

Organic Network Conference Call Notes  
November 1, 2007

Present: Jim Riddle, Bud Markhart, Paul Porter, Helene Murray, Harriet Behar, Bill Wilcke, Pauline Nickel, Milt Haar, Mary Jo Forbord, Teresa Cuperus, Derek Crompton, John Beckwith (scribe)

Jim: welcomed everyone to the teleconference as host, and suggested round robin update begin.

Pauline: Pleased for gift from Organic Valley. They have met and discussed research project. Susan Anderson was involved in discussion of organic education program development for K-12 students. She is involved in training at 10 institutions of higher learning on incorporating organic agriculture into lesson development. She is looking for opportunity to incorporate more on the topics of soil and soil quality. *Any related educational materials would be welcome for consideration.*

Milt: Harvest nearly complete. Organic beans running 30-35 bu/ac on average. Some cover crops have been planted for no-till research next year. He looked over some of the areas where cover crop had been inter-seeded into soybeans. Results were interesting and he will share pictures. He also attended a grant writing session with some others on call.

Bill: Has been to Washington DC for SARE meeting. Shared that Ed Shafer had been nominated Secretary of Agriculture. "As prior governor of ND, he worked to open new markets for North Dakota farmers and ranchers by expanding trade with China. He oversaw the development of the state's agricultural biofuels industry. He helped families recover from natural disasters -- including drought, fires and floods. And he pioneered innovative programs to increase economic opportunity in rural communities."

John: EQIP sign up is underway with hopes of funds being available as early as November. Organic transition included the same as other recent years.

Paul: Research proposal (SARE R&E) being developed for cover crops. He will be attending the upcoming Agronomy Symposium.

Helene: She is on the Agriculture Strategic Planning Committee for the College and experiment stations. A consultant has been hired to look at animal agriculture research, current and future. Organic livestock agriculture will be a part of the study. Mike Schmidt is the faculty lead on the project. Optimistic about the process and anticipated products.

Bud: With all the discussion so far on cover crop research, Bud reminded us to keep vegetables in mind. (it was stated that there are 6 – 8 included in current plans) The student farm is interested in this topic as well. Shared information on us of mustard as a cover crop with benefits as fungicide. Bud is meeting with city Co-ops with interest in grown extended season crops, in regard to potential financial assistance. Also discussed

interest of MN Landscape Arboretum in using the “signature red barn” area as part of a demonstration farm. They are looking for farmer input to the planning process so *any suggestions could go to Bud.*

Teresa Cuperus: Teresa is with the MN Food Association, new to the network calls. She provided some background on herself and interest in organic agriculture. Also provided some information on the MN Food Association. Current projects have focus on CSA, immigrant farmers and marketing in the larger Twin Cities Area. Their CSA is managed organically, but not certified. They are considering becoming certified.

Harriet: She will be providing training in Caledonia on Dec. 12<sup>th</sup>. During attendance at Farm Fest this year, she saw a need/opportunity for a “sustainable agriculture” tent. Activities could include speakers on organic food, educational display, etc. She is also working toward the MOSES conference which will be held simultaneously with the Organic Research Conference this coming year.

Mary Jo: She is a member of a nutrition organization that is experiencing phenomenal growth and is very active across the country. The nutrition community has great interest in organic products, which was demonstrated at an expo she recently attended. She continues to work toward a changed position paper of the dietician association regarding organic foods. Also, she attended the 1<sup>st</sup> Youth Summit at Iowa State University last week. Local and regional organic production was supported at this conference. On February 1-2 there will be a follow-up to the Youth Summit held at Gustavus Adolphus. Organic Dairy 101 will be held in 4 locations in MN and 3 WI locations. This training is sponsored by NC SARE grant and intended for professionals assisting organic dairy farmers.

Derrick: Extension educator in Roseau, MN. His position is currently funded for canola research and grass grower research. Has a strong history of working in organic agriculture.

Jim: An oil-farm oil pressing demonstration is being sought for the July 10, 2008 field day at Lamberton. Organic Valley gift of \$50,000 is greatly appreciated. It has helped things fall in place for MN to very probably work with Rodale and 7 land grant universities throughout the country in development of some practice standards for organic farming. It is also making possible the purchase of some needed machinery. The cover crop – no till research is fully engaged. Jim will be presenting at the ASA meeting next week. He also encouraged comments be made on the NOSB website on proposed changes effecting research facilities, group certifications, aquaculture and other topics. The organic ecology website is still down.

Next meeting: Thursday, December 6, 2007, 8:30-9:30 a.m.

Host: Gigi DiGiacomo

Scribe: Paul Porter

