Meeting was called to order at 10:15 am.

Welcome, introductions

Present: Tricia Bross, Chris Malek, Rich Lange, Mike Schulist, Dave Engel, Bob Wills, Jim Munsch, Jerry McGeorge, Harriet Behar, Bonnie Wideman, Christine Mason, Margaret Bert-Mittlestadt


Agenda review: no changes

Minutes approval. Motion to approve Christine/Bonnie. Motion passed.

Set meeting dates for next meetings
December 3, January 28 (Feb.4), March 18 (Mar 25)

Input and discussion of Organic Cost Share program
- Discussion was held regarding the new Farm Bill organic cost share program. New funding is available.
- Laura gave a report on the program to date:
  - Wisconsin's prior cost-share funding:
    - Wisconsin's prior cost-share funding:
      - Year | Total Amount | # of Recipients | Average Payment | Payment Dates
      - 2004  | $119,099.42  | 357             | $333.61         | 5/04 - 2/05
      - 2005  | $147,025.18  | 427             | $344.32         | 11/04 – 12/05

  - Based on our records. All applicants received a check in the first year and seven were denied payment in the second year (but for reasons other than lack of funds).
  - In 2005, we had a total of 454 applicants (64%) out of a total of 712 certified farms and handlers (NOP data).
    - 27 applicants were not paid due to lack of funds.
    - 37 recipients at the cap of $500. Their actual certification costs averaged $987.
    - Only 5% of the total applicants were handlers and processors (total of 21). They make up 21% of the current certified entities in the state.

  - Current funding: Wisconsin has received an allocation of $285,000 for the 2009 fiscal year. With 10% going toward administrative costs, we’ll have $256,500 to pay out as cost share. This year, the cap is increased to $750 per farm.

Agriculture generates $51.5 billion for Wisconsin

2811 Agriculture Drive • PO Box 8911 • Madison, WI 53708-8911 • 608-224-5012 • Wisconsin.gov
Current need. According to records from NOP, as of the end of 2007, we had 1161 certified farms and handlers (918 farms, 243 handlers). In the unlikely event that there were no increase in certification costs, and a similar percentage of participants applied, we’d come out ok: 64% of 1161 = 743 applicants x $344 = $255,605.

The agreement we signed runs from October 1, 2008 through September 30, 2009, although we’ve been told that these dates were in error and the legislation allows for all 2008 certification costs to be eligible. We are told that USDA is preparing amended contracts to reflect these changes.

Funding for future years is authorized, but has to be appropriated each year.

Assuming that the funding we’ve been give will be inadequate to cover demand, the council discussed possible options for equitably distributing the limited funds. The question was asked: Do we have to go up to the cap of $750?

Jim’s suggestion: Two ways: one is to have a cut off date wait till all apps. are in and divide the $ evenly. Other way is to have a cut off date and do a waited average (individual request/all requests x total amount of money available).

Does the program cover user fees in addition to certification costs? We can do this, but we don’t have the money to cover the whole thing. Tricia pointed out that including user fees benefits large producers much more than small ones. Perry stated that it would cause a lot of administrative challenges to include user fees and that’s why WI chose not to do so in the past.

Does DATCP need documentation from each producer or processor? Can DATCP just send out a check to each associate based on certifier lists? Do people need to apply? Yes, the contract makes it clear that the individual farmer or processor must apply. We cannot simply pay out cost-share based on certifier lists.

Documentation: for past programs, we asked for an application form and an invoice. The certificates (proof of certification), don’t always come out within the time frame of the program, so we also went back and checked with certifiers on each application to verify that each is certified.

Needed for application: application form, invoice/statement showing payment, w-9, Certificate or letter of user in good standing.

Can we do a flat payment? We think we can, based on how the contract reads, but several people thought it would be fairer if we pro-rated based on the total amount of their certification costs. [note from Laura: I’ve since learned that we cannot do a flat payment or pro-rate]

The issue with user fees is that some certifiers use them and some don’t. So, while total certification costs are similar among certifiers, for some, a higher proportion of the cost comes from user fee than others. MOSA and OCIA work with user fees. QAI is mostly flat fee. Most certifiers include user fees. So if we exclude user fees, the program will not be equitable across certifiers.

Bonnie: would like to have user fees accounted for. Perhaps we can ask certifiers for an invoice/statement with proof of payment after the calendar year is over that accounts for the certification fee and user fees for the year.

First come first served—previously, we did it this way, but there is a fairness issue. It was done this way because we had quarterly quotas for spending.

Recommendations:

Ideas for timing of announcement
Can we have applications available at the Organic conference?
Farm tax returns are due March 1—that would be good timing for the program, because participants would have their paperwork together for tax purposes.

MOSA sends out a statement to each client in early January that would work for our purposes. Dave Engel thought this could be done by other certifiers as well. Then all eligible participants would have the needed documents at hand.

General goals, How to fairly distribute the funds
Weighted average or flat amount? What do we want to promote with this program? Council members agreed that we’d like to favor beginners, give them a bigger proportion of their fee back or something. A flat fee favors smaller farms. The Council voted on two options: Weighted average got 0 votes, Flat fee got 12 votes.

The council agreed that we should have a deadline, toward the end of the year, and give everyone an equal chance to get their application in, regardless of when during the year their certification is due.

11:30 Committee reports and review of committee structure and expectations

Several committees have responsibilities involving developing recommendations and/or responding to policy issues. Discussion was held regarding how the council should communicate within itself to decide how to respond when such issues come up.

Three alternatives for getting the Council’s position to appropriate elected officials and agency administrators:
1) individuals within the council contact their own elected officials or agency reps,
2) a letter can be sent from the council collectively (this would have to be approved by the Secretary’s office),
3) the council can provide a recommendation to the Secretary to send a letter.

Process: any individual involved in the Council (both Council members and Agency personnel) can identify issues. They should share them with the rest of the council (via email). Issue should go through the NOP committee for formulation of a position and development of a letter or position paper. Harriet will be the interim chair of the NOP committee.

Carla would like the interagency team to meet periodically as a separate group. She acknowledged DATCP’s original intent for the agencies to meet separately to move the agenda of the council forward through our agencies, but is pleased that additional separate meetings are not necessary. Perry gave some historical context about the Interagency team.

Discussion was held on the process by which committees can develop plans and obtain funding. Perry stated that small amounts of money, e.g. a few hundred dollars for printing or mailings are fairly easy to do, but larger amounts are difficult. Laura suggested that committees could develop proposals that describe the projects they plan to do, with budgets. Then the proposals can be shared with all of the agencies and funding might be available from one or more agency through existing budgets. Larger amounts of funds could be sought through grants, or through council partnerships with state or federal legislators.

Laura suggested that the Council could invite someone from the Buy Local Coalition which successfully worked with the Wisconsin Legislature to obtain funding for their project.

12:45 Farm Bill update (Pat Murphy and Harriet Behar)
EQIP funding and practices/state technical committee report
Timeline for public comments on organic provisions

Pat reported that the farm bill rules are still being worked on, but he’s expecting the rule making to be completed soon and we should be prepared to review rules and make comments.

Pat shared that, overall, the new farm bill is a change in direction away from such a strong emphasis on commodity programs and conventional clientele, and to bring in more conservation practices and non-
traditional farmers. Pat suggests that this is a good time for the public to weigh in on their views on how the EQIP program could be retargeted.

Discussion was held with regard to the EQIP program, what organic practices are cost-share-able, and how Wisconsin utilizes its funds.

Cost shareable practices that will be available include organic transition, new use of cover cropping, habitat for native pollinators, etc.

CREP is part of the CRP program. CREP allows farmers to get cost-sharing for grassed waterways, filter strips, buffer strips, etc. This is also a set of practices that organic farmers can take advantage of.

Harriet said that there is now a maximum of $20,000 per year per farmer up to $80,000 for transition to organic on an acreage basis. This is tied to a technical assistance requirement.

Jim: nutrient management planning is a state requirement. For organic farmers this will mean that they will have to do a plan. This will probably encourage many farmers who aren’t grazing to graze more, and maybe EQIP will come into play to support their conversion.

One issue that Pat described is that NRCS programs don’t recognize the ion balance approach to nutrient management, so that the nutrient management standard doesn’t allow organic farmers who use this method to use their program.

Another issue that is of concern to several State Technical Committee members is targeting of the EQIP money: USDA mandates that 60% goes to livestock farms, and at least 25% comes off the top to fund ‘ag waste management’ systems. NRCS is funding 95-100% of applications. Non-permitted farms up to 1000 animal units are eligible for this manure storage funding. Permitted farms of over 1000 animal units are eligible as well if manure storage is not a specific requirement of their permit or they are in violation of the law. If a farm is being required to comply with the clean water regulations, they have to offer them money.

The question that Harriet posed is that, if there are a lot of new practices (that may benefit organic farmers), it would be beneficial to have as much money as possible available for local committees to use for these new and existing low cost practices. Val mentioned that GrassWorks is going to draft a letter to request that NRCS reduce the amount the take off the top to pay for manure storage.

Val asked if the council is interested in signing on to the GrassWorks letter. The council decided that they’d like to see the letter and distribute it among our members. The council may want to develop their own letter, based on our closer relationships with DATCP, and some of the member organizations of the council may wish to sign on to it independently.

Recommendations:

Ultimately, it is at the county level where priorities for EQIP funds are determined. Harriet suggested that council members approach their local county working groups to encourage them to prioritize low cost, sustainable practices, and make sure that organic transition is one of the cost-shareable items.

Pat can tell council members who their district conservationist is and get them involved in their county committees.

Pat, Harriet, or anyone else who hears about the comment period being announced should email Laura, who will get the information out to the rest of the council. The government relations and legislative affairs will take this up.

1:30 National Sustainable Ag Standard Development (Jed Colquhoun)
Jed Colquhoun described the history of the national ag standard effort. He stated that this has come out of the proliferation of sustainability certifications. The number of retailers and other organizations that are requiring either their own certification or some other one has grown and there is confusion among consumers as to what the certifications mean. Some companies have their own standards, others are using third party ones. There have developed several groups who want to simplify this whole situation. Scientific Certification Systems (a private certification company), and the Keystone Center are two groups that are developing broad sustainable ag standards that they hope to have the ag community agree on.

The Keystone group’s goal is to have the tool work on a grower by grower basis (incorporate information on participants, etc.). They’re trying to paint with a very broad brush. They’re trying to develop a standard that will work for a cotton grower in Georgia and a carrot grower in Wisconsin. Their process so far has been to start with measures that are feasible in the broad context that they’re working in and they’ve set aside some items that are more difficult to reconcile among diverse farm types and geographical areas. Several Council members questioned whether they would end up with something that has little meaning because it is so broad.

Scientific Certification Systems is a for-profit, independent certification company. They developed a program ‘veriflora’ for cut flowers and their sustainable ag standard is based on it. The goal is to have the Leonardo Group administer the draft standard and have ANSI certifies the standard, and SCS certify the farms. They have 8 elements. They met at the Leonardo Academy in Madison in September and the group ended up scrapping everything they’ve worked on to date, because of concerns from USDA and ANSI. The draft standard is on the web at: [http://www.leonardoacademy.org/](http://www.leonardoacademy.org/) (scroll down to “Sustainable Ag Practice Standard” link). Here are the 8 elements:

**ELEMENT 1: SUSTAINABLE CROP PRODUCTION**
**ELEMENT 2: ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION**
**ELEMENT 3: RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY**
**ELEMENT 4: INTEGRATED WASTE MANAGEMENT**
**ELEMENT 5: FAIR LABOR PRACTICES**
**ELEMENT 6: COMMUNITY BENEFITS**
**ELEMENT 7: PRODUCT QUALITY**
**ELEMENT 8: PRODUCT SAFETY AND PURITY**

Bob and Jim suggested that the groups are so broad and diverse that nothing that they came up with would have much meaning. Jed mentioned that the fact that 90% of soybeans are GMO and would not qualify if the standard had a GMO prohibition. Bob said that all that means is that 90% of soybeans are not sustainable. If everyone qualifies for it, it no longer has any meaning.

Discussion was held as to whether this effort would undermine organic—will it end up being too similar? Why not just support organics more strongly? Bob pointed out that there are things that people care about that aren’t covered by organic, e.g. fair trade, some environmental issues, etc.

Jim: maybe organic shouldn’t be associated directly with sustainable. There shouldn’t be confusion between the two. The organic community hasn’t defined sustainability.

None of the standards take into account economic sustainability, or social sustainability. Question: will consumers pay more for sustainable foods, and if so, will that premium be passed on to the farmer. Jed calculated that the cost of complying with a sustainable standard will cost the farmer more than the potential premium that might come.

Bob: the cheese industry has gone through this with their buyers and his small group has developed its own standard. Jed said that, while these groups have encountered obstacles, their efforts are continuing as are several other more targeted projects, with specific industries and sectors starting their own programs.

Margaret: is the problem with these efforts that they are top down, rather than bottom up? Jed: there are few farmers or other non-industry reps involved.
The discussion ended with no specific recommendation for the Council to act on what they’ve learned at this time.

2:15 Agency reports

**DNR (Carla Wright):**
- DNR has been heavily involved with the gov’s task force on global warming. Should kick off a lot of discussion on biofuels, bioeconomy, renewable energy. Should be a significant part of the governor’s budget this next time.
- Dnr and datcp will be meeting together over the next months to deal with emerald ash borer, disposal of pharmaceuticals and agricultural plastics, and a few other issues.
- The national organic action plan summit is being planned to be held two days prior to the organic farming conference in LaCrosse (being organized by National Organic Coalition).

**Tech colleges (Val Adamski for Don Jaworski)**

contact: Valerie.dantoin@nwtc.edu or by phone at 920-498-5568

The advisory committee for the program will meet in Mid-November. Contact with potential committee members has started. The first offerings from the program may be available as early as June of 2009.

**OSAFE (Organic-Sustainable Agriculture & Food Education)(draft name)**

Goals:
1. Increase the amount of organic & sustainable farming in northeast Wisconsin.
2. Establish NWTC as a regional resource center in organic farming.
3. Assist community efforts to create a sustainable, local organic food system.

Other activities:
- The DACUM process in which working organic farmers define their occupation and contribute to Developing A CURriculum will take place Oct 26-28th.
- Valerie will attend the CIAS higher education program in Madison on Oct 31st, Nov 1.

**Farm Service Agency**

Ray Ellenburger represented Russ Raeder, who was unable to attend the meeting. Ray stated that the agency is gearing up to implement the new farm bill.

**Natural Resources Conservation Service**

Pat summarized his report, focused on EQIP. His report provides a graph of funding levels of EQIP into the state over the last several years. CSP program changes were reviewed. Conservation compliance rules have been modified.

Wisconsin NRCS Budget – A continuing resolution was passed funding NRCS operations at 2008 levels through March 31. Initial estimates of FY-09 Technical Assistance funding allocation (approximately 30% of our budget) will be released the week of October 27.

2008 Farm Bill – The Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 was passed during the third week of May. An error when filing the law caused the trade provisions of the bill to be left off of the original bill which delayed approval of the entire farm bill into early June.

The NRCS National Office has submitted DRAFT rule language to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for evaluation. Once the OMB evaluation has been completed the DRAFT rules will then be posted in the federal register for comment.

Based on the current pace of the process Final program rules may not be available until February, 2009.
Environmental Quality Incentives Program - As projected the 2008 farm bill maintained strong support for EQIP and added forestry as an additional program emphasis. The requirement to direct 60% of EQIP funds nationally to livestock related practices is continued.

A DRAFT of the 2009 EQIP eligible practices and flat rate incentive payments has been prepared. A EQIP sign up is projected to begin in mid-November but contracting cannot begin until the rules are finalized.

Initial projections of EQIP cost sharing indicate a net increase of funding for Wisconsin. The State Technical Committee will be meeting in October to develop priorities of the 2009 EQIP ranking process.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CtSP)– Replaces the former Conservation Security Program. Establishes 5 year contracts and a simplified state based competitive ranking and contracting process. Each state will receive a funding allocation to fund the highest ranking offers it has received.

It is not clear when a CSIP sign up will occur. Final rules will define eligibility and enhancement levels. Early indications if there is a FY-09 sign up it would occur late in the fiscal year.

Conservation and Wetland Compliance – The existing HEL and wetland compliance requirements remain largely unchanged. A graduated penalty provision has been added to the HEL penalties. Wetland violations still result in loss of all USDA program benefits. The rules now require FSA to consult with NRCS and obtain concurrence prior to granting “good faith” which is the first step to granting a variance when a violation has occurred.

Wetland Reserve, Grassland Reserve and Farmland Protection Programs have been renewed. WRP had the most significant change allowing states to develop Geographic Area Regional Caps and removing the requirement to use the yellow book appraisal process. Wisconsin developed (6) six GARC’s ranging from a high of $4,000 to low of $1,700 per acre. This will allow the State to be very competitive for WRP easements.

Department of Commerce
Irv reported on the new director of his department. Irv suggested that the council consider inviting him to visit with the council.

Commerce has a new Secretary, Richard Leinenkugel. Leinenkugel, 50, graduated Magna Cum Laude from Marquette University with a B.S. in Business Administration. He went on to serve as a Officer in the United States Marine Corps. Leinenkugel began his career with the Jacob Leinenkugel Brewing Company in 1987 where he started out as a District Sales Manager/Chain Sales Manager. He currently serves as Vice President of Sales and Marketing for the Jacob Leinenkugel Brewing Company and Group Manager, Specialty and Craft Brands for Miller Brewing Company. He was appointed to the Waukesha County Board of Supervisors where he represented Menomonee Falls from 1997 through 2000.

Dairy 2020 Council met to continue strategic planning in August. The top five concerns/issues are as follows:

- Identified that the increasing milk supply will out surpass Wisconsin plant capacity in four years. An effort has developed by some dairy organizations to increase the amount of Dairy Manufacturing Facility Tax credits and expand the program to cooperatives. The Dairy Manufacturing Facility Tax credit is a 10% tax credit for modernization and expansion. In 2007, $600,000 was appropriated by the legislature but had requests for $1.4 million in tax credits. For 2008, the amount appropriated is $700,000. The current tax credits are only available for non-cooperative processing plants.
- Current land use policies are not sustainable for a healthy, growing agricultural industry. Policies are needed to restrict rural housing on agricultural zone land and develop a agricultural land preservation program.
- Reduce energy, equipment and labor costs in milk hauling. Inefficiency in milk hauling is costing approximately three to four cents per pound of cheese.
- Concentrated animal feedlot operations permits and Land Conservation manure permits and inspections are delaying projects causing increase costs to producers.
- Inadequate labor supply exists for skilled/middle management positions on dairies. Immigration assistance is needed to help workers from other countries get work permits, citizenship and learn English.

Funds are adequate to fund existing Dairy 2020 Early Planning Grants and Milk Volume Production Loan programs.

**DATCP**

*Ag Resource Management:* Jenni Heaton passed around a summary of the Working Lands program. She suggested that the Council could draft a letter providing their input to the program. Harriet attended one of the Working lands listening sessions. She and some others gave some input on how some types of farming (organic, grazing) can be compatible adjacent to residential areas and should be encouraged.

Jenni suggested that, when Christine pulls her committee together, we should have someone from DATCP come and speak on the Working Lands. She gave an update on the Seed Law. The pre-emption language that the council was concerned about with regard to GMOs and local governments cannot be part of a rule that DATCP writes. The only way it will get back into the law is if it is done legislatively, so the Council needs to keep informed on its progress and be prepared to work with their individual legislators if they wish to have input on this issue.

ATCP 29, DATCP’s rule that governs pesticides is coming up for reauthorization. Following is a timetable of the process:

**Proposed process for ATCP 29 revisions (Dates subject to change)**
- Scoping statement approved by ATCP Board: December 2008
- Advisory Committee appointed: January/February 2009
- Advisory Committee meetings: March/May/August 2009
- Request for Public Hearings to ATCP Board: November 2009
- Public Hearings: January/February 2010
- Final Board Approval: May 2010
- Legislative Approval or Hearings: June/July 2010
- Revisions effective: July 2010 (or later)

Jenni suggested that the council stay informed and request to have a Council representative on the Rule Making advisory committee. Harriet brought up the question of maintenance of power line rights of way through organic farms. Some farmers have had problems working with power companies to keep them from spraying their land, even when they’ve signed an agreement to maintain vegetation themselves. Jenni explained that DATCP considers this an issue between a private company and a private landowner. Currently, there is nothing in the law governing it and DATCP is unlikely to be inclined to involve itself in these interactions.

**Agricultural Development Division Report**
- Laura will attend the OTA “Assessing the 2008 Farm Bill” Conference in Indianapolis on November 12, 2008.
- Farm Bill Organic Market Data Collection
  - WI Ag Statistics Director Bob Battaglia tells me that they are working on a detailed survey of organic farmers. It will include production statistics by certified, exempt, and transition by commodity or commodity category plus the number of farms and acres in the three categories by state. They will also collect information on marketing, value and practices.
- Organic Farmer Directory Project
  - 256 entries have been received
  - All have been entered into an Access database.
  - Next steps: develop a report format for publication in hard copy and on the web.
- Organic Dairy Workshops Project (SARE PDP grant).
  - Completed four successful workshops in February and March 2008
With remaining funds, we’re doing an introductory session at the Wisconsin Veterinary Medical Association Convention on October 16 and an in-depth session with Dr. Hue Karreman and Dr. Guy Jodarski on December 4-5, 2008.

**University of Wisconsin CALS and EXT**

- UW held its second annual Organic Field Day on September 4th. The day featured two guest speakers (Michelle Wander from the University of Illinois and Dale Mutch from Michigan State University) as well as UW speakers and organic research projects. Despite the rain, approximately 80 participants attended. A thank-you is extended to all the WOAC members who attended the event. Planning will begin soon for next year’s event, which will feature more field tours and likely occur in early July. Other workshops focusing on organic production practices were also held around the state throughout the summer.

- The first year of UW’s FH King Students for Sustainable Agriculture’s organically managed CSA is coming to a close. The students did quite well managing this 10-member CSA. This fall, an experiential learning course on Organic Production is focused on student participation in this CSA.

- Next year is the Center for Integrated Agriculture’s 20 year anniversary. Events are being planned to celebrate this milestone.

- UW is hosting a conference “Cultivating Sustainable Agriculture”, a two-day conference on sustainable agriculture in Wisconsin’s higher education system. It will take place on October 31 and November 1.

- UW has been awarded a SCRI planning grant along with partners from Michigan State University and Cornell University to further work investigating barriers to creating a Great Lakes Regional Food System. Organic will be included in this project. Erin Silva and John Hendrickson are the UW contacts on this project.

- A day-long training workshop on uses and management of cover crops in field and vegetable crop production, organized by the WI SARE coordinator, Diane Mayerfeld (UW Center for Integrated Agricultural Studies) was held October 1 at the UW Hancock Agricultural Research Station. The training was held for about 50 UW Extension Educators and conservation agency personnel to assist their cover crop implementation and evaluation efforts. Detailed information was presented on using cover crops for nutrient, pest and conservation management purposes in both conventional and organic production systems. Instructors included Kevin Shelley, Jim Stute, Ken Schroeder, A.J. Bussan and Don Genrich from UWEX and Judy Derricks from NRCS. The workshop had very high reviews and promises to start the ball rolling on additional educational and research programming in cover crops from the core group of these and other professionals involved.

- UW-CALS is exploring partnerships with other land grant colleges focused explicitly on sustainability (not necessarily strictly organics, but aligned). Dean Jahn is on her way this week to U Arkansas to meet with the Undersecretary of Ag Gale Buchenon to advance those discussions.

- UW organic research continues to progress. Organic vegetable production research continues to be very productive as we complete this season’s harvest. The primary emphasis is on vegetable systems research. This research integrates pest management, nutrient cycling, energy budgeting and economics for a more holistic approach than our previous component studies. We are also completing a three-year study on weed and nutrient management in snap beans and sweet corn, and have initiated new projects in potato and cover cropping systems. Also, new studies have been initiated using rye and hairy vetch as mowed covers in organic vegetable production systems and management of organic seed potato production.

3:00 pm  Motion to Adjourn made by Harriet/Tricia. Motion passed.