so, the bulk order might be perfect for you. Each spring NOFA/Mass organizes a bulk order with popular suppliers for distribution at sites in western, central, & eastern MA, central CT & RI. Take advantage of significant savings through group purchasing power and collective shipping, while helping NOFA support organic practices throughout the Tri-State region. The order is open to both NOFA/Mass members and non-members.

Suppliers we work with include Organic Growers Supply, Moose Tubers, Ideal Compost, Vermont Compost, Crop Production Services, and Fertrell.

The big spring order form will be available to download January 1, 2014. You’ll only have a month to get your order in, so start planning now! To be prepared, we suggest getting your soil tested with recommendations. Most results are available within 2-3 days via e-mail. Please contact me if you have ideas for additional items to add to the order. Cathleen O’Keefe, Bulk Order Coordinator, (413) 387-2316, bulkorder@nofamass.org

*Offloading pallets for Spring Bulk Order at the New England Small Farm Institute, Belchertown.*
Mark Your Calendars! NOFA/Mass Winter Conference - January 11, 2014

By Cathleen O’Keefe, Winter Conference Coordinator

We are excited to invite you to the 2014 Winter Conference at Worcester State University on January 11. In our third year partnering with WSU, we will continue our zero-waste initiative to keep our conference impact low, in line with the overall mission of NOFA/Mass. This year, the NOFA/Mass Organic Land Care program will be holding their annual Lawn and Turf Course at the Winter Conference. Veteran instructors Chip Osborne and Bernadette Giblin—along with a host of others—will offer practical, applicable information about organic lawn and turf management techniques.

Lawn and Turf Course and the Winter Conference registration open on October 15. In addition to the OLC workshops, this year’s Winter Conference will offer a diverse line-up of more than 60 workshops, an all-day seminar and keynote by Mark Shepard, and ongoing exhibits by numerous regional vendors. The children’s conference (for ages 3-12) provides a lively, interactive way for your kids to get educated. Discounts are available for certified organic growers, NOFA members, students, children and teens, and groups of five or more attendees. An all-organic catered lunch will be available for purchase.

Thanks to a USDA grant we are able to offer scholarships again this year to beginning farmers—defined as anyone who has been farming for fewer than 10 years. To apply for a beginning farmer scholarship, follow the link on our website or contact Beginning Farmer Coordinator, Suzy Konecky, suzy@nofamass.org or 718-431-3592. Scholarship recipients will be expected to work for two hours before or during the conference, and complete a post-conference evaluation form. We will accept applications until November 25.

Mark Shepard, perennial agriculture and permaculture design expert, will offer a keynote and all-day seminar. A proponent of restoration agriculture, Shepard questions the easy availability of future staple crops, particularly in urban population centers. His work as a permaculture design expert, as well as his experience in water conservation and land restoration, will inform both his keynote speech and the following three accompanying workshop sessions:

**Session 1:** Introduction to Restoration Agriculture/Farm-scale Permaculture

**Session 2:** MAKS: The Modified American Keyline System: Earth-shaping to manage your water resources

**Session 3:** Putting it all together: The step-by-step restoration agriculture process

Some exciting workshops you will see this January:

**Sheep to Shawl: An Overview of Choosing a Sheared Fleece to Creating Yarn:** Betsy Alspach & Chris McCluskey, Two-part Intensive

This workshop will start by looking at an unwashed, unskirted fleece, then how to choose a fleece to spin and how to skirt, or remove, the very dirty unusable parts. Each step will cover the reasons for processing fleece based on the type of wool and the desired qualities of the created yarn. The first session will cover choosing, skirting and washing a fleece, and will begin combing or
carding if possible. The second session will begin with combing or carding and touch on dyeing and spinning. Participants do not need to attend the first session in order to go to the second.

**Local Food Goes Mobile: Amy McCann**
Mobile devices and applications are transforming how food is produced, purchased, and distributed. This workshop will cover mobile trends in e-commerce, mobile website access, and mobile application use. Examples will be provided which demonstrate how producers and distributors are using mobile tools to reach more customers, improve their record keeping, and increase efficiency.

**Focus on Fertility: The Case for Imported Nitrogen within Intensive Organic Vegetable Production: Derek Christianson**
Nitrogen is a critical mineral for plant protein production & healthy crops. While cover crops, soil mineralization, and microbial populations are core components of the organic Nitrogen cycle, intensive scale producers (gardeners & farmers) may benefit from importing Nitrogen. Covering key points in the growing season where N fertilization improves yields, the costs & benefits of N inputs will be reviewed.

More information about these workshops, Mark Shepard’s all-day seminar, Lawn & Turf course, and more, can be found at www.nofamass.org/winterconference.

Please let us know if you can help publicize this event by contacting wc@nofamass.org or calling 413-387-2316.
Upcoming NOFA/Mass Seminars

Fat-Soluble Vitamins in Traditional Diets: Nutrient-Dense Animal Foods as the Keys to Vibrant Health
Thursday, October 24 9am-5pm
Ocean Explorium, New Bedford, MA
Cost: By Oct. 20: $90 Member; $113 Non-member - After Oct. 20: $95 Member; $119 Non-member

We are partnering with the Connecting For Change conference to offer a pre-conference seminar on nutrition October 24th in New Bedford.

Chris Masterjohn will share his research, explaining how fat-soluble vitamins (e.g., A, D, and K), which are most abundant in foods from animals pastured on healthy soils, are crucial for fostering human health. He also highlights how these vitamins interact with each other in the form of whole foods.

For more info & to register, see http://bit.ly/164VAvh

Farm Profitability: Season Extension and Marketing for the Small Farm
Monday, November 4th
Barre Congregational Church, Barre, MA
Cost: By Oct. 21: $65 Member/ $81 Non-member - By Oct. 31: $70 Member/ $88 Non-member - After Oct. 31: $75 Member/ $94 Non-member.

Michael Kilpatrick will share what he’s learned expanding his own operation from a small plot to over 100 acres. He now grows food for hundreds of families and employs several people in upstate NY.

Kilpatrick has been farming since he was 16 years old, when he and his brother decided to grow vegetables for the local farmers’ market to make pocket money for the summer. The business has grown to include over 100 acres of rented and leased land; sales at three weekly summer and two weekly winter farmers’ markets; summer and winter CSAs with 275 and 150 shares, respectively; year-round production in multiple high tunnels; a summer crew of seven and winter crew of three full time employees.

For more info & to register, see http://bit.ly/19FvdLK

Seeking Ideas for 2014 NOFA Summer Conference Logo Artwork

Hello Artists and Friends of the NOFA Summer Conference,

If you would like to submit an idea or draft of artwork for the 2014 NOFA Summer Conference logo, please contact Ben Grosscup by email at ben.grosscup@nofamass.org by November 30, 2013 (or sooner) with your draft image as an attachment.

We are looking for an image that represent NOFA and what the NOFA Summer Conference is about: organic agriculture, ecological sustainability, learning about more ecological ways of life, and transforming the food system. The images that creatively integrate the number “40” are preferred.

The image itself needs to be simple enough that it can make sense in all the ways it is used: as artwork for the t-shirt; as a logo for the website and all of posters and postcards that get sent out to publicize the event.

There is a stipend of $150, which will be paid to the person whose draft image is selected, in order to finalize the image.
Job Description

NOFA Summer Conference Publications and Graphics Coordinator

SUMMARY: The Publications and Graphics Coordinator is responsible for formatting and producing all of the NOFA Summer Conference print publications and for managing the use of graphics including the logo, maps, signs, and t-shirts. The successful person for this position will exhibit a keen awareness of the physical layout of the entire conference, and an ability to convey this through clear visual communication. The conference coordinator is responsible for overseeing the accuracy and consistency of content that is used for all conference publications. The role of the Publications and Graphics Coordinator is to be aware of all this content and to ensure that it is represented in a visually effective manner.

REQUIREMENTS: Computer, desktop publishing software (Adobe Creative Suite), e-mail access, phone, desktop publishing experience.

HELPFUL SKILLS: Skills with using a scanner, working with a printer, and doing line editing.

JOB DESCRIPTION: Responsible for formatting and producing all NOFA Summer Conference print publications and for managing the use of graphics including the logo, maps, signs, and t-shirts.

Publications Responsibilities
• Stationary - December
• Advertise, Exhibit, Sponsor Form - February (example:http://www.nofasummerconference.org/pdfs/2013_Ad_Ex_sponsor.pdf)
• Mini Poster, Postcards - February
• Registration Forms – April
• Program Book – July
• Other Conference Publishing needs—June/July

Graphics Responsibilities
• Signs
• T-shirts

COMPENSATION: The pay for this position is a stipend, budgeted for 175 Hours of work, with a pay rate starting at $13 per hour ($2,275), or higher depending on an individual’s NOFA/Mass accrued hourly rate. It includes free registration to the conference, free housing, and 1 free meal. Mileage reimbursement to meetings and other job-related travel (subject to approval by conference coordinator) is at $.45 per mile. Spouses receive half off registration. Children and teens receive free registration.

TO APPLY: Please contact Ben Grosscup, NOFA Summer Conference Coordinator, if you are interested in this job. Send a resume, a letter of interest in the position, and a list of three job references to ben.grosscup@nofamass.org. Call with questions at (413) 658-5374.

For details, see http://www.nofamass.org/content/job-description-nofa-summer-conference-publications-and-graphics-coordinator
TEAM NOFA/MASS Gains Steam! Join us on November 3rd!

NOFA/Mass members, families and friends are coming together to run and walk in the 18th Annual Genesis Battlegreen Run, a 10k/5k run, to be held on Sunday, November 3 at Lexington High School. The run begins at 12:15pm and the walk begins at 12pm.

We are looking for walkers and runners to sign up for the team, supporters to help raise our fundraising goal, and individuals to cheer us on and celebrate on the run day! We welcome everyone – runners, walkers, supporters and spectators alike – to join us for a beautiful, brisk fall day, November 3. We’ll celebrate with a NOFA/Mass style potluck

How to Join the Team
Joining the team is easy. To join TEAM NOFA/MASS as a runner or walker, sign up to fundraise on the team’s webpage www.razoo.com/team/Nofa-Mass-Run. From there, you will be directed to register for the run (a $25 registration fee is required.) Team members are asked to pledge to raise $200, $350 or $500. We will gather together as a community before the run and walk. This is a good opportunity to meet other like-minded people!

How to Support the Team
Not able to join as a runner or walker? Consider supporting a team member! Learn more about doing so at http://www.razoo.com/team/Nofa-Mass-Run

Post-race Fun: Non-GMO Potluck
Live near Lexington and want to be a part of the fun? Join us after the run for a non-gmo potluck! NOFA/Mass always has the best potlucks hands down. For up-to-date details visit nofamass.org.

Funds raised by the team will support NOFA/Mass’ policy initiatives, which educate consumers, farmers and policymakers on the most pressing agricultural and food issues of our day. We are organizing our community to advocate for laws and regulations that support local Massachusetts farmers, allow consumers access to high quality, humanely raised food and build a transparent food system that fully labels ingredients – most urgently GMOs!

See you in Lexington! GO TEAM NOFA/MASS!
Homesteading Observations: Scavenging and Gleaning

By Sharon Gensler
Homesteader and NOFA/Mass Outreach Coordinator

It sure is beginning to feel like autumn and my homesteader brain (which I sometimes think is the amygdala-basic survival brain) kicks into squirrel mode. Gather and store, gather and store, is my mantra. Last month I was flat out doing the preservation-shuffle, which is a much “tamer” version of the squirrel, putting up things I’ve grown and nurtured all summer. The squirrel is the scavenger; why work all summer when you can just gather and glean.

This year for the first time we have enough of our own delicious apples and pears, but in years past scavenging was the way to go. We would visit “old tree friends” in abandoned fields and pastures. A knock on the door usually elicits the reply, “Sure take what you want, but those old trees haven’t been sprayed in 20 years.” YES! My type exactly. They may not be pretty, but they are great in cider and sauce. Keep your eyes open for bounty going unused. In fact it’s best to watch for those potential opportunities throughout the year so you can know where to go harvest when the time is right. Remember to gather for any of your animals too. Our chickens love apples, pears and other fruit.

We stock up on cranberries from local wild bogs; don’t ask me to reveal my hidden spots. A beautiful tradition: schlepping through knee-deep water to get into the bog. Then sinking ten inches or more into sphagnum moss and mud with each step while picking the delicious berries. (It’s incredible how much better they taste than the sprayed grocery store version). The swamp maples and other bog bushes are brilliantly hued, and it makes me glad to be alive. My brother now comes to visit from Louisiana so he can enjoy this adventure too.

Another “free” food out there is the wild mushrooms. I’m not a mushroom fan; I only like the Sulfur Shelf. There are many other safe ones to gather, but do get a good identification book as we can’t afford to loose any NOFA members.

The wild grapes can be located by following your nose. They smell so enticing and will lead you right to their hiding place, but you’ll have to beat the foxes and other wild animals to their bounty.

If you want to gather more tamed fruits and veggies, contact your local organic/sustainable grower and see if they allow gleaning. In the past we’ve gathered potatoes, winter squash, tomatoes and other “imperfect”, non-saleable items.

So, yes, life is busy, but being my own boss allows me to take an afternoon to pick cranberries (gather my vitamin c) and still make it a holiday. Or, like today, to take a walk through the beauty and enjoy the falling leaves before the coming rain. Nourishing my spirit. To be sure, I was also on the lookout for mushrooms or nuts. Work combined with play, play with work!

Don’t forget in all of this squirreling to give thanks. We don’t wait for Thanksgiving but give thanks by making a special meal for the first harvest or gather of any fruit or veggie, like the first green beans, or corn or strawberry, or wild cranberries. Think of all the extra holidays you can create and enjoy with your family and friends!

On a different note, November 3rd is the NOFA fundraising RUN/WALK. I really need your help here. I need sponsors. Let’s have a good showing of all of us homesteaders. Let’s meet up and walk together!

A good way to meet each other and to catch up on what our fellow urban, rural, and suburban homesteaders are doing. Join me walking, or be my sponsor. Sponsor me by emailing me: outreach@nofamass.org

The State Agriculture Councils of The Humane Society of the United States seek to ensure that animal production is humane and environmentally sustainable.

To learn more, visit humanesociety.org/agcouncils.
Come grow with us:
In 2012, we purchased more than $37,000,000 worth of local produce and flowers in our North Atlantic and North East regions—and we’re not stopping there!

If you are, or would like to be a grower of:
• organic broccoli
• organic blueberries
• organic strawberries
• organic melons

Please contact Mike Bethmann, Rich Thorpe or Brian McKeller regarding potential opportunities:
• mike.bethmann@wholefoods.com
• richard.thorpe@wholefoods.com
• brian.mckeller@wholefoods.com

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Outreach Updates
By Sharon Gensler, NOFA/Mass Outreach Coordinator

Hi NOFAites!
Here are your updates on interesting, fun, worthwhile, easy, and very useful ways you can help NOFA/Mass out in your own grassroots backyard. I do cover many events, but as you can see by the list below, I CAN NOT be everywhere at the same time, nor do I wish to add to the petro-pollution by driving, crisscrossing the state. So, think and ACT LOCALLY. Sign up for one of these exciting events. Help NOFA, help your community, and enjoy yourself.

Also, we offer credit towards NOFA/Mass workshops, membership, and other incentives as an added enticement. For more information about volunteering or becoming an Outreach Intern, go to the following website: www.nofamass.org/programs/nofamass-outreach

- October 19 Food Day Festival, Worcester
- October 23 & 24 Sustainability Fair and Food Day, Worcester State University
- October 25-27 Connecting For Change Conference- New Bedford
- December 17-19 New England Vegetable & Fruit Conference, Manchester, NH

November 3rd is the NOFA fundraising RUN/WALK- I really need your help here. My arm was TWISTED and I am doing the walk AND I need sponsors. Help me out and support a good cause! To sponsor me, email outreach@nofamass.org.
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The Politics of Fermentation

By Jeremy Ogusky

In Sandor Katz’s book, “The Art of Fermentation”, Michael Pollan writes that, “To ferment your own food is to lodge an eloquent protest against the homogenization of flavors and food experiences now rolling like a great, undifferentiated lawn across the globe. It is also a declaration of independence from an economy that would much prefer we were all passive consumers of its commodities, rather than creators of unique products expressive of ourselves and the places where we live.”

I couldn’t agree more! To ferment in your home is a counterweight to the rise of fast food and fast life. And making sauerkraut, kimchee, miso, traditional pickles, or other live fermented foods keeps us healthy. By eating these foods, which have live and wild cultures, we are promoting diversity among microbial cultures in our bodies and continuing ancient food traditions.

I have come to fermentation in a circuitous fashion. I have been a full-time studio potter for the past four years; previously, I worked in the public health world as a Peace Corps Volunteer, community health educator, and public policy advocate. And throughout I have loved tasty & healthy food. Fermentation, I believe, combines my varied interests nicely, as it lets me craft my own healthy food out of handmade vessels that I in fact created!

I believe that good handmade, slowly-made sauerkraut using quality ingredients should be created in an equally high-quality, artisan-crafted fermenting crocks. And the crocks that I make are often stamped with the words ‘ferment’ and ‘foment’ on the sides. According to Merriam, “foment” means, “to promote growth or development,” and is synonymous with instigate, incite, or provoke. These words all nicely describe what is happening inside the crock, where microorganisms are fomenting, growing, creating lactic acid, and changing the veggies into nutritious & tasty fermented food.

On a deeper level, to foment can mean to provoke change as in, “fomenting a revolution.” And cultivating wild microorganisms in your food is revolutionary. It is a transformation of both our food and largely homogeneous food system. Fermentation—as the opposite of homogeneity and uniformity—helps us foment both health and diversity.

Making fermentation crocks has led me to lead fermentation demos around the Boston area as friends have asked me for short tutorials. It is great that fermentation is becoming rediscovered, and I am always happy to comply. The occasional workshop or demo inspired me to help spread the fermenting gospel to more folks—and so I organized the first ever Boston Fermentation Festival on September 28.

With a small group of volunteers, we organized a successful festival attended by over one thousand fermenting enthusiasts! This being Boston, we organized a speakers series with, among others, Harvard microbiologists, sake experts, and nutritionists all connecting the fermentation dots. We also had demonstrations by local chefs and fermentation aficionados; and we invited a dozen small local start-up fermentation-related businesses that sampled & shared their products. Authors also attended to speak and sign books and there was even a culture-sharing table where folks could swap starters. The festival was a huge hit that helped build community and introduce many people to something they could do themselves that is healthy & easy.

And this is what I believe is the best of fermentation: the opportunity for folks to learn about and share their ‘cultures’, to learn from new people, and even to broaden our collective culinary and political perspectives!

Learn more about the Boston Fermentation Festival at www.eastonfarmersmarket.org/fermentation.
Farmer Mentorship - An Invaluable Career Move
By Suzy Konecky, NOFA/Mass Beginning Farmer Program Coordinator

The Beginning Farmer Program aims to cultivate the next generation of committed organic farmers in Massachusetts. Through three distinct educational components of the program, as well as educational conference scholarships, we are able to offer young farmers, and those who are coming to farming after a diverse range of careers, the opportunity to engage in educational opportunities that are appropriate for where they are in their professional farming development. The Mentorship Program is the largest component. In this program, Beginning Farmers are matched with experienced mentors, who over the course of a year share their skills and experiences.

This month I talked with two of the participants in the program, Lana Cannon and Zannah Porter, who shared their experience in the program thus far.

Lana Cannon works as the CSA Coordinator for the Crop department at Drumlin Farm in Lincoln, MA. She has lots of goals for this year: “I aim to commit myself fully to ask questions, adapt my body and mind to the physical and mental challenges of farming...to continue on this path that makes me feel whole and fulfilled.”

Lana’s mentor is Linda Ugelow of Dancing Tomato Farm. Lana visited the farm and helped Linda and her husband put up the end of their new hoop house; they had to cut the plastic, hang it on a track, and stretch it tight. “It was nice to be able to contribute to a pretty major step in the development of her farm,” said Lana.

Lana’s goal for the next few years is to work on her aunt’s sheep farm in Springvale, Maine. She wants to integrate crops into the farm and help increase the flock from its current size of 120 sheep. To this end, Lana and Linda have spent some time talking about business planning. Linda has generously offered to share her business plan with Lana and offered to give feedback on Lana’s plan. With Linda acting as a sounding board for Lana’s business ideas, Lana is confident that she will continue to learn a lot from this relationship with her mentor.

Already Linda has helped Lana prioritize her thoughts and plans and has given some valuable second opinions on things. Lana has been working at Drumlin Farm, which is 15 acres, and knows that if she farms on her own some day, it will need to be a smaller operation. It was good for her to see Linda’s farm, which is on a much smaller scale. Lana hopes to continue to learn from Linda’s experiences, successes, and challenges. Of her participation in the Beginning Farmer Mentorship Program, Lana says,

“I am so thankful to be part of the program. It was a really great career move.”

Zannah is the Assistant Grower at Waltham Fields Community Farm (WFCF). This is her second year at WFCF where she is responsible for managing a four-acre satellite site. The satellite site is about a 20-minute drive from the main site, and she has a lot of autonomy there. Zannah decided to grow vegetables on three acres and use the fourth acre for raising pastured pork.
Zannah’s mentor is Jim Buckle of The Buckle Farm. Zannah had three pigs this season; they are almost ready to go to slaughter. This is the first time Zannah is the primary caretaker for a group of animals, but “I have dabbled in livestock before,” she says. The learning curve was steep for her, but Jim’s experience and advice were priceless. “We talked about how to set up a rotation, about feed, sourcing feed, sourcing pigs. Actually pretty much every step”. Jim also advised her on to slaughter—like which slaughterhouse to use and how to transport the pigs to the slaughter house.

Zannah tells a story a hot day in August when she had a pig who was not doing well. The pig was lethargic, and she could tell that something was very wrong. The pig was lying by itself, which her pigs rarely do. She knew that she didn’t want to have to cull the pig, but she also was fearful that illness might spread to the other pigs. Zannah shares: “I talked to Jim a lot that day. Someone on my small scale can’t pay for a large animal vet to come out to the farm; it’s just not financially feasible.” Zannah is right; it is very expensive to even have a vet step foot on your farm, not to mention the costs of diagnosis and treatment of a sick animal. Zannah’s relationship with Jim and his role on that day is exactly the intention of the Beginning Farmer Mentorship Program. Jim was able to be both a source of emotional support, and a source of knowledge and experience for Zannah.

Going forward, now that Zannah won’t have the pigs, she knows that her mentorship with Jim with change. She plans to utilize and learn from Jim’s other skills and knowledge. Zannah’s experience has been working for nonprofit farms, but Jim purchased and started his own farm. She plans to talk with him about buying land and equipment.

Zannah also plans to visit Jim and walk his farm. This has been a challenging growing season, mostly with respect to the weather. Zannah wants to talk with Jim about what the challenges of the season mean for him. She has experienced very high weed pressure, periods of high precipitation and then none, and pest pressure that was higher and earlier than previous years. Zannah plans to seek Jim’s advice for how to structure planting differently.

For more information about the Beginning Farmer Program, see the website at: http://www.nofamass.org/programs/beginning-farmer-program or contact the Beginning Farmer Program Coordinator at: suzy@nofamass.org.

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**Beginning Farmer Scholarships Available for NOFA/Mass Winter Conference**

Apply NOW to receive a beginning farmer scholarship to the NOFA/Mass Winter Conference on January 11, 2014. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis until November 25th.

Visit the Beginning Farmer Program page http://www.nofamass.org/programs/beginning-farmer-program

Email suzy@nofamass.org with any questions.

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For decades, NOFA/Mass has been organizing and hosting winter and summer conferences, offering hundreds of workshops each year to thousands of farmers, gardeners, homesteaders, landscapers, and consumers. The workshops range from policy topics to nutrition to crop management and more, all with an eye toward using and supporting sustainable organic practices that improve the health and well-being of people and their environment.

Thanks to a grant from the USDA via the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR), this year we are capturing the teachings from many of the conference workshops – specifically those related to growing fruits and vegetables – and making them available in our newsletter and online. In doing so, we’re making lessons about organic practices more broadly available, building the beginning of what we hope will become a library of essential information for organic growers.

In this issue of NOFA/Mass News we are publishing the first three of these articles. Look for additional installments in upcoming issues, and the full collection online at www.nofamass.org.

CSA—Is It For You?

Presented by Michael Kilpatrick
Reviewed by Rebecca Buell

Michael Kilpatrick of Kilpatrick Family Farm (KFF) runs a successful, farmers’ market style Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). In this workshop, he discussed the KFF CSA model and provided a comprehensive overview of general CSA management, including the many things to consider before starting. He presented the lecture by asking basic questions: Why CSA? Is CSA for you? What season length? How to package the CSA? How to deliver? How to get paid? How to market? He answered using his own knowledge and experience, touching upon the different CSA models, how best to plan for the CSA, what to grow and when, and various marketing tools he finds useful. Michael stresses the importance of running the farm as a business, thinking and planning far enough in advance, and connecting well with your customers.

Kilpatrick Family Farm is located in Middle Granville, NY, near the border of NY and VT. In 2012, the farm had 14 acres in crops, 25 in cover crops, 1/3rd of an acre is under cover (greenhouses, high and low tunnels). They attended three weekly summer markets (two in winter), sold 285 summer shares and 140 winter shares, and hired eight full-time summer employees and two full-time winter employees. The farm income was $450,000, about 47% from market sales, 47% from CSA, and 5% from restaurant sales.

Michael has a strong belief in local, organic food, loving the work you do, practicing good stewardship of the land, and building community. He and his brother started small, offering 10 CSA shares in 2006 and expanding each year to the current size. This growth has included a number of timesaving machines that have greatly decreased labor costs. (He says spending $3000 for a piece of machinery can save $2000/year, so don’t be afraid to spend money.) To make the farm profitable, it is important to keep good records and crunch the numbers; know exactly the value of those carrots and how many pounds per feet are necessary to
make a profit before harvesting.

Why CSA? CSA is an excellent way to form a strong connection between farmer and community: The food is fresh and safe, money stays local, and the farmer is guaranteed invested customers. There is great opportunity for educating, networking, and bartering within the CSA community. In this model, the inherent risk of growing food is also shared. Michael’s customers, which include 285 families, are able to sway public vote and are excited to help the farm change policy.

Is CSA for you? Do you like people? You will need to interact a lot with your members, answering many questions about the CSA and your farming practices. Transparency allows you to grow trust with your customers. Are you willing to receive a lower overall price for your produce and willing to grow a wide diversity of crops? Can you commit to producing food every week for the whole season? The typical length of a summer season CSA is 18-22 weeks. With season extension, you can offer an early spring, fall, and even winter CSA (using cold-weather greens and root cellar crops). In touristy areas, some farms offer short 12 week CSA and others develop special CSA schedules for colleges and universities.

How to package your CSA? The size of the share you offer can vary too, from a micro share (for 1-2 people) to a larger, family-size share. Some farms provide clean, ready-to-eat shares, others offer bulk vegetables straight from the field that will need to be washed and prepped by the consumer. When packing a share, create a well-rounded share with good variety; don’t frontload early weeks with greens. Include root cellar vegetables, if possible, or experiment with season-extending high or low tunnels to provide some early treats. A well-packaged share could include one salad green, one cooking green, an allium, a root, a seasonal veggie, plus items to fill out the share.

Don’t overpromise and under-deliver. How many shares do you want to offer? Michael suggests you estimate a harvest of 35-55 shares/acre with 50-100% of land in irrigation; plan an for additional farm help as you grow past 25 shares. You can also work cooperatively with neighboring farms to offer your customers additional items, like eggs, honey, cheese, meat, or other crops you are not growing. While more work for you, this can be a good way to grow your membership lists.

How to distribute your share? CSA models include free choice; boxed shares; bulk shares (where members assemble the share based on instructions from the farmer); custom boxed shares; or member harvested shares. KFF uses a free-choice, farmers’ market style CSA. The vegetables are set-up for retail at the farmers’ market and CSA members, depending on the size of their share, have $15-25 to “spend” at the market. There will typically be one “special” item that they must take, but other than that the members can mix and match what they want. Not only does this guarantee customers at the market stand, but usually the CSA members will spend extra money on additional items and also create a buzz around the stand, encouraging others to shop there, too. So the farmers’ market doubles as a CSA drop, brings in retail dollars, enables KFF to sell as much or as little as they want, and offers fluidity to adapt to the farm’s needs.

How to manage share holders? A simple paper form can be an effective, inexpensive sign-up system for your CSA. As you grow, there are many online systems to look into: Wofoo or Google Docs; Farmigo; Local Harvest and CSAware; Small Farm Central; or develop a custom web-form. These options are more expensive but could save money and time. Getting paid in cash and check up front is easiest and best for the farmer, but offering payment plans and options to pay with credit/debit cards will increase your sign-ups. Decide on rules for customers’ missed pick-ups, late checks, and issuing refunds, and stick to them.

To be successful at marketing you need to offer a great product and build relationships. Interact and engage your customers through a vibrant website, photographs, a blog, emailed newsletters, and social media; offer farm tours or plan a harvest day festival to invite people to see the farm. Don’t miss the opportunity to educate the consumer. Have print material available, including business cards, brochures, cookbooks for customer perusal, and recipe cards to hand out. Include a well-structured end of year survey to receive as much feedback as possible to improve for next year. When it comes to marketing, you are selling yourself and your product. Be transparent and real; believe in what you are doing; and stay connected to your customers.
Wholesale Logistics

Presented by Caroline Pam, co-owner Kitchen Garden, Hadley, MA
Reviewed by Cathleen O’Keefe

Caroline Pam and her husband, Tim Wilcox, operate a family farm in the Pioneer Valley. Over the past eight years, their farm has grown from one acre to twenty. They don’t, as Caroline says, “ship pallets to Whole Foods,” nor do they “do commodity crops,” but they run a pretty good business managing a CSA, attending five farmers’ markets, and selling wholesale to many restaurants and other outlets in the Pioneer Valley.

Caroline shared the following tips, gained in her years on the farm. Before selling to customers, establish a brand identity. A business name or slogan will give people a sense of what you are about. Sell yourself, your experience, your knowledge and dedication, and always be clear about your standards. Your self-presentation defines how you are seen. Small local businesses prefer to establish personal relationships. In the case of restaurants and retail stores, make a list of businesses that provide food in line with your standards. If you wouldn’t spend your money there, you probably do not want to sell your produce to them.

Many new farmers struggle to build a customer base when they are first starting out. Caroline has two words: be shameless. When meeting prospective new clients, give them your business card or contact information and be sure to get theirs as well. Do not be shy. Continue to send product lists to possible clients, even if they are not currently purchasing from you.

Get to know your buyers by soliciting feedback in frequent communications. A newsletter can be a great way to share stories and information about your product line. Offer samples, especially when introducing new products. Trust is created through frequent, reliable interactions. When determining what crops to grow, know what sells in your market, and then grow more of the best selling product.

At farmers’ markets it’s important to be the first vendor to sell a particular item. In many cases this means planting early varieties of crops or growing crops in a greenhouse to shorten production time. In wholesale markets, however, it is more important to guarantee a supply; Caroline recommends offering only crops which you can produce regularly and in sizeable quantities. Selling wholesale has many merits, including having to harvest only what is ordered and thus reducing waste. In addition, wholesale production can be significantly less time-consuming. Caroline estimates that at the Kitchen Garden, they can sell in one wholesale order as much as they sell in eight hours at a farmers’ market.

For most wholesale buyers, an attractive product list offers both staples and niche products. To maintain consistency, always deliver products that are uniform in size, well packed, and well washed. Keep your customers happy by offering refunds on any damaged or sub-par product. It is important that all vegetable varieties have a good shelf life, unless they are offered as a special or marked for quick sale. Labeling seconds (fruits and vegetables with minor blemishes) and pricing accordingly will help maintain quality standards.

Before setting the season’s prices, know what your quality standard is and price accordingly based on other wholesale and retail prices. Subscribing to competitors’ wholesale lists will also give you a good gauge of market prices. In general, wholesale prices can be as little as a third of retail prices, but a grower of high quality or specialty products can charge a premium for those products. Additional services, like weekly deliveries, flexibility in ordering time, and small order quantities also garner a higher price.

Caroline recommends providing clients with a weekly price list. She publishes hers on Friday afternoon and has a Sunday evening deadline for orders. Orders are delivered on Tuesdays, which leaves Monday for harvesting and packing produce. She advises farmers to never negotiate prices but rather solicit...
more information about the customer’s needs in hopes of better tailoring future orders.

During a farm’s peak season, a common problem is how to price products of which you have too many. If you have excess produce, avoid lowering prices; rather, find other buyers and use incentives, like bulk discounts and lower prices for seconds. Offer specials of the day/week for very ripe, abundant crops.

When dealing with restaurants, be knowledgeable about what you are growing and how to use it in recipes. Always be prepared to offer substitutions, in case one crop is unripe or in short supply. Work on their schedule: call between 2 and 4 pm, after the lunch rush is over. It generally takes a chef one to two weeks to incorporate items into a new recipe. In Caroline’s experience, chefs are not necessarily concerned about organic labeling; they’re more focused on quality and flavor.

In order to generate a profit, gross sales for the year should be five times net sales. Be patient. At the Kitchen Garden, the owners didn’t pay themselves for the first four years.

Resources

Organic Price Reports
• MOFGA: http://www.mofga.org/Publications/OrganicPriceReports
• Rodale: www.rodaleinstitute.org/farm/organic-price-report/

Include Herbs in Your Diversified Crop Plan

Presented by Keith Stewart (Keith’s Farm) Reviewed by Kathleen Geary

Keith Stewart runs a diversified farm about 65 miles from NYC where he raises 14 acres of certified organic vegetables, herbs, and some fruit. Herbs take up about 8% of the total acreage and bring in about 15% of the revenue. He sells primarily at the Union Square Green Market in Manhattan two days per week.

Stewart’s Seven Reasons to Grow Herbs
1. Most herbs are easy to grow and usually produce for some time.
2. Most herbs are relatively pest free.
3. Herbs don’t take up much space: you can get a lot more gross income from 20 square feet of thyme than 20 square feet of broccoli. Keith calculated that parsley was his most valuable crop per square foot.
4. Herbs don’t weigh much, so you reduce heavy lifting in the field and at market.
5. Herbs smell good. The good aromas attract customers to your stand or table.
6. Many herbs are perennials.
7. Herbs are great add-on items at markets.

Growing information:
75 degrees is generally a good temperature for herb starts.

Parsley: biennial (it goes to seed in its second year). For this reason he treats this as an annual and plants it every year, starting in the greenhouse. It takes up to 4 weeks to germinate. Soak parsley seed in warm water for 2-3 days, changing water each day to break down the coating on the seed, and allow to dry before seeding. He seeds into flats on tables with heat mats, trying to maintain a temperature of around 75 degrees. In the field, plant into black plastic and use high volume drip tape to irrigate. He gets 3-4 cuttings off each plant.

Basil: tender annual, not hardy to cold temperatures. From the second week of March through the first week of July, seed a batch every two weeks. It is ready to be transplanted about 5 weeks after seeding. Plant transplants into black plastic with drip tape. Genovese is recommended for standard pesto basil. It goes to seed very quickly. One can pinch the flower off the top to get new leaf growth. To harvest, cut the whole plant above the branching points, yet fairly low on the plant.
There are 3-4 weeks between re-growth.

**Rosemary:** perennial. He recommends planting in a high tunnel, as the warmer, drier soil in a high tunnel allows the plants to stay alive year-round. Give rosemary compost in the fall, then water. In December cover with floating row cover to overwinter. It grows very tall & needs plenty of space. It is difficult to start from seed.

**Sage and Thyme:** Mediterranean perennials. They prefer warmer, drier soil. Disperse seed into large cells, then transplant into individual cells in 98-cell flats. He recommends planting one-third of the thyme crop in a high tunnel, and the remainder with a soil cover (landscape fabric or paper mulch) in the field. Sage has a lot of energy and lasts for a long time.

**French Tarragon:** hardy perennial with a strong flavor. It prefers well-drained soil and partial sun and rarely sets seed. Propagate by root division in the spring. It can last decades.

**Lovage:** hardy perennial. The leaf is similar to celery but with a stronger flavor. It is relatively easy to start from seed and likes full sun, so give it 24-inch spacing, and some water. (It is a big plant).

**Oregano and Marjoram:** perennials. These can be started from seed in flats. Both can bolt and go to seed if they are left in the flats too long.

**Lavender:** hardy perennial. This herb has a great smell and is beloved by bees, although it is not widely used in cooking. Put lavender seed in a plastic bag in the freezer for about a week before planting. It does not require a lot of fertility and can tolerate drought.

**Cilantro:** annual. Cilantro does best in a fertile, well-drained soil with 12” between plants. Cut the whole plant to harvest, as it will re-grow. It can quickly go to seed.

**Savories:** Summer savory is an annual; winter savory a perennial. They both taste like a peppery thyme and go well with bean dishes (reducing incidence of flatulence). They are easy to grow.

**Chives and Garlic Chives:** hardy perennials. These herbs are in the onion family. It is easiest to divide the plants rather than growing them from seed. They do best in fertile soil and full sun.

**Mint:** perennial. Mint prefers rich, well-drained soil with plenty of organic matter. It is hard to grow true to type mint from seed, so it is best to get it from a nursery, or dig up a few plants that you like from a friend’s garden and divide them.

**Propagation:**

**Stem Cuttings:** Cut off 3-4 inches of nice new green growth; trim the leaves off the bottom inch. Put them in a place with plenty of light but not direct sun, in an inch of water. Change water every day. Little hairs will form on the roots. When hairs reach 1/2 inch in size (after a few weeks) put them in a potting medium in a tray.

**Root Division** – On a damp overcast day in spring or early summer, dig up a good healthy plant and separate into 3 or so pieces (each piece should have good growth and roots). Put into a wheelbarrow and cover with soil, then place in a hole with compost, topsoil, and at least 1/2 gal. of water.

**Layering** – Lay down a supple branch, remove leaves and scrape off some bark from the stem. Cover with dirt, keep moist, and weigh down with a “ground staple” or rock. Return in a few weeks and check if it has taken root by tugging on it.

**Harvesting:**

Usually a knife works, but later in the season, and with woody stems, use small pruning shears. Don’t cut too low as this can kill plants. Cut herbs in the morning after the dew is off of them, because there is a greater concentration of volatile and aromatic oils.

**Packing for Market:**

Transport herbs to market in 48-quart coolers and display just a few at a time. Don’t put wet herbs in a bag in a cooler. Air circulation is critical; leave coolers propped open.

**Resources:**

• Growing Organic Vegetables & Herbs, Keith Stewrt, Storey Publishing
To organic farmers everywhere for treating their animals and earth with care and treating us with some of the finest organic ingredients around, thanks.

Donegan Family Dairy, VT. One of the Organic Valley family farms that supply milk for our yogurt.
Moment of Truth for Farmers with Food Safety

Guest article by Brian Snyder, Executive Director of Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA)

It’s hard to believe, but many of my colleagues and I have now been working on food safety issues for well over four years, at least since the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) began to move through Congress in early 2009. Throughout that time the road has been twisting and bumpy, with victories and losses along the way, but now the moment of truth has arrived. In just a few weeks, on November 15, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will close the comment period on proposed new rules that would greatly affect many of the farmers who are doing the right thing. It’s anyone’s guess right now what will finally come out as a result.

When I talk about the “right thing” I really mean that many farmers at PASA and elsewhere have been working to develop balanced systems of production that prioritize health-building practices from the soil up, and short food supply chains that promote transparency by selling to local and regional markets as much as possible. Such strategies are the embodiment of both common sense and current science, since they maximize the health of the whole system while also minimizing risk through reduction of handling, storage, transportation and other factors associated with longer supply chains. The urgent challenge now before us is that the FDA is preparing to implement food safety rules for tomorrow’s farms based on yesterday’s science.

There is so much at stake in this current rulemaking process that I could hardly overstate the case. However, the proper approach for us to take is not one of panic, but of constructive action instead. That has been our goal all along in working with partners across the country through the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC), and it remains the most critical factor as the final weeks of the comment period approach. Our greatest need is for farmers in particular to write informed comments to the FDA that reflect experiences on the farm and in the marketplace, bolstered by a strong commitment to public health and the new science of sustainable systems that is just beginning to emerge.

Here is just a sampling of the issues that will need to be addressed by thoughtful comments to the FDA by the November 15 deadline:

Prevention vs. Reaction – FSMA intended that the FDA would take a more proactive approach to keeping the food supply safe, by working with farmers and processors before problems occur instead of waiting for a crisis. It is important that we support this concept, and point out to the FDA that this is exactly what sustainable farmers have been doing all along. Representatives of industrial agriculture are always quick to suggest that consolidation of agricultural resources and concentration of production are solutions to food safety and security problems. But we know different, and need to vigorously defend the stance that widespread diversification of properly scaled farms serving local and regional markets is the strategy that reduces risk the most by far. In other words, we are in favor of developing risk-based regulations that acknowledge the inherently lower risk of more sustainable production systems.

Farm vs. Facility – There is much confusion in the proposed rules about the definitions of “farm” and “facility,” which is not helped by the fact that the definition of a farm contains the words “a farm is a facility that…” in it, as a result of the Bioterrorism Act of 2002. This is a critical point for several reasons, chief among them being the necessity of facilities to register with the FDA and to potentially be regulated by both the Produce and Preventive Controls sets of rules being developed. There is also the potential for all facilities to have to pay inspection fees in the future. The FDA is asking for comment on the idea that perhaps all farms should register anyway, and we already know there are consumer advocacy organizations out there who favor this approach. We must insist on clear definitions that give plenty of leeway for legitimate farms to conduct farm-like activities, like actually helping each other with hauling and storage of products, without tripping over an unseen and ill-understood wire that makes them facilities.

Exemptions – Much has been said about various exemptions contained in the proposed rules, and many farmers have been lulled into believing the rules will not affect them because they are exempt. It’s just not that simple, which should surprise no one. All of the potential “exemptions” (quotation marks should probably be employed anytime the word is used) are complicated by the requirement that the value of “all food” produced on a farm, including commodities for processing elsewhere, hay, and all other products consumed by livestock or humans, is used in calculating exemption status.

This means for instance that even a relatively small conventional farm that is diversifying to serve local
markets will quite possibly not qualify for any exemption at all. In the much heralded Tester-Hagan Exemptions contained in the rules, there is also a “material conditions” clause that allows FDA to withdraw an exemption if, in their sole judgment, a risky situation exists on a farm or facility. Also, there is no mention about how, if ever, an exemption can be restored if lost, or to whom such a lost exemption would accrue. And then there are modified requirements applied in the case of most exemptions; hence the necessity of taking all discussion of exempt farms and facilities with a significant grain of salt.

(Jack Kittredge adds: Also if a farm processes any product to add value, as do many Massachusetts farms, it loses the exemption. Processing seems to be defined by the FDA as transforming the product in any way. These might include: cutting/coring/chopping/slicing, canning, cooking, freezing, drying, artificial ripening, and many other activities.)

**Manure, Water & Wildlife** – Once taken for granted that farms were meant to operate in harmony with nature, the industrialization of agriculture has pretty much disabused us of such sentimental notions. The proposed FSMA rules take a very nuanced, but ill-considered, approach to the topics of manure, water, wildlife and other environmental concerns that may affect the safety of food.

For instance, applying manure to any field would mean not harvesting a crop from that field for 9 months, and some circumstances could require weekly testing of water sources. Interactions with wildlife are also not adequately dealt with in the rules. In nearly every case the farmer is held responsible to mitigate the potential negative effects of natural systems on food safety, with very little acknowledgement as to how such systems actually can contribute to the safety of food, viability of the farm and quality of the environment. This is one general area where farmers must weigh in with comments based on their personal experience. There is more to be lost here than meets the eye for sure, and we cannot give in to the notion that a safe and abundant food supply is inherently contrary to natural systems.

**Where’s the Science?** – Throughout the proposed FSMA rules one thing is very clear: the scientific data used to support them is thin at best and absent in many cases. Some of the economic impact projections seem made up to support the cause (and even fail in doing so); the instructions for water testing are based on recreational water standards; manure and compost procedures seem based on irrational fears more than actual science; and the entire process has been totally devoid of any acknowledgement that balanced systems might actually require the infusion of healthy bacteria, as opposed to just the “search and destroy” approach to pathogens.

This strategy is totally unacceptable for a rulemaking process, especially when advances in science are rapidly developing, and an entire revolution in the way we look at health, nutrition and food safety may be in the immediate offing. Farmers, and those who support them, must speak loudly with an insistence on the use of science, on gauging food safety regulations and enforcement based on proven risk, and on using “guidance documents” as opposed to regulations to contain the use of metrics that may change more often than federal rulemaking can reasonably accommodate. Science has always been our friend in the sustainable agriculture community, coupled with the indigenous knowledge and experience of our farmers, and we must now insist that such a dual approach is paramount for success in managing food safety concerns.

The above areas of concern are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to understanding and responding to the issues contained in the proposed rules under FSMA. Those working most closely on the rules have, as a group, digested literally thousands of pages of material so that farmers and interested consumers have a fighting chance of being able to weigh in with thoughtful and effective comments themselves. Expressions of frustration and fear sent to FDA may affect the process to some extent, but will not be nearly as helpful as the comments that come from experience and at least cursory research on the relevant issues.

To that end, members and staff of NSAC have developed a FSMA Action Center with abundant (though abbreviated) information and clear instructions on how to make public comment, which can be accessed at http://sustainableagriculture.net/fsma/. You can also access more information elsewhere on this blog, http://wrietofarm.com, including several articles on FSMA and sustainable agriculture perspectives on food safety.

Both of these websites offer a chance to sign up for updates, and both would be good to share with your family, friends, customers and other associates, so they may participate as well. The important thing is to make comments early and often to FDA, on either or both rules as necessary, by the deadline of November 15, 2013. The future of our farms and food systems may depend on your informed and focused efforts right now!
GMO Labeling Education Day Draws Legislators and Aides

By Jack Kittredge

On September 25 NOFA/Mass, along with Mass Right to Know GMOs, MASSPIRG, and MoveOn.org, organized a day at the State House in Boston to educate legislators and their aides on why GMO foods need to be labeled.

The day began with a free non-GMO lunch (wraps, chips, fruit salad, cookies, muffins, iced tea and lemonade, prepared by Berkshire Organics as well as coffee from Dean’s Beans). Senator Jamie Eldridge and Representative Ellen Story sponsored the State House event. Rep. Story (Amherst) and her aide helped us secure Room 350, next to the House chamber, for the meal. They also coordinated publicity for the event, inviting all legislators and their aides to eat and listen to short talks about the need for GMO labeling. Over 80 accepted. They were mostly aides, but a smattering of representatives and senators attended as well, although interrupted by having to run out because of occasional quorum calls in the chamber.

After the talks by Pat Fiero of MoveOn.org, myself for NOFA/Mass, Deirdre Cummings for MASSPIRG, and Ed Stockton, Marty Dagoberto, and Marty’s wife Kalia for Mass. Right to Know GMOs, there were several good questions and comments, then the attendees thanked us for the excellent food and information and went back to their offices.

Phase Two began when 30 to 40 volunteers from all the groups, including a dozen from NOFA/Mass, showed up and fanned out throughout the State House with information packets on the need for labeling to deliver to the offices of their own and other reps and senators. For the next 2 hours we met with legislators and staffers, again explaining the need for GMO labeling and educating them about the technology. Some were quite knowledgeable about the issue, but many were not and asked basic questions that we were happy to answer.

While several bills have been filed in this session calling for mandatory GMO labeling, we were not lobbying for any one of them. We were, instead, trying to educate the legislators about the need for action. Should a bill be reported out before the end of the session the legislators can then craft the best parts of all the bills onto it and move it along. We will keep you up to date on this as it proceeds!

About 80 legislators and aides line up at the State House to enjoy a non-GMO lunch and learn why GMO foods should be labeled.
**USDA Guidelines Provide Crop Insurance for Organic Farming Practices**

By John Berry, Penn State Extension

Do you understand Crop Insurance for Organic Farming Practices?

Organic farming has become one of the fastest growing segments of U.S. agriculture. Also, USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) recognizes organic farming practices as good farming practices and continues to move forward in improving crop insurance coverage for organic producers and producers transitioning to organic production, so they will have viable and effective risk management options available. RMA currently provides coverage for: (1) Certified organic acreage; (2) Transitional acreage (acreage on which organic farming practices are being followed that does not yet qualify to be designated as certified organic acreage); and (3) Buffer zone acreage.

**What’s covered?**

Covered perils are drought, excess moisture, freeze, hail, prevented planting, insect damage, disease, and weeds - if recognized organic farming practices fail to provide an effective control method that may result in losses. Please note, contamination by application or drift of prohibited substances onto organic, transitional, or buffer zone acreage is not an insured peril.

If any acreage qualified as certified organic acreage or transitional acreage on the acreage reporting date such acreage (even if such certification is subsequently revoked by the certifying agent or the certifying agent no longer considers the acreage as transitional acreage for the remainder of the crop year), that acreage will remain insured under the reported practice for which it qualified at the time the acreage was reported. Any loss due to failure to comply with the organic standards is considered an uninsured cause of loss.

**What about Reporting Acreage?**

On the date you report acreage, you must have: (1) For certified organic acreage, a current organic plan and recent written certification (certificate) in effect from a certifying agent. (2) For transitional acreage, a certificate or written documentation from a certifying agent indicating that an organic plan is in effect. (Acreage transitioning to a certified organic farming practice without an organic certificate or written documentation from a certifying agent must be insured under the conventional farming practice.); (3) For both certified and transitional acreage, records from the certifying agent showing the specific location of each field of certified organic, transitional, buffer zone, and acreage maintained and not maintained under organic farming practices.

Price Elections, Insurance Dollar Amounts, and Premiums Separate organic price elections, projected prices, and harvest prices are currently available for 8 crops: cotton, corn, soybeans, processing tomatoes, avocados, and stonefruit crops; and fresh freestone peaches, fresh nectarines, and plums in California. For all other crops, the price elections, insurance amounts, projected prices, and harvest prices that apply to both certified organic and transitional crops are the price elections, insurance amounts, projected prices, and harvest prices RMA publishes for the crop grown using conventional means for the current crop year. The Price Discovery Tool is available under the RMA “Information Browser” at [www.rma.usda.gov/tools/](http://www.rma.usda.gov/tools/).

**New Contract Price Option**

Beginning with the 2014 crop year, new contract price options will be available to organic producers who grow crops under guaranteed contracts. You can choose to use the prices established in those contracts as your “price election” in place of the RMA-issued prices when buying crop insurance. This contract price option allows organic producers who receive a contract price for their crop to get a crop insurance guarantee that is more reflective of the actual value of your crop. You will also have the ability to use your personal contract price as your price election or to choose existing crop insurance price elections where this option is available.

**New Premium Organic Price Elections**

All crops are being evaluated for establishing organic prices for the 2014 crop year. However, 6 to 10 crops have emerged as the most promising for new organic price elections. These are apricots, apples, blueberries, oats, mint, millet, and others.

Note: In some cases, premium organic price elections will only be available in certain locations and for certain types, depending on data availability. Continued expansion of premium organic price elections is planned; however, the limiting factor is data availability.

**Contact Crop Insurance Agents**

You should contact your crop insurance agent for more information about this new option. You should talk to your crop insurance agent to get specific information and deadlines. To find a list of crop insurance agents, see: [www.rma.usda.gov/tools/agent.html](http://www.rma.usda.gov/tools/agent.html). For a list of insurable crops, see: [www.rma.usda.gov/policies/](http://www.rma.usda.gov/policies/). More information on RMAs Organic Crop Insurance Program can be found on RMA’s web site at [www.rma.usda.gov/news/currentissues/organics/](http://www.rma.usda.gov/news/currentissues/organics/).
From Field to Fridge

Farms listed in the NOFA/Mass Organic Food Guide have the opportunity to highlight here what they currently have available for sale. Pick up some of their goods and help support your local organic and sustainable farmers today!

If you would like your farm or business listed on the Organic Food Guide website, contact Rebecca Buell at foodguide@nofamass.org or 978-724-3561.

To access a farm’s full Organic Food Guide listing, click on that farm’s name.

Billingsgate Farm
6 County Road, Plympton, MA
781-293-6144, farmgirl@billingsgatefarm.com
www.billingsgatefarm.com
Farm stand open Monday-Friday 10 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday 9 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Summer Squash, Zucchini, Swiss Chard, Kale, and Lettuce. Join us at our upcoming fall events. See our website for details.

Bird of the Hand Farm
33 School St., Sterling, MA
978-422-6217, birdofthehandfarm@gmail.com
www.birdofthehand.com
Farm stand is open Monday-Saturday dawn to 7 p.m. for self-serve. It is a good idea to call ahead for availability or check website. Apples: $2.75/lb, seconds and drops: $1.00/lb. Varieties available: Wealthy, Gravenstein, and McIntosh. Cider available after Sept. 15. Herbs: sage, thyme, lovage, greens, parsley, valerian root, black cohosh root, plants.

Blue Heron Organic Farm
PO Box 67, Lincoln, MA
781-254-3727, farmer@blueheronfarmlincoln.com
www.blueheronfarmlincoln.com
We sell to many Boston area restaurants; please see website (click on ‘Restaurants’) for seasonal availability. The farm stand is open Friday-Sunday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. until Halloween. We are at two Farmers’ Markets a week. Visit website for details.

Bug Hill Farm
502 Bug Hill Road, Ashfield, MA
413-628-3980, kate@bughillfarm.org
www.bughillfarm.org
NEW farm store and commercial farm kitchen with demos now open weekends 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Lots of holiday gift ideas. We ship! Free gift bags and a complimentary bottle of Rhubarb Rush Cordial with every purchase. See our website for what Farmers’ Markets we participate in weekly. Fruit, Flower, and Berry Cordials, Syrups, Fruit Shrubs, Chutneys, Sauces, Dessert Topping, Conserves, and Honey

Heritage Fields
309 Gidney Road, Orange, MA
978-544-3282, rachelscherer@yahoo.com
Open by appointment. 2013 LaMancha kids (does, bucks, or wethers); 2012 yearling does; and frozen chevon. Pastured organic broilers (whole only).

High Meadow Farm
28 High St, Hubbardston, MA
978-928-5646, jassy.bratko@gmail.com
www.highmeadowfarms.com
Farm stand open 9 a.m. to dusk daily. Certified organic apples, 100% grass-fed beef, woodland raised pork, pure maple syrup and honey.

Holiday Brook Farm
100 Holiday Cottage Road, Dalton, MA
413-684-0444, farmers@holidaybrookfarm.com
www.holidaybrookfarm.com
Farm store is open Friday and Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Downtown Pittsfield Farmers’ Market, Saturdays in October. Grass-fed beef, pastured pork, maple syrup.

Many Hands Organic Farm
411 Sheldon Road, Barre, MA
978-355-2853, farm@mhof.net
www.mhof.net
Call ahead to visit. Lard at $20/quart available October 15. Comfrey salve at $6. Garlic powder at $8. Eggs at $6/dozen. All of our animals are pasture raised. 2013 Certified Organic CSA, pork, chicken, and turkey information is on the website. Order now for our October 20 batch of broiler chickens. Some pork cuts still available. Turkeys and beef sold out.
Natick Community Organic Farm
117 Eliot St, Natick, MA
508-655-2204, lsimkins.ncorganic@verizon.net
www.natickfarm.org
Open daily during daylight hours for visits and purchases; Natick Farmers’ Market, Saturdays 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Framingham Farmers’ Market, Thursdays noon to 5 p.m. Meat, cooking greens, salad mix, carrots, potatoes, parsnip, beets, cabbage, herbs, flowers, and wreaths. Pre-order your Thanksgiving turkey online.

Puddingstone Organics
121 Old Center St., Middleborough, MA
508-946-0745, puddingstoneorganics@yahoo.com
No website, but check us out on Facebook.
On your honor shack at farm for eggs and honey. Certified organic, AWA-approved pasture-raised eggs; honey; certified organic broilers by pre-order; vegetables available intermittently.

Red Fire Farm
Granby Farm Stand at 7 Carver St, Granby, MA and Montague Old Depot Gardens Farm Stand at 504 Turners Falls Road, Montague, MA
413-467-7645, thefarmers@redfirefarm.com
www.redfirefarm.com
Farm stands open daily 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Farmers’ Markets at Boston South Station, Tuesdays noon to 6 p.m.; Springfield Forest Park, Tuesdays 12:30 to 6 p.m.; Amherst Kendrick Park on Wednesdays 2 to 6 p.m. Heirloom tomatoes, red slicers, watermelon, peaches, peppers, summer squash, zucchini, pickling and slicing cucumbers, orange carrots, onions, many herbs. Delicious lettuce, kale and collards, swiss chard, Candy-stripe beets, red radishes, green beans, potatoes, garlic. Fresh organic flowers. As we get to October... turnips, winter squash of many types, decorative gourds and more. Plus the stands keep a wide array of local products, like milk, honey, maple syrup, eggs, artisan cheeses, jams, and more. Paste and saucing tomatoes in bulk - visit website to order! Fall CSA memberships available online with hearty shares of greens and storage crops every other week.

Robinson Farm
42 Jackson Road, Hardwick, MA
413-477-6988, info@robinsonfarm.org
www.robinsonfarm.org
Winter Farm Shop hours 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. Check our website for retail locations. Also at the following Farmers’ Market: in Hardwick, Sundays 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.; with Crystal Creek Farm at Copley Square, Tuesdays and Fridays 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; in Marblehead, Saturdays 9 a.m. to noon; and Westborough, Thursdays noon to 6 p.m. Offering our award-winning Farmstead aged cheeses (cow), our grass-fed beef/veal, raw milk, Sidehill Farm yogurt, Westfield Farm goat cheese, Hardwick Sugar Shack maple syrup, High Meadow Farm pork, local honey, jams, crackers, and Real Pickle fermented veggies.

Sidehill Farm
58 Forget Road, Hawley, MA
413-339-0033, info@sidehillfarm.net
www.sidehillfarm.net
Our farm shop is open year-round, seven days a week, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. and you can find us at the Saturday Amherst Farmers’ Market (7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.) Raw Milk, yogurt, beef, and our just-out-of-the-cave Hawley Blue cheese all from our grass-fed cows and available in the farm shop. Come visit! Yogurt and Solar Smoothies at the Amherst Market.

Simple Gifts Farm
1089 North Pleasant St., Amherst, MA
413-549-1585, simplisticfarm@gmail.com
simplegiftscsa.com
Farm stand open dawn to dusk. Amherst Farmers’ Market, Saturdays 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Potatoes, Carrots, Onions, Parsnips, other Root crops, Sweet Potatoes, Greens, Eggs, Pork, Beef Lamb

Small Ones Farm
416 Bay Road, Amherst, MA
413-253-6788, smallonesfarm@att.net
www.smallonesfarm.com
Farm stand is open daily from 9 a.m. to dusk in front of the farmhouse at 416 Bay Road, Amherst. We will be open through the fall. We will have apples, pears, our apple cider, our apple cider vinegar, fall raspberries, and apple pies.

Sweet Autumn Farm
180 Prospect St., Carlisle, MA
978-287-0025, sweetautumnfarmma@gmail.com
Farm Stand open Tuesdays and Thursdays 2 to 6 p.m. Duck and chicken eggs, seedlings.

Turner Farms Maple Syrup
25 Phillips Road, South Egremont, MA
413-528-5710, tfmsyrup@gmail.com
www.turnerfarmsmaplesyrup.com
Open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. 7 days a week. We have 100% pure maple syrup available in sizes ranging from 3.4 oz to 5 gallons. We are now also offering pure honey.
COMMUNITY HAPPENINGS

Events

Farm to School & Farm Based Education In Practice
October 17 - 3:00pm to 5:00pm; Moraine Farm, 735 Cabot St. Beverly, MA

This gathering will introduce attendees to Moraine Farm, a property of The Trustees of Reservations, and the work they do with the Salem and Beverly public schools. This gathering will focus on the audience of farm-based educators, farmers and school food service staff. Attendees will have the opportunity to see how one farm can successfully meet multiple objectives: providing healthy, fresh, local foods to the surrounding schools; providing opportunities for on-farm learning and community engagement; and operating a public access extended season CSA.

Please complete the registration form to secure your spot in this free workshop: http://bit.ly/17c2uj0

Extended Season Production
October 30 - 4:00pm to 6:00pm; 303 Nahanton Street, Newton MA 02459

Extended Season Production at Newton Community Farm with Greg Maslowe and Umass Extension Ruth Hazard. This session will focus on disease and pest identification and management specific to growing under plastic in the winter. Depending on the conditions of our summer hoophouse crops, we may also be able to talk a bit about diseases and pests for those crops as well. While this visit’s primary purpose is to discuss diseases and pests of concern in growing in high tunnels, time permitting we can also discuss other aspects of growing under plastic. Please park on Winchester St and enter the farm via the path next to the farm stand.

The New England Environmental Education Alliance Conference & Sustainable School Summit
November 1-3; Salve Regina University in Newport, RI.

The joint NEEEA Conference and Sustainable Schools Summit will create connections across environmental and educational fields, increasing the ability of students, citizens, and our environment to sustain and thrive in the 21st century.

This regional conference will provide a unique opportunity for cross-sector networking and collaboration to increase environmental literacy and help create and maintain effective, safe and healthy green schools throughout New England.


Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers Growers’ Business School
November 3-4; Rhode Island

Learn how successful growers have managed their businesses, including discussions of their marketing tactics, postharvest processes, and season extension practices.

Cut Flower Conference for all Growers. Sessions on Business Decision Making, Marketing Strategies, Crop Planning and Record Keeping. Tour of Robin Hollow Farm covering fall greenhouse and tunnel production,
major improvements (USDA and EQIP funding), cover crops and soil fertility, and growing systems.


**Beginning Farmer Network of Massachusetts (BFN/Mass) Fall Forum 2013**
November 12, 2013 - 10:00am to 3:00pm
Charlton Public Library - 40 Main Street, Charlton, MA
This networking event will be a chance to meet other farmers, farm service providers, and engaged food system advocates who are concerned with beginning farmers’ livelihoods and success in the Commonwealth. Meet each other, talk about hot-button issues, make action plans, identify gaps in resources, and figure out where we can collaborate to ensure beginning farmer success.


**Announcements**

**Established Organic Farm For Rent**
Established organic farm available for lease with off-the-grid house, barn and greenhouse. Two acres are currently deer-fenced and cultivated (vegs/flowers/fruit, chickens) and eight acre hayfield can be converted to cultivation. Experienced organic farmer on site, available to advise new tenants. Located in the shoreline area of Connecticut at the mouth of the CT River near I-95. $2,000/month, no utility expense. Contact owner directly at 860-575-2387 or hayhouseonline@gmail.com.

**Hawthorne Valley Farm Accepting 2014 Apprentice Applications**
Are you interested in gaining valuable hands-on experience working on a biodynamic farm? We are actively seeking applicants for our 2014 season. We offer eight apprenticeship positions.

The Farm’s focus is both production and education. All apprentices work closely with the farm team to learn the daily rhythms in the various areas of the farm and participate in discussions with the farmers. Hawthorne Valley farm is a diversified, biodynamic farm in upstate New York.

Visit the website at [http://hawthornevalleyfarm.org/apprenticeships](http://hawthornevalleyfarm.org/apprenticeships) to download the Apprentice Handbook and Application. For more information, email the Apprentice Program at apprenticeships@hawthornevalleyfarm.org.

**Organic Farm Top Soil analysis**

The National Soil Project at Northeastern University, Boston has for the first time measured the sequestered carbon contents of 1000+ conventional ag top soils from all 50 US States. This is a measure of soil quality/health. In Phase 2 we will analyze organic farm top soils to see if they sequester more carbon. We need 2 oz air-dry samples. No charge for analysis, results and postage returned to donor on request. Contact g.davies@neu.edu or go to [http://www.neu.edu/hagroup](http://www.neu.edu/hagroup) for more info, and THANKS FOR YOUR HELP! Please spread the word before winter rolls around!
New and Renewing NOFA/Mass Members in June

New and Renewing Members in September:
Frank & Sally Albani Jr.
Nicki Anderson
Michael Armstrong
Alison Ash
Dorothy and Frank Baptista
Christopher Berg
Erika Waly Bourne
Johanna Boynton
Anne Carlson
Derek & Katie Christianson
Marjorie Connelly
Laura Davis and Donald Sutherland
Curtis Dragon
Ted Finch
Gillian Gurish
Benjamin Hellier
Nancy Henry
Pamela Jacobsen
Taylor Kane
Adrienne Kimball
Harry Liggett
Ervin & Gloria Meluleni
Vicki & John Mickola
Ellen Miller
John Mitchell
Edmund and Elizabeth Newton
Cathleen O’Keefe
Luke Pryjma

Bruce Quevillon
Charlie Radoslovich
Kathleen Raftery
Steve and Susan Rice
Joanne S. Sharac
Marcia Shaw
Kailia Star
Terri Steiner
David & Sally Tarara
John Thompson
Trisha Tinker
Allen Young
Caroline Meyer Young
NOFA/Mass Workshops & Events

Managing and Growing a CSA
Saturday, October 19 - 9am to 12pm
Powisset Farm, Dover, MA
Cost: $25 NOFA members; $31 non-members
Powisset Farm grows for 350 summer CSA members, 200 winter CSA members, 55 off-site shares for a partner-farm, an on-site farm stand and weekly donations. There will be a farm tour highlighting our equipment and infrastructure, especially our distribution barn and wash area. We will discuss farm planning, crew management and structure, CSA distribution and community building events, harvest management and post-harvest storage systems. Instructor: Meryl LaTronica

Fat-Soluble Vitamins in Traditional Diets: Nutrient-Dense Animal Foods as the Keys to Vibrant Health
Thursday, October 24 - 9am to 5pm
The Ocean Explorium, New Bedford, MA
Cost: $95 NOFA Member; $119 Non-member
A full day seminar on the role of fat-soluble vitamins (e.g., A, D, and K) in human health. Presentation covers what modern science reveals about why food practices of many non-industrialized cultures have supported vibrant health. Directly relevant to those interested in nutrition for healing, this workshop will show participants how to analyze claims about fats and disease, identify superior sources of fat-soluble vitamins, and assess and amend soils for improved nutrition. Instructor: Chris Masterjohn

Run or Walk with Team NOFA/Mass in Lexington
Sunday, November 3 - 12pm to 1:30pm
Genesis Battlegreen Run, Lexington, MA
NOFA/Mass members, families and friends are coming together for a great cause and you’re invited! Join “TEAM NOFA/MASS: Run for Organic Food for All” at the 18th Annual Genesis Battlegreen Run, a 10k/5k run and 5k walk held on November 3rd.

Farm Profitability: Season Extension and Marketing for the Small Farm
Monday, November 4 - 9am to 5:30pm
Barre Congregational Church, Barre, MA
Cost: $65 NOFA Member; $81 Non-member (if registering by Oct. 21)
Michael Kilpatrick has been farming since he was 16 years old, when he and his brother decided to grow vegetables for the local farmers market to make pocket money for the summer. Since then, the business has grown to include over 100 acres of rented and leased land; sales at three weekly summer and two weekly winter farmers’ markets; summer and winter CSAs with 275 and 150 shares, respectively; year-round production in multiple high tunnels; a summer crew of seven and winter crew of three full time employees. Instructor: Michael Kilpatrick

Sauerkraut and Lacto-fermentation
Sunday, November 10 - 2pm to 4pm
Future Chefs Office & Teaching Kitchen, Boston, MA
Cost: $25 NOFA Member; $31 Non-member
Making sauerkraut and other lacto-fermented products is easier than you think. During this workshop, participants will learn the basics of lacto-fermentation, sample some lacto-fermentation products such as pickles, kimchi, and sauerkraut, and get hands-on experience preparing their own cabbage for lacto-fermentation. At the end of the workshop, participants will leave with their own jar of cabbage that will transform into sauerkraut on their counter through the magic of lacto-fermentation in a few short weeks. Registration includes samples, cabbage, and ingredients for preparing sauerkraut. Please bring your own quart or half-gallon canning jar and lid. Instructor: Kimi Ceridon

Check our website for new workshops and updated details: http://www.nofamass.org/events
Thank you to 2013 Appeal donors in March

NOFA/ Massachusetts
411 Sheldon Road
Barre, MA 01005