

June 1, 2006 – Organic Network

Those present: Jim Riddle, DeEtta Bilek, Helene Murray, Hans Kandel, Carmen Fernholz, Jeremy Lanctot, Paul Porter and Pauline Nichols

Host - Jim Riddle

Scribe – DeEtta Bilek

Round Robin

Hans Kandel

Weather is fantastic. Crops look really good. Organic growers had a little late start, but going good now.

Pembina RC&D has funds for training on organics. We have usually had a bus tour. Initial phases of planning this year's event sometime beginning of July, with help from these funds.

Jeremy Lanctot

Working with dairy farms – goats and organic. Due to price differential, more producers are interested in transitioning to organic, primarily in NW and SW part of the state. Farm tour at Donnay's certified organic goat farm Saturday, June 3rd. Seems to be a need to strengthen and expand the support network for organic dairy cows and dairy goats. Some new resources to share with dairy producers: MOSES Organic Dairy book, MDA Dairy Your Way and ATTRA Pubs. Need more people to actually help farmers fill out the certification application forms. Organic Valley and Horizon have staff now to help farmers. Putting together a statewide network of regions with experienced producers to further address the needs. Contacts from MN Dairy Initiative (MDI) Tim Dolan and Merri Post. Bob Koehler knows them both. Jim Riddle talked about how there could be an addition (producer meeting with dairy buyers) to the IFOAM conference to help address this concern. Carmen asked about Midwest Organic Dairy Producers Assn. (MODPA). Jim said this is modeled after the NE association. Bob Mueller is on this board.

Helene Murray

On the search committee for the new Dean – The timeline: telephone interviews, by Sept 3-5 candidates to interview.

Paul Porter

Student Farm (Courtney Tschida) – students are working/ will be at the Farmer's market. All are invited to stop by. It is enjoyable. Jim R. asked to add a tour of the farm to the IFOAM conference. Paul said ok. Jim R. asked if there will be any food available for the conference. Paul said might be some items ready. Jim R. asked if students would be able to help with the conference. Helene suggested a list of specific tasks.

Pauline Nichols

Organic Field Day – June 28th – has an excellent agenda.

Carmen Fernholz

Plans for field day – Ken Meter and Jerry DeWitt will be the keynote speakers.

The day starts with a continental breakfast followed by one tour with Debra Allen, Craig Shaeffer, Don Wyse, Jim Orf, Matt Harbor, & Bud M.

11 a.m. - Ken Meter

Exhibitors have some time over lunch to be introduced and describe the services they provide.

Jim Riddle and Carmen will be presenting their work with outreach and research.

2 p.m. – Jerry Dewitt making the connection with researcher and producer.

3 p.m. – Prairie tour or continue round table discussion on issues related to organic.

On June 29th the Minnesota Project has a meeting at Lamberton to discuss conservation planning. Carmen will present on organic.

Carmen has research projects on the farm and at Lamberton.

DeEtta Bilek Bounty

For OCIA MN #1 prepare an event schedule and will send to organic network.

I forwarded a note from Bob Craven about the AGR-Lite Focus Group sessions coming up June 6th – 8th. The link to the info sheet and sign-up is

<http://www.cffm.umn.edu/pubs/AGR-LiteFocusGroupSessions.pdf> -- I will send some further information about the program.

Jim Riddle

Yesterday Rep. Gutknecht held a field hearing in Winona on dairy policy issues. He chairs the House Subcommittee on Dairy, Nutrition, and UDSA. Focus was on large-scale production. One mention of organic from Dr. Robert Cropp, UW, who talked about the organic price – minimum \$22/cwt. They are taking written testimony for 30 days from the hearing.

Is spending huge amount of time for the IFOAM conference. The schedule should be complete today and get it out and on the website. MDA has \$2,000 to help support the farm tours. They have a live band (The Peromones) secured for Thursday evening.

Register early, online at:

http://www.ifoam.org/events/ifoam_conferences/IFOAM_Animal_Production_Conference.html

Organic Advisory Task Force had a conference call last week. Regarding rule-making on pasture for ruminants – comments due June 12th. They have asked the Commissioner to submit comments from MDA, based on draft comments from the Task Force. Next OATF meeting is June 27th at Lamberton. Mitigation plans for organic farms will be discussed.

There are items being added to the organicecology website regarding research projects, organic field day, and the IFOAM conference.

New Agriculture Network <http://www.new-ag.msu.edu/> - There is an opportunity for MN to be involved. On the call there are researchers and producers from IN, MI and IL. Focus on field crops and horticulture. They have a SARE grant. Jim R. is willing to be the MN contact and be on the conference calls. Carmen has also joined. Researchers and producers from Minnesota can share their data (write their own or interview with a writer) through Jim R. to this network. Jim R. and Hans K. will gather ideas at the summer field day.

Next call: 8:30 a.m., Thursday, July 6th (tentative)

Host: Carmen Fernholz

Scribe: Milt

NO CALL IN AUGUST.

Notes by DeEtta Bilek....