

Organic Network Call Notes February 2, 2006

Jim Riddle: Host

Meg Moynihan: Substitute scribe

Attendees: Jim Riddle, Meg Moynihan, Hans Kandel, Bill Wilcke, Bud Markhart, Paul Porter, Milt Haar, Pauline Nickel, LaMoine Nickel, DeEtta Bilek, Carmen Fernholz, Helene Murray, Matt Harbur

ROUND ROBIN

Jim – Carmen and Jim have oriented for their new jobs at the SWROC in Lamberton. Jim described a new website www.organicecology.umn.edu that will be “unveiled” at Upper Midwest Conference in LaCrosse. Goal: site will be premier organic web site for UMN and highlight past and ongoing work from Campus, ROCs, student farm, etc. Jim is manager/gatekeeper, so UMN people get info posted through him. Other certification/standards info will be located there as well as a calendar, links, etc.

Jim also working on IFOAM livestock conf. Aug 23-25. Venue will be at the UMN Continuing Education center on St Paul campus. Will be serving organic food. Will circulate announcement and call for papers – would like Network members to share broadly.

Jim reports SE chapter of SFA is having annual event in St. Charles this weekend. Fred Kirschenmann is speaking. Winona Co Econ Dev Authority is organizing local foods forum/expo on March 10. All day event featuring local and organic. Ken Meter will speak. Also County administrator from Woodbury Co IA (famous for the tax credit for organic farms and spending county \$ on local food.)

Hans reported Lake Agassiz Sustainable Farming Assn. and UMN Extension annual event is coming to Red Lake Falls March 16. Is farmer-driven program and Hans has already posted the agenda to the listserv. Also recently published booklet called “On-Farm Cropping Trials for NW and WC Minnesota”, which includes a number of organic topics – flax and wheat variety trials and bio control/soybean. Contact Hans for a copy.

Helene – College of Agriculture..., College of Natural Resources, and parts of the College of Food Sci/Nutrition are all merging. There will be a national search for new dean -- Chuck Muscoplat is going to become full time vice president for agricultural policy, so is not a contender for dean of this new college. Nor is the current dean of Nat Resources.

Minnesota Farm Bureau and about 20 other commodity groups released new report on state of research at UMN at www.mnfb.org In it, they express dissatisfaction with UMN research agenda and propose increased time and commitment to production agriculture. The College has released statement positing that of the information in the report is inaccurate and disagreeing with the conclusions. Helene will post link to listserv.

Bud – Bud’s international experiences class has 15-17 students so far. If anyone interested in just trip part to Iceland and Germany, let Bud know. Class has drawn from across academic disciplines and colleges. Student organic farm may add high tunnel, season-extending hoop houses and are looking for a donation. Bud will also teach 2 organic horticulture short courses soon in Chanhassen and in Chisago Co. The folks who invited him say they getting the most public requests for organic gardening --evidence of mainstreaming of organics. Currently, Master Gardeners do not receive much organic training. Bud has discussed lack of organic content with the program coordinators content. Maybe new curriculum and training are a SARE-Professional Development Program grant-worthy? Bud thinks core course needs to be reworked and perhaps special sessions could be included at their annual conference.

Paul – 10 or 11 students enrolled in student organic farm course. Courtney Tchida is again the excellent TA. Happy w/ that enrollment, but would like more. Next week on Feb 10-11 Northern Plains Sustainable Ag Society annual winter conference. Winona LaDuke and Nina Leopold Bradley (an Aldo Leopold relative) are keynoting.

Bill – nothing new to report that the rest of us don't already know.

Milt – already planning for the SW Research and Outreach center field day this summer. It will include organic topics. Is also planning organic experiments on weed competition in soybean, alternative crops, etc.

Pauline: There will probably be a stand alone organic field day at SWROC, but organic topics will also be included in the “big” Lamberton field day. Have been working for the last year collecting and synthesizing research data from prior organic studies – will go on web page.

LaMoine - waiting to be told what experiments are on deck so he knows what he'll be up to this season.

Carmen - says there seems to be growing interest in poultry again (Meg interjected with information about a new *Poultry Your Way* book available from MDA, MISA and others).. Vis a vis research: is undertaking a review of research that has been done and thinking about future plans for the acreage. Is getting calls from individual producers – overall interest in organic but especially in livestock – meat – seems to be coming on quickly. Need to be on top of that for near future.

Working on \$600K Risk Mgmt organic research grant - have a committee of producers and researchers formulating research questions. Trying to understand scenarios and situations that a risk mgmt tool could best address. Tools to help existing and traditional farmers make rotation decisions (factoring in type of farm, livestock or no, location in state...)

Matt – is summarizing research that has gone on at SWROC previously. Hope to have summary ready w/in 6 weeks. Publication plans: Canada thistle research for *Weed Science*. VICMS study for *Agronomy Journal*. Cover crops in *Crop Science*.

DeEtta – OCIA MN #1 was at organic conference – pleased w/ turnout and interest. Lots of trade show traffic. Did crop insurance session about the proposed AGR-Lite program (especially appropriate for organic and specialty crops. Current crop ins options for organic farmers require higher premium but use conventional prices if claim is made.) Final AGR-Lite application is being worked on by Bob Craven and staff at CFFM. In order to complete that, need funds to prepare the application – collecting actuarial data, etc. . OCIA chapter #1 is trying to find. Have \$5K and need \$7,500 more. Earliest AGR-Lite would be available is 2007 if application is approved. UMN Gary Hachfeld and Kent Olson have RMA funding to do multiple sessions about AGR-Lite. A flyer is appended to these minutes.

OCIA's certification/education committee has been talking about sugar beet lime. OCIA has International has approved its use but NOP standard does not. Robin Brekken will be preparing petition to NOSB requesting approval for use. DeEtta stated Red River Valley Needs it because Mg is high and Ca is low.

Minnesota and Wisconsin OCIA chapters are co-hosting OCIA international meeting in LaCrosse later this month prior to UMOFC. OCIA's newsletter event schedule – appended to these minutes.

Buckwheat growers are OCIA certified and had annual inspection last week. Are hearing from many people requesting more info and help on how to get certified organic. Have one person especially viable for dairy.

Meg -- reported higher-than-ever Minnesota Organic Conference attendance and popularity of farmer led and/or taught sessions. Lots of first timers at the conference. Will have more info available for discussion after summarized by student worker.

MDA has been having internal discussions about organic dairy and how to assist interested producers.

The Organic Advisory Task Force met on January 19. Its next two meetings will be spent discussing recommendations to the commissioner vis-à-vis Minnesota's input on the Farm Bill and possible organic initiatives for the next MN legislative session. Meg urged Network members to contact any OATF members with comments or suggestions. The OATF members are listed at <http://www.mda.state.mn.us/esap/organic/oatf/default.htm>

Carmen commented that OATF member Glenn Schafer (FSA) has been a great addition. Has been really helpful w/ field pea issue (do they or do they not affect a producer's base). Getting connected to organic and sharing info w/ county level info.

DISCUSSION

Meg described a new MDA project to create a directory of certified organic farmer directory . RMA is funding it. It should be useful to buyers looking to purchase organic crops/livestock, farmers who want to increase visibility of their products, and farmers who want to get a better idea of what others in their are (and are not) growing. Hopes to have survey out by early March. members suggested some new crop and livestock categories, recommended including vegetables, fruits and landscape/bedding plants.

Positive feedback to Organic Network Page SFA. Jim wants to nail down a mission statement.

Next call on March 2. Host: Carmen Fernholz Scribe: Matt Harbur

AGR-Lite

Federal Crop Insurance for Organic and/or Alternative-Specialty Crop Producers – Available in Minnesota for 2007

This is a partial list of sessions to be held across Minnesota in the next few months, with support from RMA. Presenters are from the U of M Extension.

Gary Hachfeld -- hachf002@umn.edu (507) 389-6722

Bill Craig -- craig030@umn.edu (218) 281-8692

Tuesday, February 14, 2006

9:00 AM Registration

9:30 - 11:00 AGR-Lite Session

Best Western, Thief River Falls

Sponsored by Farm Credit Services Contact:

Jim Reinbold (218) 681-2304

jim.reinbold@farmcredit.com

Tuesday, February 14, 2006

1:00 PM Registration

1:30 - 3:00 AGR-Lite Session

Northland Inn, Crookston

Sponsored by Farm Credit Services Contact:

Jim Reinbold (218) 681-2304

jim.reinbold@farmcredit.com

Friday, March 3, 2006

9:00 AM Registration

9:30 - 11:00 AGR-Lite Session

Wadena County Courthouse

415 So Jefferson St. (Hwy 71), Wadena

Sponsored by Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA) MN #1 – an organic certification agency.

Contact: DeEtta Bilek

deebilek@wcta.net (218) 445-5475

Thursday, March 9, 2006

9:00 AM Registration

9:30 - 11:00 AGR-Lite Session

Regional Extension Center Conference Rm

Morris MN

Contact: Mary Jo Forbord, SFA of MN

Tuesday, March 21, 2006

9:00 AM Registration

9:30 - 11:00 AGR-Lite Session

SW ROC – Lamberton

Bringing AGR-Lite to Minnesota is a group effort by OCIA MN #1, U of M, MDA, Farm Credit Services, and MFVGA. Other interested groups are invited to participate.

Contact: DeEtta Bilek – 20415 Co Rd 2, Aldrich MN 56434 -- deebilek@wcta.net -- (218) 445-5475

Sponsored by U of M Extension

Contact: Gary Hachfeld -- hachf002@umn.edu
(507) 389-6722

Tuesday, March 28, 2006

9:00 AM Registration

9:30 - 11:00 AGR-Lite Session

**Regional Extension Office-Rm HC228
Rochester MN**

Sponsored by U of M Extension

Contact: Gary Hachfeld -- hachf002@umn.edu
(507) 389-6722

Thursday, March 30, 2006

4:30-6:00 PM AGR-Lite Session

County Extension Office, Waseca MN

Contact: Marilyn Johnson MFVGA

MFVGA@worldnet.att.net

(763) 434-0400

Session yet to be scheduled in Duluth





Thursday & Friday, February 2nd & 3rd – MN Fruit and Vegetable Conference at the St. Cloud Civic Center
http://www.mfvga.org/education_umrgvvc.shtml info@mfvga.org (763) 434-0400

Saturday, February 4th – SFA of Central MN – Browerville Community Center / Contact Jim Chamberlain
(218) 764-3020 or islandlakefarm@brainerd.net

Saturday, February 4th – SFA of SE MN – Contact Edgar Hansgen (507) 932-4219

Friday & Saturday, February 10th & 11th - Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society Winter Conference -
Doublewood Inn, Fargo, ND Keynote speaker: Winona LaDuke (701)883-4304 or lnpsas@drtel.net

Saturday, February 11th – SFA of Cannon River/Hiwatha Valley – First United Church of Christ, 300 Union Street,
Northfield – Contact Kathy Zeman (507) 789-6375 kzeman@cannon.net

Saturday, February 11th – SFA of Coteau Ridge – Pizza Ranch, Tyler – Contact Bob Schelhaas (507) 442-8493
bolischl@frontiernet.net

Wednesday, & Thursday, February 15th & 16th - International Crop Expo – Alerus Center,
Grand Forks, ND <http://www.cropexpo.com/>

Saturday, February 18th – SFA of MN Annual Meeting at St. Francis Center, Little Falls MN
<http://www.sfa-mn.org> (320) 760-8732

Sunday-Thursday, February 20th -23rd – OCIA Intl Annual Membership Meeting (AGMM) LaCrosse, WI

Thursday, February 23rd – Organic University – LaCrosse, WI www.mosesorganic.org

Friday & Saturday, February 24th & 25th – Upper Midwest Organic Conference-LaCrosse WI
info@mosesorganic.org (715) 772-3153 www.mosesorganic.org

March 11th – SFA of SC – First Baptist Church in Clarks Grove MN – Contact Julie Ackland
(507) 826-3358 ackland@deskmedia.com

Thursday, March 16th – (8 am – 4 pm) Annual Education Meeting – Red Lake Falls City Hall. Sponsored by Lake
Agassiz Chapter of the Sustainable Farming Association, U of M Extension and OCIA MN #1. Contact Bill
Langlois (218) 281-6881

Saturday, March 18th – Buckwheat Growers Assn of Minnesota Annual Meeting
Program at 1:30 pm – Ted & Gen's, Hwy 10, Aldrich MN Contact Tom Bilek (218) 445-5475

March 21st – 23rd – Midwest Poultry Federation Convention – River Centre, St. Paul, MN
www.midwestpoultry.com (763) 682-2171 nicole@midwestpoultry.com

August 1-2, 2006 – FarmFest 2006 – Gilfillan Estate, Redwood County, MN
OCIA MN #1 will exhibit at this show this year.

August 15th – 17th - North Central Region SARE Conference - Oconomowoc, WI
<http://www.sare.org> outreach@sare.org (614) 306-6422

August 23rd – 25th – IFOAM Organic Livestock Research Symposium at U of M – Audience-those involved in
research of organic livestock. Contact Jim Riddle (507) 454-8310 jriddle@hbc.com